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EDITORIAL

Welcome to another special issue of the *Midwestern Journal of Theology*. Once again, I am indebted to several who work incredibly hard to make sure the Journal appears each Semester, and as such I am especially indebted to Dr. Jason Dusing, Provost and Academic Editor, for all his invaluable assistance. My sincere thanks also go to Mrs. Kaylee Freeman, for all she does as Journal secretary.

The last issue was a special one, dedicated as it was to honoring the contribution of Dr. Alan F. Tomlinson here at Midwestern, and this issue is special too, being comprised of Articles from doctoral students here at MBTS. With the arrival of Dr. Jason Allen as President, Midwestern has been blessed with incredible student growth, including in the Research and Professional doctorate programs. To celebrate all that God is doing at Midwestern, we are dedicating this issue to highlighting those programs by publishing six Articles by current doctoral students. These Articles were Papers that the students submitted as part of their seminar requirements, and after professor feedback have been briefly edited by them for publication here. We believe their work is reflective of the high standard of both the teaching and of the students in the various doctoral programs.

We begin with Jenny-Lyn de Klerk's carefully researched work on the transformation and thinking of Augustine. This is followed by Nathan Rose's examination of Charles Spurgeon's stance on Slavery and the opposition in some quarters that that caused him. Daniel Slavich then presents his well-reasoned argument for the membership of the local church not just being regenerate, but one that is ethnically-diverse too. The next article is from Madison Trammel, who admirably defends Ignatius of Antioch's Martyrdom and his view of Redemption. For many, Ignatius seemed maybe a little too keen to suffer as a Christian leader in the early church. Our penultimate piece is from Camden Pulliam, who very helpfully outlines the concept of Familial Covenants, by analyzing the familial language in the Covenants found in Genesis 17 and 2 Samuel 7. Chad McDonald provides the final article, with his timely and helpful study of time management from the perspective of a church pastor.

We again conclude this issue of the *MJT* with several relevant and thought provoking book reviews, helpfully secured and edited by Dr. Blake Hearson.

From Pride to Humility: An Evaluation of Augustine's Break with Neo-Platonism in light of his conception of the Ideal Man before and after his Conversion

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Introduction

One of the most intriguing features of Augustine's life and theology that has prompted ongoing debate is the nature of the changes he experienced in his quest for wisdom, both before and after his conversion to Christianity.¹ Many scholars have traced developments in his thought from his upbringing in a culture that was based on Roman values, to his discovery of philosophy, to his adherence to Manichaeism, philosophical skepticism, and Neo-Platonism, and finally to his conversion to Christianity and life as a bishop. Some scholars, such as Peter Brown, Gerald Bray, and Henry Chadwick, have specifically emphasized the importance of Neo-Platonism for Augustine's conversion, calling his discovery of the Neo-Platonists his first conversion or the first step in his conversion, and calling him a preeminent Christian Neo-Platonist.² This emphasis on Augustine's Neo-Platonism encourages the belief that Augustine was one of the main theologians who contaminated Christianity with non-Christian philosophical concepts. However, this perspective ignores Augustine's own view of the extreme differences between a life before and after conversion to Christianity. In order to

¹ Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), ix.

² See Brown, *Augustine*, 86; Gerald Bray, *Augustine on the Christian Life: Transformed by the Power of God* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2015), 109; Henry Chadwick, *Augustine: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 4.

respond to this misconception, this paper will evaluate the change in Augustine's understanding of the ideal man from before to after his conversion, wherein his view of the ideal man moved permanently from a powerful and independent man who is perfect in virtue to a humble man who loves Christ, the perfect and unique God-man.

Augustine's Life

Much is known about the changes that Augustine experienced before and after his conversion because of his spiritual autobiography, *The Confessions*, and the many commentaries written on it. Augustine was born in 354 AD in Roman occupied Thagaste, North Africa. Though his parents had conflicting ideals, they raised Augustine in the context of and in general adherence to Roman values. As a child, Augustine learned stories that idealized power, honor, and success. He comments on this stage of life in his *Confessions*, saying to God, "at that time I believed that living a good life consisted in winning the favor of those who commended me. I failed to recognize the whirlpool of disgraceful conduct into which I had been flung out of your sight."³ In his adolescence, Augustine continued in the Roman way as he became obsessed with sex, even telling lies about how sexually promiscuous he was "lest [he] be thought less courageous for being more innocent."⁴ He studied rhetoric and his parents placed much hope in his potential success. He excelled in this craft and his growing reputation continually fed his pride.⁵

Soon, Augustine developed an interest in philosophy, which led to the beginning of his long and intentional quest for wisdom. He read Cicero's *Hortensius*, which "advocated the pursuit of philosophy as the way to obtain a better life," and this made him fall "into the trap of pseudo-intellectual pride and . . . derid[e] the Bible as something far too simple for serious minds to engage with."⁶ The philosophical system that first appealed to him was Manichaeism, of which he became a hearer, or a follower who was receiving instruction before baptism. The Manichees were dualists who created a mystical narrative of the battle between good

³ Augustine, *The Confessions* (trans. Maria Boulding. Rev. Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2012), 31.

⁴ Ibid., 36.

⁵ Ibid., 45.

⁶ Bray, *Augustine*, 56. See Augustine, *The Confessions*, 74.

and evil. Augustine was drawn to this sect because their dualistic system answered his questions about the nature of evil and gave him a way to assuage the guilt he held in his heart for maintaining a relationship with a concubine. However, after meeting with Faustus, a prominent Manichaean teacher, and hearing Faustus's inadequate responses to questions about the intricacies of Manichaean doctrine, Augustine began to see the holes in this system of thought. After this disappointing event, Augustine turned to philosophical skepticism and believed that human beings were unable to have knowledge that was beyond doubt. At this time, his close friend died and Augustine was cast into a pit of sorrow. The pain that he experienced "makes the case very well that his need for self-sustenance ran deep."⁷ To escape this pain, he moved to Carthage and began to teach there but was disgusted by the undisciplined behavior of his students. Thus, when he was offered a position in Rome, he jumped at the opportunity to teach among the civilized and obedient. This, too, proved to be a disappointment, as his cultured students lacked a sense of morality as well. Augustine moved to Milan to teach, permanently leaving the Manichees behind for his new-found skepticism.

In Milan, Augustine became a catechumen in the Catholic church because it was the social norm. However, God began to soften his heart to faith in Christ as he sat under Ambrose's preaching. He realized that his life was empty and continued to search for the truth. He was drawn to Neo-Platonism, which finally enabled him to conceive of God as a spiritual being, answered his questions about the origin of evil, and led him to read Paul's letters. He sought Platonic ecstasy or oneness with the Good, but in his small glimpse of reality he realized that he was infinitely far from God and could not reach him.⁸ He was "disappointed by the extreme transience of an experience so profound, and by the fact that afterwards he found himself as consumed with pride and lust as before."⁹

Augustine began to seek ways to grow closer to God.¹⁰ Through the testimonies of several Christians he entered into an extreme struggle with his flesh as he considered repentance. He first asked Simplicianus

⁷ Sandra Lee Dixon, *Augustine: The Scattered and Gathered Self* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1999), 94.

⁸ Augustine, *The Confessions*, 125ff. See J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1978), 21–22.

⁹ Chadwick, *Augustine*, 23.

¹⁰ Augustine, *The Confessions*, 137.

for help. Simplicianus was happy that Augustine had read Platonist writings. He told Augustine about the conversion of Victorinus, a famous teacher who “was not ashamed to become a child of [God’s] Christ and be born as an infant from [God’s] font, bending his neck to the yoke of humility and accepting on his docile brow the sign of the ignominious cross.”¹¹ Augustine marvelled at this story and wanted to do what Victorinus did but felt bound to his sin. In his inner person, his two wills fought viciously against one another.¹²

Later, Pontianus visited Augustine and told Augustine how he was converted after seeing two of his friends converted from reading the *Life of Anthony*. This story gave Augustine “an example of humility that had not been offered to him by the Platonists.”¹³ After hearing it, Augustine began to hate himself and how he had wasted so many years searching for wisdom but never repenting. He had told himself that he was putting off repentance because he was not completely convinced of Christianity, but in reality he was.¹⁴ This hate turned into anger. Later, Augustine would confess to God, “in my secret heart you stood by me, Lord, redoubling the lashes of fear and shame in the severity of your mercy, lest I give up the struggle.”¹⁵ While he was agonizing over his repentance, he had a vision of Continence who called him to turn from his sin. He could still hear his sin calling to him as well, but Continence showed him that those who had turned to her did not do so by their own strength, but by God’s. Augustine then heard a voice who told him to “pick up and read,” and so he picked up Paul’s letters and read Romans 13:13 and realized that was all he needed to know to repent from his sin. Augustine finally renounced his sin and threw himself upon God’s mercy.¹⁶

After his conversion, Augustine abandoned his career and was baptized. Though he merely wanted to be a monk, he soon became a priest and bishop. He rose to prominence in the Roman empire through his preaching, writing, and opposition of heresies such as Donatism and

¹¹ Ibid., 140.

¹² Ibid., 144.

¹³ Mark J. Edwards, “Neoplatonism,” in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia* (ed. Allan Fitzgerald and John C. Cavadini. Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1999), 589.

¹⁴ Augustine, *The Confessions*, 149.

¹⁵ Ibid., 154.

¹⁶ Ibid., 155–157.

Pelagianism, both of which underemphasized and thus distorted God's grace. In his old age, Augustine defended his beliefs against Julian of Eclanum. Julian accused Augustine of asserting doctrines that made God the Creator of evil and made man's free will non-existent. In his defence, Augustine accused Julian of placing "too much emphasis on the idea that human beings were capable of reaching eternal happiness through their own efforts and could even have some rightful claim to it through good works."¹⁷ To Augustine, Julian's perspective was a form of pride, just like the perspectives of Pelagius and the Donatists. Augustine died trusting in Christ and left a legacy of emphasizing humble dependence upon God's grace, which would form part of the foundation of Western Christianity.

Augustine's Ideal Man

As seen above, Augustine's thought was steadily being developed and revised throughout his lifetime. However, it is undeniable that his conversion to Christianity represented a significant and permanent break with non-Christian beliefs. At the heart of this break was the concept of humility, which Augustine repeatedly identified as one of the most foundational aspects of Christianity.¹⁸ Before his conversion, Augustine sought wisdom and happiness in human philosophy and conceived of the ideal man as a powerful and independent man who is perfect in virtue. After his conversion, Augustine continued to seek wisdom and happiness, but in God's way, which led him to conceive of the ideal man as the exact opposite, namely, the humble man who loves Christ, the perfect God-man.

Before Conversion

Augustine was raised in the Roman world and influenced by parents, teachers, and colleagues who had Roman values. Thus, his concept of the ideal man before his conversion had deep roots in Roman culture. To the Romans, the ideal man was powerful, educated, and had the leisure time

¹⁷ Paul van Geest, *The Incomprehensibility of God: Augustine as Negative Theologian* (Leuven: Peeters, 2011), 206.

¹⁸ See page 11ff.; Jennifer Herdt, "Smoke, Wind and that Journey Upwards: Augustinian Reflections on the Role of Humility in Virtue Formation," *International Journal of Christianity and Education* 19 (Mar 2015): 15.

needed to engage in philosophical reflection.¹⁹ During his school years, Augustine was taught “to admire emphasized pride in one’s abilities, the importance of ambition, the glamour of glory and praise, concern with one’s feelings of inner perfection, and sensitivity to the ways that people reflected agreement with that self-perception.”²⁰ Pagan literature celebrated “economic success and notoriety,” and “pride in sexual prowess figured in the stories” that Augustine read and even had to memorize.²¹ Herdt sums up these values by saying that in Roman culture, “virtue was literally manliness, not simply accidentally linked with the word for man but tied up with ideals of warrior courage, of the pursuit of glory, and of Stoical responses to suffering.”²² Dunnington sums up the Roman ideal in terms of self-knowledge and self-control, saying “the moral pagan becomes a man of character, and he knows his character, and his knowledge of his character crowns his virtue . . . because he has made virtue part of his second nature, he is both self-sufficient and relatively secure against the ravages of time and luck.”²³ Cicero reflected this in that his “ideal was personal self-sufficiency.”²⁴

When Augustine became a follower of the Manichees, his conception of the ideal man centered on morality. The Manichees viewed matter as evil, and thus the Manichean elite or elect practised celibacy and severe asceticism to avoid contact with matter. The lower grade of hearers

¹⁹ Herdt, “Smoke, Wind, and that Journey Upwards,” 18.

²⁰ Dixon, *Augustine*, 62.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 68.

²² Herdt, “Smoke, Wind, and that Journey Upwards,” 22.

²³ Kent Dunnington, “Humility: An Augustinian Perspective,” in *Pro Ecclesia* 25 (Wint 2016): 40. Overall, these characteristics were seen in various aspects of Roman culture such as architecture, stories, and philosophical writings. See Harold Mattingly, “The Roman ‘Virtues’” *Harvard Theological Review* 30 (April 1937): 104–105, 110–114. For example, Augustine quotes Virgil in *The City of God*, saying “thus the mind in which this resolution is well grounded suffers no perturbations to prevail with it in opposition to reason . . . and not only so, but it rules over them, and, while it refuses its consent and resists them, administers a reign of virtue. Such character is ascribed to Aeneas by Virgil when he says, ‘He stands immovable by tears. Nor tenderest words with pity hears.’” Augustine, *The City of God*, in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. 2, *St. Augustin: The City of God and Christian Doctrine* (ed. Philip Schaff. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 9.4.

²⁴ Chadwick, *Augustine*, 10–11.

helped them do this by “prepar[ing] their food and attend[ing] to their needs.”²⁵ The Manichees opposed those aspects of Christianity that seemed to be base, such as “the emphasis on faith (which seemed like credulity) . . . the anthropomorphic conception of God so characteristic of African Christianity . . . [and] the deficiencies of Scripture.”²⁶

Later, as a Neo-Platonist, Augustine conceived of the ideal man as one who had power over himself through reason, as employed by the faculty of the mind. In Platonic thought,²⁷

the ideal person is a philosopher, since his wisdom means his soul is in complete harmony with itself. The philosopher’s rational faculty governs his passions and appetites, never allowing them free rein . . . He has knowledge of himself and society; he knows what it is to be virtuous; [and] he has a certain amount of equanimity.²⁸

Plato asserted that the way to become the ideal man was to ascend to the Good through a visionary experience called theurgy.²⁹ Later, Plotinus would turn “what was essentially an academic philosophy into a kind of religion that would enable those who pursued it not only to understand but also to experience the supreme being,” which set Platonism up as an opposing religion to Christianity in the “marketplace of ideas.”³⁰

²⁵ Carol Harrison, *Augustine: Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 8.

²⁶ Ibid., 8.

²⁷ Though Neo-Platonists were not identical to Plato himself, his “aspirational and religious teachings” were adopted by the Neo-Platonists. Dewey J. Hoitenga Jr., *Faith and Reason From Plato to Plantinga: An Introduction to Reformed Epistemology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 62.

²⁸ Christopher Wright, “Plato’s Just State,” *Philosophy Now*, 12 10 2016 https://philosophynow.org/issues/90/Platos_Just_State.

²⁹ Hoitenga Jr., *Faith and Reason*, 30–31. See John Peter Kenney, “None Come Closer to Us Than These’: Augustine and the Platonists.” *Religions* 7 (September 2016): 5.

³⁰ Bray, *Augustine on the Christian Life*, 24.

After Conversion

Overall, Augustine's conception of the ideal man before his conversion to Christianity went through various developments as he grew up in a Roman culture and adhered to Manichaeism and Neo-Platonism. However, the common characteristic of his conception of the ideal man throughout this time was pride. This is seen in Augustine's own reflections after his conversion.

According to Augustine, the sentiment "engrained in the Roman mind" was that "the true way . . . is virtue, along which [the ideal man] presses as to the goal of possession—namely, to glory, honor, and power."³¹ To Augustine, viewing the ideal man as the one who was independent and self-sufficient was the exact essence of pride.³² Augustine would also identify pride as a characteristic of Manichaeism. He said that Mani "in his insane, pretentious vanity, pass[ed] off his erroneous opinions as those of a divine person—himself, no less."³³ Furthermore, commenting on his friend's time as a Manichee, Augustine said he was "deceived by the superficial appearance of a virtue that was but feigned and faked."³⁴ Though the Manichees boasted of achieving an ideal existence by being morally pure, they lived according to the flesh.³⁵ Finally, pride was also a characteristic of the Neo-Platonist ideal. After his conversion to Christianity, Augustine would accuse the Neo-Platonists of filling him with pride.

Overall, pride was the one thing that held Augustine back from repentance.³⁶ It was only when he humbled himself before God that

³¹ Augustine, *The City of God*, 5.12.

³² Dunnington, "Humility," 40.

³³ Augustine, *The Confessions*, 80.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 104.

³⁵ For example, see Augustine, *On the Morals of the Manicheans* in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. 4 (ed. Philip Schaff. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 20.74–75.

³⁶ This is seen in personal reflections in his *Confessions* as well as his teachings on pride as the main vice that prevents one from repenting and turning to God in faith. See Augustine, *The Confessions*, 73, 78, 88, 124; *On the Holy Trinity*, in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. 3, *St. Augustin: On the Holy Trinity, Doctrinal Treatises, and Moral Treatises* (ed. Philip Schaff. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 13.17; Robert J.

Augustine experienced God's converting power. From then on, Augustine would develop the idea of humility seen in and given through Christ, the perfect God-man, as a central tenet of Christianity. The centrality of humility to Christianity in Augustine's thought is seen, for example, in a letter he wrote to Dioscorus. Augustine said,

I wish you to prepare for yourself no other way of seizing and holding the truth than that which has been prepared by [God] . . . in that way the first part is humility; the second, humility; the third, humility: and this I would continue to repeat as often as you might ask direction, not that there are not other instructions which may be given, but because, unless humility precede, accompany, and follow every good action . . . pride wrests wholly from our hand any good work on which we are congratulating ourselves . . . so if you were to ask me . . . what are the instructions of the Christian religion, I would be disposed to answer always and only 'Humility.'³⁷

According to Augustine, humility: 1) is exhibited primarily in Christ's death on the cross, 2) is received for salvation through faith in Christ, and 3) leads to the happy life. Augustine saw humility as exhibited primarily in Christ's death on the cross. In *A Treatise on Faith and the Creed*, Augustine said, "but little [comparatively] was the humiliation (*humilitas*) of our Lord on our behalf in His being born: it was also added that He deemed it meet to die in behalf of mortal men. For 'He humbled Himself, being made subject even unto death, yea, the death of the cross.'"³⁸ Christ provided the supreme example of humility. Augustine reminded his readers that Christ himself said (as recorded in Matthew

O'Connell, *Soundings in St. Augustine's Imaginations* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1994), 270.

³⁷ Augustine, *The Letters of Saint Augustine*, in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. 1, *St. Augustin: Confessions and Letters* (ed. Philip Schaff. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), CXVIII.

³⁸ Augustine, *A Treatise on Faith and the Creed*, in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. 3, *On the Holy Trinity, Doctrinal Treatises, and Moral Treatises* (ed. Philip Schaff. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 5.11.

11:28-29) that people should learn from Him because of His meekness and humility, not because of the miracles He performed.³⁹

However, Christ is not just a pre-eminent example of humility, but also provides salvation to man through His humility.⁴⁰ Augustine repeatedly accuses humanity of being full of sinful pride and in need of receiving salvation through Christ's humility. This is seen, for example, in Augustine's use of the metaphor of human pride as a physical infirmity that can only be healed through Christ's remedy or medicine of humility.⁴¹ In *On the Holy Trinity* he says, "the humility by which God was born of a woman, and was led to death through contumelies so great by mortal men, is the chiefest remedy by which the swelling of our pride may be cured."⁴² In *On the Catechising of the Uninstructed*, Augustine asserted, "inasmuch as there is nothing more adverse to love than envy, and as pride is the mother of envy, the same Lord Jesus Christ, God-man, is both a manifestation of divine love towards us, and an example of human humility with us, to the end that our great swelling might be cured by a greater counteracting remedy."⁴³ In a sermon on John 2, Augustine preached,

Ye know, Brethren, for ye have learnt it as believing in Christ, and continually too do we by our ministry impress it upon you, that the humility of Christ is the medicine of man's swollen pride. For man would not have perished, had he not been swollen up through pride. For "pride," as saith the Scripture, "is the beginning of all sin." Against the beginning of sin, the beginning of righteousness was necessary. If then pride be the beginning of

³⁹ Augustine, *On the Holy Trinity*, 13.14. See van Geest, *The Incomprehensibility of God*, 173.

⁴⁰ Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 393.

⁴¹ See van Geest, *The Incomprehensibility of God*, 150, 170.

⁴² Augustine, *On the Holy Trinity*, 5.13.17.

⁴³ Augustine, *On the Catechising of the Uninstructed*, in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. 3, St. Augustin: *Confessions and Letters* (ed. Philip Schaff. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 4.

all sin, whereby should the swelling of pride be cured, had not God vouchsafed to humble Himself?⁴⁴

Finally, Augustine stated that humility leads to the happy life. Perhaps the most obvious proof of this is the thrust of Augustine's *Confessions*, wherein he moves from one unhappy situation to the next until he finds the true meaning of joy in Christ. Augustine's moments of greatest joy are when he praises God for humbling him and thus giving him grace. On the other hand, his moments of greatest pain and sorrow are when he relies on himself or others for happiness. For example, he said

the temptation to want veneration and affection from others, and to want them not for the sake of some quality that merits them . . . in order to make such admiration itself the cause of my joy . . . is not true joy at all, but leads only to a miserable life and shameful ostentation. This tendency is one of the chief impediments to loving [God] and revering [Him] with chaste fear, and therefore [God] thwart[s] the proud but give[s] grace to the humble.⁴⁵

According to Augustine, happiness is not found not in self-sufficiency but humility, which enables one to love God and live righteously.⁴⁶ In other words, one leads a happy life to the extent that one practices "humility as the most exalted form of self-development,"⁴⁷ loves God,⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Augustine, *Sermon LXXIII*, in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. 6, St. Augustin: *Sermon on the Mount, Harmony of the Gospels, and Homilies on the Gospels* (ed. Philip Schaff. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 1.

⁴⁵ Augustine, *The Confessions*, 215.

⁴⁶ Cavidini comments on Augustine's manual of the Christian life, saying that being "aware of the great gift of God's humility in Christ, and placing hope in that and not in oneself" leads to "one's lusts progressively giv[ing] way to love even to readiness to lay down ones life for ones friends." John Cavidini, "Enchiridion," in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia* (ed. Allan Fitzgerald and John Cavidini; Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1999), 296–267.

⁴⁷ van Geest, *The Incomprehensibility of God*, 144.

⁴⁸ Matthew Drever, *Image, Identity, and the Forming of the Augustinian Soul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 141.

and lives righteously by receiving Christ's righteousness.⁴⁹ Thus, Augustine's view of humility is not one of self-hatred or low self-esteem, but recognizing the truth about one's sinfulness and finitude, and depending on God for everything in life.⁵⁰ Peter Holmes explains that Augustine's emphasis on the human need for the healing of pride does not demean humanity, but leads humanity from humility to exaltation:

I know nothing in the whole range of practical or theoretical divinity more beautiful than Augustin[e]'s analysis of the procedures of grace, in raising man from the depths of his sinful prostration to the heights of his last and eternal elevation in the presence and fellowship of God.⁵¹

This emphasis on humility is also seen in Augustine's opposition to Pelagianism and Donatism. Pelagius claimed that man was able to turn from sin by the power of his own will and the Donatists claimed that only those who are perfectly righteous are able to be a part of the church. To Augustine, Pelagianism and Donatism overemphasized man's supposed self-control and righteousness to the point that God's grace was distorted. In response to Pelagius, Augustine asserted that man was corrupted by sin and could not choose good, but had to depend on God's grace. Again and again in his writings against Pelagius, Augustine proclaims that humility is the truth about humanity, even when they are at their best.⁵² For example, Augustine cited 1 Corinthians 15:10,

⁴⁹ Matthew Levering, *The Theology of Augustine: An Introductory Guide to His Most Important Works* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 56.

⁵⁰ Herdt, "Smoke, Wind, and that Journey Upwards," 24. Dunnington, "Humility," 25, 27. See Dunnington, "Humility," 27.

⁵¹ Peter Holmes, "Preface to Volume I of the Edinburgh Edition" in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. 5, *St. Augustine: Anti-Pelagian Writings* (ed. Philip Schaff, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 11.

⁵² See Augustine, *On Nature and Grace, Against Pelagius*, in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. 2, *St. Augustine: Anti-Pelagian Writings* (ed. Philip Schaff. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 38.34, 42.36, 73; Augustine, *On the Proceedings of Pelagius*, in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. 5, *St.*

wherein Paul acknowledges his success but attributes the source of it to God. Commenting on this verse, Augustine said, "O mighty teacher, confessor, and preacher of grace! What meaneth this: 'I laboured more, yet not I?' Where the will exalted itself ever so little, there piety was instantly on the watch, and humility trembled, because weakness recognised itself."⁵³ In response to the Donatists, Augustine asserted that it was prideful to assume that one could distinguish between true and false believers in the church. Augustine supported his argument by quoting Cyprian who said,

What swelling of arrogance it is, what forgetfulness of humility and gentleness, that any one should dare or believe that he can do what the Lord did not grant even to the apostles, — to think that he can distinguish the tares from the wheat, or, as if it were granted to him to carry the fan and purge the floor, to endeavor to separate the chaff from the grain!⁵⁴

Augustine's Break with Neo-Platonism

As shown above, the centrality of humility in Augustine's conversion and view of the Christianity is seen clearly in primary and secondary sources. This shows that though Augustine's conversion was influenced by his adherence to Neo-Platonic thought (a fact that he himself recognized in his *Confessions* and earlier works), this does not mean that his turning to Neo-Platonism was the same kind of conversion as his true conversion to Christianity (a fact that he himself recognized in his *Confessions* and later works). Though some of his Christian doctrines may parallel non-Christian doctrines he held to before his conversion, this does not mean that they find their origin in non-Christian doctrines

⁵³ Augustin: *Anti-Pelagian Writings* (ed. Philip Schaff. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 27.12.

⁵⁴ Augustine, *On the Proceedings of Pelagius*, 36.

⁵⁴ Augustine, *On Baptism, Against the Donatists*, in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. 4, *St. Augustin: The Writings Against the Manichaeans and Against the Donatists* (ed. Philip Schaff. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 4.11.

or that Augustine thus contaminated biblical Christianity with non-Christian philosophical concepts.

Unfortunately, this misconception is still widely held on a popular level. Some scholars exacerbate this misconception by overemphasizing Augustine's Neo-Platonism, marking it as one step along the way in his ever-deepening quest for wisdom and spiritual development, just as his conversion to Christianity was. In other words, they identify his 'conversion' to Neo-Platonism and his conversion to Christianity as a change of the same kind. Such scholars make parallels between Augustine's Christian doctrines and Neo-Platonic doctrines at every turn.⁵⁵ The most oft-cited proofs for this perspective are 1) Augustine's recounting of learning Christian doctrine from Neo-Platonic writers, and 2) his claim that the Platonists were the closest philosophers to Christianity.⁵⁶ First, in his *Confessions* Augustine said that in Platonists books he read, "*in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God; he was God*" though those exact words were not used.⁵⁷ Second, in *Of True Religion* Augustine said, "with the change of a few words and sentiments, [the Platonists] would become Christians, as many Platonists of recent times have done."⁵⁸ Furthermore, O'Connell explains that the reason some refer to Augustine's turning to philosophy as his first conversion is because Augustine used similar language regarding his experience of reading Cicero's *Hortensius* and his experience in the garden before his conversion to Christianity.⁵⁹

Based on passages such as these in primary sources, scholars make statements that lessen Augustine's break with Neo-Platonism. For example, Bray says that Augustine "rejected Platonism more because it was inadequate than because it was false."⁶⁰ Bray explains that in Augustine's thought, "the difference between Platonism and Christianity was that the former was an idea of ultimate reality whereas the latter was

⁵⁵ See Brown, *Augustine*, 498.

⁵⁶ See Chadwick, *Augustine*, 55; O'Connell, *Soundings in St. Augustine's Imaginations*, 197.

⁵⁷ Augustine, *The Confessions*, 125.

⁵⁸ Augustine, *Of True Religion in Augustine: Earlier Writings* (trans. John H. S. Burleigh; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953), 7.

⁵⁹ O'Connell, *Soundings in St. Augustine's Imagination*, 197.

⁶⁰ Bray, *Augustine on the Christian Life*, 109.

an experience of it.”⁶¹ Moreover, Chadwick explains that Augustine’s conversion to Christianity was “no sudden flash, but the culminating point of many months of painful gestation” and “marked a shift more ethical than intellectual in content.”⁶² Chadwick notes in passing that Augustine maintained his Neo-Platonism until his death.⁶³ He also describes Augustine’s view of “the content of salvation” as “happiness . . . [and] inner security.”⁶⁴ In his lengthy biography on Augustine, Brown claims that Augustine’s conversion from a “Manichean version of Christianity” to “Christian Platonism” allowed Augustine to “regain . . . a sense of purpose” and make sure progress in his life of philosophy.⁶⁵ Finally, John Kenney refers to the “conversionary power of Platonism” in Augustine’s life and claims that Augustine was “never free from Platonism.”⁶⁶

Though these statements may convey some truth, they do not convey the whole truth because they do not take into account other relevant passages in Augustine’s works. Stated simply, Neo-Platonism was the opposite of Christianity when it came to Augustine’s beloved doctrine of humility, and this caused Augustine to reject it as a false belief system. This is attested to by Augustine himself and various scholars. Augustine’s evaluation of Neo-Platonism is seen most clearly in *The City of God*. Here he said, “the Platonists, though knowing something of the Creator of the universe, have misunderstood the true worship of God.”⁶⁷ Addressing Porphyry, Augustine said,

You drive men, therefore, into the most palpable error. And yet you are not ashamed of doing so much harm, though you call yourself a lover of virtue and wisdom. Had you been true and faithful in this profession, you would have recognized Christ, the virtue of God and the wisdom of God, and would not, in the pride

⁶¹ Ibid., 96.

⁶² Chadwick, *Augustine*, 27. Dunnington notes that some scholars call Augustine’s adherence to Neo-Platonism his “intellectual conversion to Christianity.” Dunnington, “Humility,” 55.

⁶³ Chadwick, *Augustine*, 26.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 55.

⁶⁵ Brown, *Augustine*, 104.

⁶⁶ Kenney, “None Come Closer to Us Than These,” 1.

⁶⁷ Augustine, *The City of God*, 10.3. Italics mine.

*of vain science, have revolted from His wholesome humility . . . [preaching Christ crucified] is despised as a weak and foolish thing by those who are wise and strong in themselves; yet this is the grace which heals the weak, who do not proudly boast a blessedness of their own, but rather humbly acknowledge their real misery.*⁶⁸

Furthermore, reflecting on his conversion to Christianity after his adherence to Neo-Platonism, Augustine said, “had I not been seeking [God’s] way in Christ our Savior I would more probably have been killed than skilled. For I had already begun to covet a reputation for wisdom.”⁶⁹ Schlabach explains that though Augustine said that Neo-Platonic thought helped him accept certain Christian doctrines, it was only a potential “source of saving knowledge . . . in a very backhanded way” in that it was one of the “inner goads” driving him to such saving knowledge, which was “precisely the humility of Jesus Christ.”⁷⁰ Hoitenga uses the same argument, saying, “for all their success in bringing Augustine to the truth about God’s nature, [the Platonists] not only failed to make him humble, but actually fed his pride” and therefore may have even “drawn him away from faith, had he come upon them after his conversion.”⁷¹

Van Geest provides a thorough explanation of the reasons that Augustine’s Neo-Platonism would have come into direct opposition to Augustine’s Christianity, all of which revolve around the concept of humility. For example, the Platonists could not accept the idea that God took on flesh, lived an unimpressive life, and suffered and died on a cross.⁷² Furthermore, it was simply not Platonic to conceive of humility as a way to know God, but that is exactly what Augustine did.⁷³ van Geest highlights the fact that after years of preaching, Augustine’s sermons

⁶⁸ Ibid., 10.28. Italics mine.

⁶⁹ Augustine, *The Confessions*, 134.

⁷⁰ Gerald W. Schlabach, “Augustine’s Hermeneutic of Humility: An Alternative to Moral Imperialism and Moral Relativism,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 22 (Fall 1994): 315, 316. See Augustine, *The Confessions*, 123–125.

⁷¹ Hoitenga, *Faith and Reason*, 92, 93. See Augustine, *The Confessions*, 134.

⁷² van Geest, *The Incomprehensibility of God*, 86, 169. See Augustine, *The City of God*, 10.28; Augustine, *The Confessions*, 125–126.

⁷³ van Geest, *The Incomprehensibility of God*, 244–245. See footnote 75 below.

"increasingly exude a familiarity with the person of Christ as he is presented in Scripture, rather than an indebtedness to neo-Platonism."⁷⁴ O'Connell also attests to the significant differences between Augustine's evaluation of Neo-Platonism in his first book written as a cleric, *Of True Religion*, compared to his later writings, such as *The City of God*, between which Augustine had probably discovered Porphyry's *Against the Christians*.⁷⁵

Therefore, Augustine's earlier statements about Neo-Platonism should be seen in light of his later statements. Early on, Augustine said that the Neo-Platonists were the philosophers who were closest to the Christian faith. However, in light of his later statements, one must conclude that according to Augustine, this does not mean that the Neo-Platonists could bridge the gap between their doctrine and Christian doctrine by their own reasoning.⁷⁶ Early on, Augustine commended the Neo-Platonists for teaching him that God is immaterial. However, this is only one of many other important doctrines, of which Neo-Platonism knew perhaps none.⁷⁷ Moreover, much of the knowledge they claimed to have was not knowledge of the truth.⁷⁸ Though some may want to label Augustine's adherence to Neo-Platonism his first conversion or the first step in his conversion to Christianity,⁷⁹ it is clear that much of the knowledge that he learned from the Neo-Platonists had to be renounced. Therefore, it is inaccurate to say that because Augustine conceived in his mind that God was a transcendent, spiritual being who was good, and that he willed to be close to God, that he was, in a sense, converted.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 86.

⁷⁵ O'Connell, *Soundings in St. Augustine's Imaginations*, 79, 123.

⁷⁶ Edwards states that according to Augustine, "there is nothing in the sensible creation that will lead us to God so readily as the voluntary abasement of his Word in Jesus Christ: 'The God within whom man forsook in pride he found outside him in humility' (*lib. arb. 3.10.30*)."⁸⁰ Edwards, "Neoplatonism," 589.

⁷⁷ See O'Connell, *Soundings in St. Augustine's Imaginations*, 123.

⁷⁸ Augustine claimed that knowledge of God stemming from a prideful attitude is not really knowledge of God at all. van Geest, *The Incomprehensibility of God*, 106.

⁷⁹ This is sometimes referred to as the theory of a two-step conversion: the first 'intellectual' step achieved in Neo-Platonism and the second 'moral' step achieved in Christianity. See Dunnington, "Humility," 25, 37; O'Connell, *Soundings in St. Augustine's Imaginations*, 197.

Rather, his description of his life as a Neo-Platonist aligns with the description of a spiritually dead person.⁸⁰ Perhaps his experiences as a Neo-Platonist before his conversion marked the beginning of his conversion. However, he had not reached the point of regeneration. Furthermore, he did not reach such regeneration by his own Neo-Platonic thought, but was regenerated by God after throwing himself upon God's grace. Overall, Augustine saw conversion as an act of God.⁸¹

Because of these statements from various scholars and Augustine himself, studies on Augustine should reflect the significance of his conversion to Christianity. This may be worked out in several ways. For example, though one should not ignorantly disregard the philosophical systems that influenced Augustine, one need not feel compelled to explain Augustine's Christianity as it hinged on these philosophical systems, especially Neo-Platonism. Instead of constantly referring to these systems and making explicit parallels between their doctrines and Christian doctrines as if they had fundamental similarities, it would make more sense to allow his Christians beliefs to stand as fundamentally separate from such systems. This is not to say that such parallels should never be made, but rather that Neo-Platonic beliefs should not be portrayed as the foundation upon which Augustine built his Christianity. Augustine himself would look upon this interpretation with disdain.

More specifically, the statements quoted above from Bray, Chadwick, and Brown may be improved by removing their implicit de-emphasis on Augustine's break with Neo-Platonism. Augustine did not reject Platonism merely because it was inadequate, as Bray claims, but also because it was false in many ways, though true regarding the transcendence of God. Christianity was not only different from Platonism because it was an experience of God rather than just an idea, as Bray states, but also because Christianity was an entirely separate

⁸⁰ See Augustine's description of the dead soul. Augustine, *The Confessions*, 292–293.

⁸¹ See Augustine, *On Baptism, Against the Donatists*. Dixon states that "Augustine made his small but drastic shift in his view of human nature in *To Simplicianus*, written in 396. He gave up the notion that human beings chose to respond to God's calling or not to answer it and conceded that the power to initiate faith comes from God alone." Dixon, *Augustine*, 197. See Hoitenga, *Faith and Reason*, 127; Augustine, *The Confessions*, 285.

theological system that believed in a different God, namely, Jesus Christ. According to Augustine, his conversion was not just a shift in his ethics or another step on his way to happiness and wisdom brought about by Platonic thought, as Chadwick and Brown propose, but a change from death to life; an act of God that saved him from damnation. Finally, because of this significant break with his past, Augustine did not hold to Platonism for the rest of his life, as Chadwick asserts. Rather, though Augustine continued to believe in God's transcendence, he fundamentally changed other beliefs to conform with orthodox Christianity, which set him at odds with Platonism. On the other hand, Schlabach, Hoitenga, and van Geest exemplify a proper understanding of the interplay between Augustine's positive comments and negative critiques of Platonism, as well as Augustine's own understanding of conversion.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Augustine believed that one reached an ideal existence not by ascending to the Good and thereby being able master oneself, but by falling before Christ, the perfect God-man, and surrendering one's life to his lordship. The true ideal man is Christ, who humbled himself in death on a cross and, though he will ultimately make his co-heirs perfect through his righteousness, is always the center and source of that perfection. Thus, there was not only a functional difference between Augustine's life and thought before and after his conversion to Christianity, but a fundamental difference. Christ was that difference.

Spurgeon and the Slavery Controversy of 1860:
A Critical Analysis of the Anthropology
of Charles Haddon Spurgeon,
as it relates specifically to his Stance on Slavery

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Introduction

Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892) was the most recognized preacher during the 19th century. His popularity did not absolve him from controversy, however. His commitment to hold and herald biblical truth often put him at odds with others who disagreed with his position.¹ Most of the controversies surrounding Spurgeon are well known as well as highly researched. However, there is one particular controversy that has not received much scholarly attention: the Slavery Controversy of 1860. Spurgeon was unambiguous and unapologetic about his views on slavery. On multiple occasions he publicly voiced his sentiments, “I believe slavery to be a crime of crimes, a soul-destroying sin, and an iniquity which cries aloud for vengeance.”² As a result of his condemning remarks, he suffered. His life was threatened and his published sermons

¹ For example, in 1864 Spurgeon launched no small controversy when he preached a sermon repudiating the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, a teaching that was highly esteemed by the Church of England. Another dispute involving Spurgeon was the Downgrade Controversy. Near the end of his life, theological liberalism had invaded his denomination, denying evangelical doctrines such as Jesus’ atonement and the inspiration of Scripture. Spurgeon fought vigorously against these unorthodox beliefs, using both his pen and pulpit. Spurgeon was never one to shy away from a dispute when the truth of Scripture was at stake.

² J.C. Carlile, *C.H. Spurgeon: An Interpretative Biography* (London: The Kingsgate Press, 1933), 160.

were burned as well as boycotted by those living in the Southern United States.

Why did Spurgeon so adamantly oppose slavery when it cost him so much? Why was he quick to denounce slaveholders and embrace former slaves as friends? This paper will argue that Spurgeon despised slavery and its advocates because the practice contradicted his understanding of Scripture. The Bible taught him that every person, regardless of his or her race or class, was a human being made in the image of God, and was worthy of honor and respect. The first section of this paper will recount the historical details surrounding the Slavery Controversy of 1860, as well as Spurgeon's interactions with former slaves. The second section will present Spurgeon's anthropology, specifically as it relates to his aggressive stance against slavery, by examining his published works. This section will argue that Spurgeon's view of humanity, as revealed in Scripture, drove him to oppose this particular injustice.

Spurgeon and the Slavery Controversy of 1860

Spurgeon's Condemnation of Slavery

In 1833, the year before Charles Spurgeon was born, Parliament passed an Act emancipating slaves throughout the British Empire, except for the territories controlled by the East India Company.³ Although this legislation was approved, it was not implemented until August of the following year, just six weeks after Spurgeon was born.⁴ Thus, Spurgeon was raised in a country that was virtually free from the injustices of slavery.

On December 8, 1859, Spurgeon invited a fugitive slave, John Andrew Jackson, to speak to his congregation at the New Park Street Chapel in London. On that Thursday evening, Jackson recounted the horrors he suffered while living on a slave plantation in South Carolina. His audience was captivated by his address and expressed their disdain for slavery with frequent outbursts of applause.⁵ After his hour-long

³ Marika Sherwood, *After Abolition: Britain and the Slave Trade since 1807* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 14.

⁴ Full emancipation for every British slave was not actualized until 1838. Britain created an apprenticeship program for slaves, which emancipated adult males over the next four years.

⁵ G. Holden Pike, *The Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (London: Cassell & Company, Limited, 1894), 2:324.

discourse, Spurgeon stated his feelings regarding American slavery. He was forthright in his appraisal, calling it the “foulest blot” to have ever soiled a nation. He also indicted American theologians who refused to speak out against it. In his judgment, they had exercised a “wonderful complacency” towards this heinous practice and had lost sight of its evil character. Spurgeon was so bold in his statements against slavery that he went so far as to say that he would not even hold “communion of any sort with those who [were] guilty of it.”⁶

This was not the only time that Spurgeon denounced slavery from his pulpit. Though he never wrote an extensive treatise against the practice, he consistently condemned it in his sermons. For example, in one address delivered in June of 1857, he argued that British subjects are the freest people in the entire world, but they do not possess the same freedoms as the Americans. Unlike those living in the States,

we have not the freedom of beating our slaves to death, or of shooting them if they choose to disobey—though we have not the freedom of hunting men, or the freedom of sucking another man’s blood out of him to make us rich—though we have not the freedom of being worse than devils, which slave-catchers and many slaveholders most certainly are—we have liberty greater than that, liberty against the tyrant mob, as well as against the tyrant king.⁷

Not only did he attack those engaged in slavery, Spurgeon also denounced the horrible effects it had on slaves themselves. In one of his earliest published sermons, the young preacher described his country as a land that is “untainted by the groan of a single slave.”⁸ Unlike America, England did not experience “the tear of a single slave woman shed over her child which has been sold from her.”⁹ The practice of splitting up African families at a slave auction frequently occurred in America and was utterly deplorable in Spurgeon’s eyes.

Perhaps Spurgeon’s strongest denunciation of slavery was delivered in his sermon entitled “Scales of Judgment”. It was delivered on June 12, 1859 and was an exposition of Daniel 5:27, “Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.” Spurgeon made explicit that no one,

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ NPSP 3:229.

⁸ NPSP 1:61.

⁹ NPSP 1:61.

not even kings or emperors, can escape God's judgment. Wicked nations are not exempt either. "National sins demand national punishments."¹⁰ Though America was not explicitly mentioned, it was clearly implied. The London preacher was certain that "the iniquity of slavery [will not] go unpunished" and God would indeed "bring down a red hail of blood upon the nation that still holds the black man in slavery."¹¹ For Spurgeon, this was such a heinous practice that he believed God would certainly judge any nation that refused to repent of it.

It should be noted that Spurgeon's remarks against slavery are somewhat limited, at least in comparison to the other sins he addressed. This was not due to a lack of concern, but rather a lack of necessity. Slavery had already been abolished in Britain for decades when Spurgeon began preaching, and therefore to rail against it was very much like "beating the air."¹² The London preacher had little need to warn his people about this particular sin because it was "the very last crime they [were] likely to commit."¹³

Omitting Spurgeon's Comments on Slavery

Though his sermons were published and purchased in great numbers, Spurgeon's attacks against slavery never made it before American eyes. During the 19th century, the sale of Spurgeon's sermons was a profitable enterprise. At this time, his sermons sold about 25,000 copies each week and brought in a great sum of money.¹⁴ In an effort to avoid the loss of sales, American publishers began intentionally omitting his remarks against slavery.

Once these omissions were discovered, many incorrectly assumed that Spurgeon was the culprit. Some American newspapers concluded that the Baptist preacher had modified his position on the issue of slavery.¹⁵ In order to determine if his views had truly changed, Spurgeon was asked if he knew about or gave consent to the omissions. His response was unambiguous. He emphatically denied editing any of his

¹⁰ NPSP 5:257.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² "Spurgeon On Slavery," *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 3, 1860.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Eric W. Hayden, "Did You Know?" *Christian History*, 29, no. 1 (1991), 2.

¹⁵ Pike, 2:330.

sermons. In a letter that was first published in a British newspaper, Spurgeon clarified that he had “never altered a single sentence in a sermon which has been sent out to [his] American publishers....”¹⁶ He also took the opportunity to clarify that his position had not changed. Spurgeon still abhorred slavery. He wrote, I do from my inmost soul detest slavery anywhere and everywhere, and although I commune at the Lord’s table with men of all creeds, yet with a slave-holder I have no fellowship of any sort or kind.¹⁷

Spurgeon further explained that he would be as likely to receive a murderer as a member of his church as he would a “man-stealer.” In the conclusion of his letter, the Baptist preacher stated that he would continue to reprimand Americans because “the crying sin of a man-stealing people [should] not go unrebuked.”¹⁸

Spurgeon’s Friendship with Former Slaves

An interesting contrast in Spurgeon’s disposition toward slave and slave-owner needs to be made at this point. While Spurgeon refused fellowship with those engaged with slavery, he was not hesitant to embrace former slaves as friends and fellow Christians. Two years after his address at the New Park Street Chapel, John Andrew Jackson published an autobiographical account of his life as a slave and subsequent escape. In his book, *The Experience of a Slave in South Carolina*, he explained how he met Spurgeon through a mutual friend and described the type of relationship they developed after their introduction. Spurgeon was quick to receive both Jackson and his wife as church members. Jackson even regarded Spurgeon as a close friend and personal adviser.¹⁹ In his own words, Spurgeon testified that he was “very happy” to call Jackson a member of his church and that he was a man “well worthy of all confidence and regard.”²⁰

Spurgeon also developed close friendships with other former slaves. One in particular was a man named Thomas L. Johnson. Johnson, an

¹⁶ “Spurgeon On Slavery,” *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 3, 1860.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ John Andrew Jackson, *The Experience of a Slave in South Carolina* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library, 2011), 32.

²⁰ Ibid., 45.

emancipated slave from Virginia, served first as a missionary in Colorado and then in Africa. Before taking on this latter endeavor, he enrolled at the Pastors' College in 1876 where he met the London minister. Johnson, in his autobiography, recounts his first interaction with Spurgeon. He was incredibly anxious beforehand, but Spurgeon's sympathetic kindness, demonstrated by Spurgeon taking him by the hand and inquiring about his well-being, immediately put him at ease. "I at once fell in love with dear Mr. Spurgeon," wrote Johnson. He continued, "I felt so happy in his presence and so at home with him, that I could not help saying, 'Well, thank God he is my friend.'"²¹

After graduation, Johnson left London for the African mission field, but poor health and the death of his wife caused him to return to America after one year of service. Spurgeon gladly wrote a letter of recommendation testifying to his respect and esteem for his dear friend. He concluded his letter by describing Johnson as "a beloved brother in the Lord and should be received as such."²²

Spurgeon also became friends with another former slave and renowned abolitionist, Fredrick Douglass. In 1887, Douglass traveled to London, and while there, he visited the Metropolitan Tabernacle. In personal correspondence with Spurgeon, he stated that he had an "ardent desire" to hear him preach as a result of reading some of his sermons.²³ He also inquired about the origin of a statement he made while crossing the Atlantic Ocean. In regards to the diversity of the human race, Douglass remarked, "we are many as the waves, but we are one as the sea."²⁴ Douglass wanted to know if he had "unconsciously borrowed" the phrase from Mr. Spurgeon because this remark was very similar to a statement Spurgeon made in one of his sermons. While it is difficult to

²¹ Thomas L. Johnson, *Born Three Times*, ed. Paul D. Sporer. (Chester, NY: Bylany Press, 2005), 64.

²² Thomas L. Johnson, "Twenty-Eight Years a Slave: Electronic Edition," Documenting the American South, accessed September 14, 2016, <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/johnson1/johnson.html#ill20>.

²³ C. H. Spurgeon, *C. H. Spurgeon's Autobiography: Compiled from His Diary, Letters, and Records, by His Wife, and His Private Secretary* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1897), 4:176. From this point forward, this work will be referred to as *Autobiography*.

²⁴ Ibid.

determine which one influenced the other in this matter, it is clear that Douglass and Spurgeon exercised a mutual respect for another.

Southerners' Reaction to Spurgeon

The letter Spurgeon wrote condemning slavery and slave-owners was published in the Boston newspaper, *Watchman and Reflector*. It was distributed throughout several American journals, and the reaction was severe. Those living in the Southern States despised Spurgeon and his anti-slavery sentiments. This was made clear in no uncertain terms. One newspaper attacked Spurgeon by describing him as a “beef-eating, puffed-up, vain, over-righteous, pharisaical, English, blab-mouth, ranting preacher of doctrine not found in the Bible.”²⁵ Others labeled him a “delectable scoundrel”²⁶ and a “hell-deserving Englishman” who possessed a corrupt heart.²⁷ While he was still serving as a slave in Virginia, Johnson recalled the animosity that his slave owners expressed toward his future pastor. “He used to hear talk about Spurgeon during the [Civil] war, but he did not stand very high in the estimation of his masters.”²⁸

Not all of the comments coming from the South were derogatory. Some publications exercised restraint and only criticized Spurgeon’s response rather than his character, noting that it was “written in a very bad spirit” and “breathes nothing of the kindness of St. Paul.”²⁹ One writer also indicted Spurgeon’s public letter because it was marked by “uncharitableness” and full of “studied insults to the great body of our Southern countrymen.”³⁰

In addition to being criticized, volumes of Spurgeon’s printed works were burned in the South. *The Montgomery Mail* invited everyone who possessed copies of the “notorious English Abolitionist, Spurgeon, to send them in to the jail yard to be burned...”³¹ This was no idle threat

²⁵ “A Southern Opinion of the Rev. Mr. Spurgeon,” *New York Herald*, March 1, 1860.

²⁶ “Take It Out,” *Bossier Banner*, April 20, 1860.

²⁷ “Take It Out,” *Bossier Banner*, Feb. 24, 1860.

²⁸ Johnson, 71.

²⁹ “Spurgeon’s Sermons: A bonfire,” *Newbern Weekly Progress*, March 20, 1860.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

either. Shortly after this invitation was given, *The Montgomery Mail* reported that, “about sixty volumes of Spurgeon were reduced to smoke and ashes.”³² They also encouraged other southern cities to follow their example by burning these “dangerous books.”³³

Furthermore, physical threats were made against Spurgeon’s life. In addition to calling him a “greasy cockney vociferator,” one newspaper promised to lynch Spurgeon if he ever visited their city:

And if the Pharisaical author should ever show himself in these parts, we trust that a stout cord may speedily find its way around his eloquent throat. He has proved himself a dirty, low-bred slanderer, and ought to be treated accordingly.³⁴

Spurgeon was threatened with a hangman’s noose more than once. Another Southern newspaper promised “...a strong hemp rope for the eloquent throat of an English Spurgeon.”³⁵ One biographer recorded that numerous letters, containing both insults and threats were sent to the Baptist minister.³⁶ These threats were taken seriously. Spurgeon had considered traveling to America in order to preach and lecture, but was advised against it because if he “ventured across the water, he would be mobbed.”³⁷ Another Baptist minister, who traveled from Alabama to London, also strongly advised Spurgeon not to undertake a preaching tour because of the strong opposition he would face from Southerners.³⁸

Along with the death threats and public bonfires, Southerners also stopped purchasing Spurgeon’s printed sermons. Some even declared that anybody caught selling them should be arrested for “circulating incendiary publications.”³⁹ This boycott severely hindered Spurgeon’s ministry endeavors in London. The selling of sermons in America brought in a great sum of money, approximately £600 to £800 each

³² “Book Burning in Montgomery,” *Randolph County Journal*, March 29, 1860.

³³ Pike, 2:332.

³⁴ “The Barbarities of Slavery: Speech of Hon. Charles Sumner,” *Randolph County Journal*, July 05, 1860.

³⁵ William M. Mitchell, *The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom*, (London: Woodfall and Kinder, 1860), 130.

³⁶ Charles Ray, *A Marvellous Ministry: The Story of C. H. Spurgeon’s Sermons 1855-1905*, (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1985), 13.

³⁷ “Slavery in the United States,” *Liberator*, May 20, 1859.

³⁸ “Spurgeon’s Anti-Slavery Mission to America,” *National Era*, Nov. 3, 1859.

³⁹ “Rev. Mr. Spurgeon,” *North Carolinian*, Feb. 18, 1860.

year.⁴⁰ All of these proceeds went back into funding the various ministries of the New Park Street Chapel and, specifically, the Pastors' College. Decades after the controversy had ended, Spurgeon recalled in his autobiography how his denunciations of slavery caused these precious resources to dry up and thus hindered his ability to prepare pastors for ministry.⁴¹

The Aftermath

The boycott was effective in that it had a devastating effect on Spurgeon. He experienced a great amount of stress and anguish over the financial hardship that it placed on his ministry. The verbal attacks weighed heavily on him as well. One of his biographers described this episode as a "great trial" for the Baptist preacher.⁴² Despite this difficulty, however, the abolitionist would not recant or alter his views. Nor would he remain silent. He continued to denounce the practice of slavery throughout the American Civil War and even after it had ended.

Spurgeon also lauded Abraham Lincoln for emancipating American slaves. In the same year of Lincoln's death, Spurgeon praised the deceased president for defeating the "gallant and a mighty foe" known as slavery.⁴³ He also acknowledged that God raised up Lincoln specifically for the purpose of freeing the slaves. Like William Wilberforce, Lincoln was a gift to "the negro slave [who] had borne long years of bondage...."⁴⁴

Decades later, when slavery was outlawed in Brazil in 1888, Spurgeon also celebrated this further abolition. He rejoiced over this good news and encouraged his congregation to do the same. In commenting on this legislation, he reminded his people that "[w]herever slavery exists, it is an awful curse; and the abolition of it is an unspeakable blessing."⁴⁵ Though many things changed over the course of Spurgeon's ministry, his detestation for slavery remained constant.

⁴⁰ Ray, 13.

⁴¹ *Autobiography* 3:138.

⁴² Ray, 14.

⁴³ MTP 11:722.

⁴⁴ MTP 29:243.

⁴⁵ MTP 40:349.

Spurgeon's Anthropology

Having examined the historical details surrounding the Slavery Controversy of 1860, this paper will now investigate Charles Spurgeon's anthropology as it relates specifically to his stance against slavery. It will argue that Spurgeon's strong opposition to slavery is directly connected to his scriptural view of humanity. Because he believed that all humans belong to one race and that every human is made in the image of God, he concluded that slavery is a grievous sin that Christians have a moral obligation to oppose.

Humanity as One Race

One verse that repeatedly surfaced throughout Spurgeon's published works is Acts 17:26. In the seventeenth chapter the book of Acts, the apostle Paul visited the city of Athens on his second missionary journey. While in the city, he conversed with some Greek philosophers about the good news of the gospel. This strange message piqued their interest and consequently they invited him to address the Areopagus. When Paul stood up to deliver his sermon he began by telling them that the Lord of heaven and earth made the world and everything in it. This God also created the entire human race from one man. Though there are many people groups dispersed throughout the world, they all share a common lineage.

This theological truth that Paul asserted is found in Acts 17:26, which reads, "God hath made of one blood all nations that dwell upon the face of the earth." The emphasis of this verse, as one commentator observed, is on the universality of mankind, as well as man's relationship with God. Although there are many different nations, "...they are one in their common ancestry and in their relationship to their Creator."⁴⁶

This verse was foundational to Spurgeon's anthropology. Though he never preached on this one verse specifically, he repeatedly referenced it in many of his published works and drew out specific implications from its meaning. In one of these works, Spurgeon described humanity as one united race by writing,

⁴⁶ John B. Polhill, *Acts*, vol. 26, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 374.

In Holy Scripture all partakers of flesh and blood are regarded as of one family. By the fact of common descent from Adam, all men are of one race, seeing that “God hath made of one blood all nations that dwell upon the face of the earth.” Hence, in the Bible, man is spoken of universally as “thy brother” (Leviticus 19:17; Job 22:6; Matthew 5:23, 24; Luke 17:3; Romans 14:10, etc., etc.); and “thy neighbor” (Exodus 20:16; Leviticus 19:13-18; Matthew 5:43; Romans 13:9; James 2:8); to whom, on account of nature and descent, we are required to render kindness and goodwill.⁴⁷

Here, Spurgeon repeatedly emphasized the oneness of humanity. All human beings, which of course included African slaves, are members of this one race. And since all belong to this singular family, each one should be considered a brother and treated with familial kindness and benevolence.

There are many other instances where Spurgeon characterized humanity as consisting of only one race. In his sermon “The Great Assize,” he explained that “the entire human race” will be gathered and judged by God at the end of this age.⁴⁸ As he described the scene, he mentions that both “father Adam” and “mother Eve” will be present to look upon all of their “offspring.” This “will be the first time in which [Adam] has ever had the opportunity of seeing all his children meet together.”⁴⁹ In another sermon, he reminded his congregation that this type of “brotherhood extends to all ranks, races, and conditions.”⁵⁰ Mankind, according to Spurgeon, is one family united “by the common tie of blood” and therefore all are considered “brethren.”⁵¹

Spurgeon believed that the solidarity of the human race was a biblical truth that many were quick to forget.⁵² When this happened, numerous negative consequences occurred. So what are some implications of

⁴⁷ C. H. Spurgeon, *Till He Come: Communion Meditations and Addresses* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1896), 184-185.

⁴⁸ MTP 18:581.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ MTP 24:131; emphasis added.

⁵¹ MTP 51:243.

⁵² Ibid.

remembering that God hath made of one blood all nations of men? There are at least four, according to Spurgeon. First, since all share a common descent from Adam all are equal. No individual or group of individuals can rightfully claim superiority over another. The one who considers another human “inferior” denies the truth of Acts 17:26.⁵³ So says Spurgeon, “The greatest fools in the world are those who despise other people.”⁵⁴

Second, a different skin color does not exclude one from belonging to the human race. In a sermon about the necessity of taking the gospel overseas, Spurgeon encouraged his people to view the heathens as a fellow human beings. Speaking from their viewpoint he says, “though our skin be of a color less fair than your own...we are...of your kith and kind!” He continued,

we are your brothers...mother Eve is our mother, as well as yours; Adam, too, is the father from whose loins we sprang; and because we are men, the common sympathy of humanity bids you to...come over and help us.⁵⁵

For Spurgeon, possessing a darker color of skin does not exclude one from belonging to the human family.

Third, because every individual belongs to the human race, every death is tragic. In September 1855, Spurgeon referenced a battle that England had recently won.⁵⁶ Though there was much celebration throughout Britain, Spurgeon could not rejoice. For him, even the death of an enemy was a cause of great regret.⁵⁷ The reason for his remorse was that he considered everyone, even adversaries on the battlefield, his brothers. He explained the rationale for his sorrow, “Are we not all made of one flesh? And hath not God ‘made of one blood all nations that dwell upon the face of the earth?’”⁵⁸ Spurgeon could not rejoice over the death

⁵³ Spurgeon, ME, 12 March, Morning.

⁵⁴ MTP 13:609.

⁵⁵ NPSP 4:197.

⁵⁶ The battle mentioned, though not explicitly stated by Spurgeon, was the Battle of the Great Redan, which was fought on September 8, 1855 between Britain and Russia.

⁵⁷ NPSP 1:293.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

of another human being because it was inconsistent with his Christian anthropology.

One final implication that results from the solidarity of mankind is that treating humans with malice or cruelty is sinful. This is one reason why Spurgeon so strongly detested slavery; it regarded fellow human beings in an inhumane way. “[T]o hold our fellow-creatures in bondage is a sin, and a damnable one, inconsistent with grace.”⁵⁹ The type of brutality that commonly accompanied antebellum slavery was forbidden in light of this biblical truth. “You are not to treat men with cruelty...” because “God has made of one blood all nations to dwell upon the face of the earth.”⁶⁰

Humanity Made in the Image of God

In addition to believing that humanity was one race without distinction, Spurgeon also held that everyone who belonged to the human race was made in the image of God. This facet of his anthropology greatly contributed to his belief in the equality of the African slave, as well as his fierce opposition against slavery as an institution. Since every human being, regardless of his or her skin color, was made in the likeness of God, each was worthy of honor and respect, which was something that the practice of slavery denied. Though Spurgeon may have never stated that those of African descent were made in the image of God, he clearly believed they were. This is evidenced by his affirmation that every human being was an image bearer and also by his belief that slaves could have a relationship with God.

One of the clearest passages of Scripture which affirms that humanity was made in the image of God is Genesis 1:26-27.⁶¹ Just as in the case of Acts 17:26, Spurgeon never preached on these verses specifically, but he did reference them often in his published works. After examining these references it is clear that, among other things, Spurgeon affirmed that

⁵⁹ NPSP 6:155.

⁶⁰ MTP 47:579.

⁶¹ The *imago Dei* in man is multi-faceted doctrine that cannot be dealt with at length in this paper because it falls outside its scope and purpose.

mankind was a special creation of God⁶² and that God's image, though marred by sin, was "in every man."⁶³

As an image bearer, every human is worthy of respect, despite his or her physical appearance or circumstances. This connection between the *imago Dei* and being treated with dignity was one that Spurgeon made explicit. While applying the command to "honor all men" which is found in 1 Peter 2:17, Spurgeon stated,

'Honour all men.' What, honor the lower classes? Yes, sir, 'honor all men.' Honour agricultural laborers? Yes, 'all men.' Honour paupers, negroes, crossingsweepers? Yes, 'honor all men.'...Anything in the shape of a man or a woman deserves to be honored, for man was made in the image of God.⁶⁴

This is the most overt instance in which Spurgeon asserted that black persons are human beings made in the image of God, and that thus, like the rest of humanity, they should be treated with equality, dignity, and respect. In another sermon, he makes this connection clear as well, "There is God's image...in every man; and because he is a man, honor him."⁶⁵ These comments demonstrate that, along with those in the previous section, Spurgeon believed every black person belonged to the human race and thus, each one was made in God's image and should be treated accordingly.

Spurgeon's actions attest to the fact that he believed this biblical truth. Not only did he denounce slavery, he also showed honor to fellow image bearers, even though their skin was a different pigment than his own. This is evident in the kindness and cordiality he extended to former slaves, such as John Andrew Jackson and Thomas L. Johnson. As previously mentioned, Johnson noted Spurgeon's amicability towards him and wrote, "God raised up friends to cheer me and help, very memorable amongst them being Mr. Spurgeon."⁶⁶

The assertion that Spurgeon believed every person was made in the image of God can also be demonstrated in that he affirmed everyone

⁶² MTP 30:652.

⁶³ MTP 61:539; emphasis added.

⁶⁴ MTP 23:588; emphasis added.

⁶⁵ MTP 61:539.

⁶⁶ Johnson, 100.

needed a relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ. Like all other members of the human race, Africans had souls, for which Christ died. This is why Spurgeon urged the students of his Pastors' College to consider serving as missionaries in Africa and elsewhere.⁶⁷ He also financially supported several missionaries to South Africa, Ethiopia, and the Congo.⁶⁸

Spurgeon intentionally made his sermons accessible to everyone, even uneducated slaves. He believed that, just like white people, they too needed the gospel, and wanted them to experience salvation. Spurgeon recounts an episode of an interaction he had with a man who was offended by his indiscriminate preaching. He says,

I was once complimented by a person, who told me he believed my preaching would be extremely suitable for blacks — for negroes. He did not intend it as a compliment, but I replied, "Well sir, if it is suitable for blacks I should think it would be very suitable for whites; for there is only a little difference of skin, and I do not preach to people's skins, but to their hearts."⁶⁹

Not only does this anecdote demonstrate that Spurgeon wanted everyone to grasp the good news of the gospel, it also shows that the color of a person's skin was irrelevant in Spurgeon's eyes. All people, regardless of their skin pigment, were made in God's image and thus were capable of responding to the message of the gospel.

The Christian's Duty to Alleviate Suffering

One final component of Spurgeon's anthropology, which contributed to his opposition of slavery, is the scriptural duty of Christians to help fellow humans in need. Spurgeon was a strong advocate and practitioner of social justice. He founded the Stockwell Orphanage, which cared for hundreds of boys and girls, all of whom would otherwise have been roaming the streets of London. Spurgeon also began and oversaw many

⁶⁷ ST 5:364.

⁶⁸ ST 6:139; 5:511; 7:50.

⁶⁹ NPSP 4:397.

other benevolent ministries that cared for the needs of widows, pregnant women, the underprivileged, and alcoholics.⁷⁰ He was rightly concerned with philanthropy because Jesus taught that “we are bound to love and honor all men, simply because they are men.”⁷¹

Spurgeon believed that individual Christians had a moral obligation to help those who were suffering. One place this is demonstrated clearly is in his exposition of the parable of the Good Samaritan. He exhorted his congregation to assist those in need, but especially those whose affliction was not the result of their own vice or folly. “When we see innocent persons suffering as the result of the sin of others,” declared Spurgeon, “our pity should be excited.”⁷² He listed many examples of those who are suffering at the hands of others and even specifically mentioned “the oppressor’s cruelty” as a particular cause of such anguish.⁷³

Furthermore, Spurgeon explained that the Samaritan’s rationale for helping the wounded stranger was grounded in Acts 17:26. He was compelled to act because he “felt that touch of nature which makes all men kin.”⁷⁴ Therefore, it can be safely concluded that Spurgeon’s hard stance against slavery stemmed from this scriptural duty to help fellow humans who are suffering as a consequence of the sins of others.

This duty to love, care, and assist fellow human beings should be extended to all races. The color of one’s skin is an irrelevant factor when exercising Christian charity. “Suffering humanity is to be aided even when it wears the ebon hue,” declared Spurgeon, “and [a] high-handed wrong is to be impeached even when the much despised negro is its victim.”⁷⁵ Neither fear nor self-preservation should interfere with a Christian’s duty to aid others. Like the Good Samaritan the Christian is “under obligation to [help] everybody that is a man.”⁷⁶

The injustices of slavery not only motivated Spurgeon to action, but it also provoked him to anger. As Spurgeon considered the horrific

⁷⁰ Lewis Drummond, *Spurgeon: Prince of Preachers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publishing, 1992), 430-439.

⁷¹ NPSP 3:504.

⁷² MTP 23:440.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ MTP 23:440.

⁷⁵ MTP 11:663.

⁷⁶ MTP 23:441.

treatment of African slaves he burned with fierce indignation. Twenty-six years after the slavery controversy was over Spurgeon, preaching on an imprecatory psalm, asked his congregation,

Did you ever read the story of ‘the middle passage’ in the days of the African slave trade, when the negroes died by hundreds, or were flung into the sea to lighten the ship? Did you ever read of those horrors without praying, ‘O God, let the thunderbolts of thy wrath fall on the men who can perpetrate such enormities’?⁷⁷

This was not the only instance where Spurgeon referenced the middle passage and his righteous indignation toward it. In another sermon, he recounted how a Baptist minister, upon hearing about these atrocities, kneeled down, prayed and asked God to “[l]ift up thy thunderbolt and damn these wretches.”⁷⁸ Spurgeon contrasted his desire for “speedy justice” with divine forbearance, stating that, in light of such cruelty, he was “very thankful to think that [he] had not the handling of the thunderbolts.”⁷⁹

Though Spurgeon understood that he had an obligation to help relieve the physical sufferings of humanity, he was more concerned about alleviating people’s spiritual suffering, which was the result of sin and eternal judgment. Spurgeon’s greatest passion was to see spiritual captives set free through the preaching of the gospel. He understood this was humanity’s greatest need and that of “all bondage and slavery in this world, there is none more horrible than the bondage of sin.”⁸⁰ This was one reason that Spurgeon preached much more about the redemption that is found only in Jesus Christ than he did about the abolition of antebellum slavery.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the historical details surrounding the Slavery Controversy of 1860 as well as Charles Spurgeon’s anthropology as it relates specifically to his uncompromising stance against enslaving African men and women. It has argued that Spurgeon’s opposition to

⁷⁷ MTP 42:541.

⁷⁸ MTP 15:262.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ *Autobiography* 1:84.

slavery is the result of his beliefs that all humans, including black persons, belong to one race and that every human being is made in the image of God and is therefore worthy of dignity and respect. Slavery stands in opposition to these biblical truths, and thus Christians have a moral duty to oppose this kind of suffering. This view of his fellow man is what convinced Spurgeon to use such harsh words to condemn slavery and slave owners; it also is what motivated him to stand by his statements even though they caused him great difficulty.

In Church as it is in Heaven: An Argument for Regenerate and Ethnically Diverse Local Church Membership

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Introduction

“Our ecclesiological convictions set Baptists apart from most other evangelical groups.”¹ I met Jesus in the context of the broadly non-denominational evangelical tradition, but have since become a confessional Baptist by conviction. I have also spent the last eight years serving as a majority (Anglo) pastor in a largely minority neighborhood and church community. One impetus behind this paper, then, is working to sketch the contours of how to be faithfully Baptist in a multiethnic context. But more broadly, beyond the confines of contextual factors, this paper works toward a proposal for how Baptist ecclesiology can uniquely position Baptists to cultivate reconciled diversity in healthy multiethnic local churches. This will take confessional, theological labor. “Sociologists have led the way in researching multiethnic congregations. It would be profitable for more theologians to pursue this area of examination.”² This paper modestly attempts a way toward a biblical and theological proposal that shows the inextricable link between different facets of God’s heart for his church. The formal proposal of this paper is this: a healthy local church, as a proleptic expression of the eschatological church, should have membership that is regenerate and ethnically diverse.

¹ Nathan A. Finn, “Contours of a Healthy Baptist Spirituality,” *Criswell Theological Review* 12:1 (2014): 16.

² Stephen Crouse, “A Missiological Evaluation of Southern Baptist Churches in the United States” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014), 240.

This proposal outlines this way: First, this paper will argue that the local church is a proleptic expression of the eschatological church. Second, this proleptic character implies that the local church's membership should mirror the eschatological church's membership in two specific ways: the membership of a local church should be regenerate and ethnically diverse. Third, this regenerate, ethnically diverse membership is required for the local church's well-being. Fourth, shortcomings in a church's health in these two areas exist as a function of ongoing congregational sanctification in between the inauguration and consummation of the kingdom.

The Proleptic Nature of the Local Church

The section will propose a way of viewing the relationship between the local and the “not-local” church, arguing that an individual local church is a proleptic sign of the eschatological church. This thesis builds upon Miroslav Wolf’s discussion in *After Our Likeness*.³ Wolf sees “proleptic/prolepsis” as bound up with “anticipation”⁴ and “hope,” but also “present experience.”⁵ It is “real anticipation,” of something that is both present (“real”) and future (“anticipation”).⁶ To paraphrase with the words of another theologian, “prolepsis” is “the hope of a future which has already started.”⁷

³ Miroslav Wolf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 127-158. This work has engendered mixed reviews among evangelicals. Negatively, Kevin J. Bidwell, *The Church as the Image of the Trinity: A Critical Evaluation of Miroslav Wolf’s Ecclesial Model* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011) and William M. Schweitzer, “The Church as the Image of the Trinity: A Critical Evaluation of Miroslav Wolf’s Ecclesial Model,” *The Westminster Theological Journal* 74:1 (2012): 209-21. More positively, David Peterson, “After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity,” *Themelios* 24:3 (1999): 90-92. Peterson says, “Exploring first the question of ecclesiality (what makes the church the church), Wolf rightly insists that eschatology is the key” (91).

⁴ Wolf, *After Our Likeness*, 140.

⁵ Ibid., 129.

⁶ Ibid., 140.

⁷ Paul Leer-Salvesen, “Reconciliation Without Violence,” *Studia Theologica* 63:2 (2009): 175.

In Wolf's current discussion, this object of present experience and future hope is the church, which he defines not simply as local or universal, but as eschatological. Wolf argues from Matthew 18:20, "Wherever two or three are gathered in my name," that "assembly" is the constituent element of a church. Wolf unfolds this understanding of the church as "an assembly" by explaining that the church "is the people who in a specific way assemble at a specific place" in the name of Jesus.⁸ In a most fundamental way, "A congregation *is* the body of Christ in the particular locale in which it gathers together."⁹

This concrete local expression does not, however, exhaust the reality of the church. While the universal church "includes all Christians who have lived and are living,"¹⁰ Wolf argues that the conceptions of the church both as local and universal should be seen "within the larger context of the entire eschatological people of God."¹¹ "For both exegetical

⁸ Ibid., 137. "The church is first of all an *assembly*; 'where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them'" (137, emphasis original). Cf. John Webster: "church assembles around the revelatory self-presence of God in Christ through the Spirit, borne to the communion of saints by the writings of the prophets and apostles" ("On Evangelical Ecclesiology," *Ecclesiology* 1:1 [2004]: 32).

⁹ Wolf, 138.

¹⁰ Ibid., 140.

¹¹ Ibid., 141, n. 55. Similarly, the Reformed understanding of the church invisible, defined by Edmund P. Clowney as "all the saints known to God, past, present, and future" (*The Church* [Downer's Grove: InterVarsity, 1995], 109). Cf. Mark Dever, "We can also speak of the *invisible* church, that is, the church as God sees it, or as it will appear on the last day" (*The Church: The Gospel Made Visible* [Nashville, TN: B&H, 2012], 92). Wellum notes that "even though there is only one people of God throughout the ages, there is a redemptive historical difference between OT Israel and the NT church" (Stephen J. Wellum, "Baptism and the Relationship Between the Covenants" in *Believer's Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant in Christ* [Nashville: B&H Academic, 2006], 113). Künig, while not denying the invisible church, emphasizes its visibility, saying, "There has never been such a thing as a completely invisible church [...] A church made up of real people cannot possibly be invisible" (*The Church* [Translated by Ray and Rosaleen Ockenden. New York: Sneed and Ward, 1967], 35). Cf. John Webster: "The church is visible in the sense that it is a genuine creaturely event and assembly, not a purely eschatological polity or culture" ("On Evangelical Ecclesiology," 25).

and theological reasons,” Wolf explains that ecclesiology requires a broader category: “the eschatological people of God assembling themselves from all the nations at particular places.”¹²

This assertion raises the question of the relationship between these two expressions: local and eschatological. Here Wolf introduces “the category of anticipation.”¹³ The local church and the universal church “do overlap insofar as the universal church includes all local churches, and every local church is a part of the universal church.”¹⁴ And both “through their common relation to the Spirit of Christ” are made “into the anticipation of the eschatological gathering of the people of God.”¹⁵

Wolf undergirds this point by arguing that the church is not a collective “one” but “a differentiated unity,” individuals interconnected in “a communion” that exists by virtue of the indwelling Spirit and a common confession.¹⁶ The same Christ, then, who by his Spirit interconnects individuals within a church also interconnects individual churches with one another.¹⁷ And “Christ,” then, “who is present in the local church through his Spirit [...] in this way makes it into the church in a proleptic experience of the eschatological gathering of the people of God.”¹⁸

Wolf’s thesis would seem to be confirmed textually: “But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven” (Hebrews 12:22-

¹² Ibid., 139-140.

¹³ Ibid., 140. Künig sees the anticipatory nature of the church as pointing toward “the definitive reign of God” (96).

¹⁴ Wolf, 140.

¹⁵ Ibid., 141. “The church...is nothing apart from its function as an eschatological community and therefore as an anticipatory sign of God’s coming rule” (Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology, volume 3*. Translated by Geoffrey Bromley [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998], 32; quoted in Ted Peters, “In Memoriam: Wolfhart Pannenberg (1928-2014),” *Dialog: A Journal Of Theology* 53:4 (2014): 365-83.

¹⁶ Wolf, 145-154.

¹⁷ Ibid., 145.

¹⁸ Ibid., 145.

23).¹⁹ Meaning, when the Christian assembly assembles on earth it somehow steps into the reality of the heavenly assembly. William Lane confirms that these verses from Hebrews refer to the redeemed heavenly assembly.²⁰ Lane argues that “the assembly in view [...] is an eschatological or heavenly gathering.”²¹ James W. Thompson says, “Although the inheritance of the heavenly city lies in the future [...], the community is already the participant in worship that spans heaven and earth.”²²

This returns us to Wolf’s earlier assertion, “A congregation is the body of Christ in the particular locale in which it gathers together.”²³ This means that prolepsis does not reduce the local church to a community of future hope alone, but envisions the local church as the actual future itself assembled in the present. To this point, Wolf defines the local

¹⁹ Biblical citations are taken from the *English Standard Version* unless otherwise indicated.

²⁰ William L. Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*. Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 47B (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991), 468. Luke Timothy Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, 2012), says that “the Mount Zion spoken of here is not the seat of temporal rule over Israel, but of God’s eschatological rule through Christ” (331). Cf. Craig R. Koester, “Hebrews, Rhetoric, and the Future” in Eric Farrel Mason and Kevin B. McCruden, *Reading the Epistle to the Hebrews: A Resource for Students* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 113.

²¹ Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, 469. Cf. “Believers are, in the present, entering and receiving eschatological realities, the continuing reception of which will surely result in the final, full realization of those realities” (Alexander Stewart, “Cosmology, Eschatology, and Soteriology in Hebrews: A Synthetic Analysis,” *Bulletin For Biblical Research* 20:4 [2010]: 554).

²² James W. Thompson, “The Ecclesiology of Hebrews,” *Restoration Quarterly* 56:3 (2014): 145; Patrick Graham Willis, “Multi-site Churches and Their Undergirding Ecclesiology: Questioning Its Baptist Identity and Biblical Validity” (PhD Diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014), says “as believers were being added into the eschatological church (e.g. Acts 2:41-47) via salvation and into the local church via baptism they were concurrently partaking of membership in the eschatological church and the local church” (191).

²³ Wolf, 138. “The local church does not merely belong to the church, the local church is the church. The whole church can only be understood in terms of the local church and its concrete actions” (Küng, 85).

church as “a proleptic *experience* of the eschatological gathering.”²⁴ And again, “Participation in the communion of the triune God, however, is not only an object of hope for the church, but also its present experience.”²⁵ This steers Wolf’s thesis away from the danger of what Michael Horton calls eschatological “reductionism.” Horton, in critiquing anticipatory eschatology as seen in Moltmann and Pannenberg, provides a reminder that prolepsis narrowly defined does not exhaust the New Testament eschatological vision: “In contrast to all reductionism, Pauline eschatology insists that the new age actually *arrives* in Christ as ‘the firstfruits.’”²⁶ Thus, the local church is a real manifestation of the eschatological community. It *is* the eschatological community, not “merely” an anticipatory assembly, but a genuine “foretaste” of “the eschatological gathering.”²⁷

On this point, P.T. O’Brien concedes that the exact nature of “the relationship between the local church and the heavenly gathering [...] is

²⁴ Wolf, 145, emphasis added.

²⁵ Ibid., 129.

²⁶ Michael Horton, *Covenant and Eschatology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 37. In this work, Horton effectively exposes the shortcomings of the “merely” proleptic and anticipatory eschatological visions of Pannenberg and Moltmann: “It is clear in Paul’s writings that the ‘new’ that has come is not merely anticipatory or revelatory, but effective” (38). Cf. Jürgen Moltmann, “Anticipations are always a preliminary taking possession of what is to come for other people and other things” (*The Church in the Power of the Spirit*. Translated by Margaret Kohl. [New York: Harper and Row, 1977], 195). John W. Cooper explicates the panentheistic visions of Moltmann (explicitly) and Pannenberg (implicitly), in which the Trinity itself is ontologically incomplete until the union of God, his people, and creation in the eschaton. (*Panentheism: The Other God of the Philosophers: From Plato to the Present* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006], 237-281). Likewise, “Viewing the resurrection as proleptic event, Pannenberg underscores the ontological priority of the future,” ([R. David Rightmire, “Pannenberg’s Quest for the Proleptic Jesus,” *The Asbury Theological Journal* 44:1 [1989]: 64]. The shortcomings of this approach are ably countered by Horton.

²⁷ Wolf, 156-157. This would seem to invalidate the critique of Avery Robert Dulles of “such an anticipatory ecclesiology” as insufficient (“After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity,” *First Things* 87 [1998]: 52).

nowhere specifically spelled out.”²⁸ That said, O’Brien argues, “Perhaps it is best to suggest that the local congregations or house-groups are earthly manifestations of the heavenly assembly.”²⁹ The local assembly “manifests” or “shows” the heavenly assembly, what Edmund Clowney calls, “the Lord’s true assembly.”³⁰ The heavenly assembly fully exists eschatologically, and the space-and-time-bound local assembly expresses and signals this eschatological heavenly reality in the constraints of space and time. As Mark Dever says, “The picture of people assembling in one place for worship points the world to this marvelous end-of-history congregation.”³¹

Gregg Allison’s appropriation of Michael Horton for his discussion on church discipline would seem to support such a thesis on prolepsis.³² Allison, referencing Horton, refers to church discipline being “a proleptic and declarative sign of eschatological judgment.”³³ Consistency would seem to indicate that if the actions of the local assembly function proleptically so should the assembling of that assembly itself function proleptically. Both in its doing and in its being a local church anticipates an eschatological reality.

If this is true, what is the shape of the local church’s anticipation of the eschatological assembly? What does it look like? This question requires an answer to a prior question: what is the character of the eschatological assembly? Once this character is established, the character of the faithful local church can be defined and pursued more fully. This

²⁸ P.T. O’Brien, “The Church as a Heavenly and Eschatological Entity” in D.A. Carson, ed. *The Church in the Bible and the World* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002), 97. Recent controversy notwithstanding, O’Brien remains a helpful voice in this discussion. So also Küng: “the relationship between the local churches and the whole church is not laid down, either theologically or juridically, in the New Testament” (85).

²⁹ O’Brien, “The Church as a Heavenly and Eschatological Entity,” 97.

³⁰ Clowney, *The Church*, 32.

³¹ Dever, *The Church*, 134. “Since Christ is entirely present in every congregation of worship, every congregation of worship held by the local community is in the fullest sense God’s ecclesia, Christ’s body” (Küng, 235).

³² Gregg Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 181.

³³ Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 181. Here he cites Horton, *Covenant and Eschatology*, 272.

will enable the local church to practice greater eschatological fidelity in its worship and witness, as it more fully embraces the reality that already defines it.

Perhaps the ancient credo best summarizes the biblical witness to the eschatological gathering's character. The eschatological assembly is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. The dramatic scene of the heavenly assembly envisioned by John the Revelator shows this: "a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes" (Rev 7:9).³⁴

The assembly here is one, united, "a great multitude," singular; not many fractionalized tribes, but one made up of many, diversity defined by unity and unity defined by diversity. The assembly here is holy, "clothed in white robes."³⁵ Here is a vision of an assembly altogether pure, redeemed, by and before the Lamb who is centered in the breeze of the many waving branches of palm. The assembly here is catholic, universal, the pan-ethnocultural people promised to Abraham.³⁶ The assembly here is apostolic, for how would this vision be known without the testimony of the apostle?

What, then, will characterize the local church's faithful proleptic expression of and witness to the character of the eschatological assembly? The Reformation *sine qua non* marks of the church, gospel-preaching and rightly ordered ordinances, function as a witness to Christ

³⁴ Cf. Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 316-20; Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, rev. ed. New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 162; Leon Morris, *Revelation*. Tyndale New Testament Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 115; Brian K. Blount, *Revelation: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, 2009), 150. Gordon D. Fee, *Revelation: A New Covenant Commentary* (Cambridge, UK: The Lutterworth Press, 2013), 111.

³⁵ "That they are white probably points us to justification. The saved stand before God perfect in the righteousness which Christ supplies" (Morris, *Revelation*, 115).

³⁶ "Earlier John declares that the Lamb is worthy because he redeemed (i.e., liberated) every tribe, tongue, people, and nation (5:9). Though John orders the elements differently in 7:9, he clearly has the same universal, believing congregation in mind" (Blount, *Revelation*, 150).

until the consummation of the kingdom and gathering of the nations. These are the activities that define the local church's being until Christ returns. What, however, should define the constituent identity of the local church's intention to gather together as a church in light of its proleptic nature? Next I will argue that the character of the eschatological assembly is best expressed in a local church composed of regenerate and ethnically diverse members.

Regenerate Church Membership

Membership as an idea is implied in the nature of the eschatological assembly itself. The Apostle describes it hyperbolically as an innumerable multitude, appearing infinite, a much greater number than the 144,000 just mentioned in Revelation 7:8.³⁷ Though so obvious as to be tautological, the very existence of such a multitude implies the existence of members of that multitude. Without members, without constituent individuals, the multitude does not exist. And at some point, despite the prophetic hyperbole of "innumerable," the multitude exists as a countable gathering of those constituent individuals. Therefore, local church membership itself is implied by the nature of the eschatological gathering.³⁸

³⁷ Osborne, *Revelation*, 318; Fee, *Revelation*, 111.

³⁸ On further arguments for membership *per se*, cf. John Mark Yeats, "More Than Fifteen Million Southern Baptists? Recovering Regenerate Church Membership," in Jason K. Allen, ed. *The SBC in the 21st Century: Reflection, Renewal, and Recommitment* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2016), 96-98; Jeremy M. Kimble, "'That His Spirit May Be Saved': Church Discipline as a Means to Repentance and Perseverance" (PhD Diss. Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013), 184-187; Willis, "Multi-site Churches and Their Undergirding Ecclesiology," 182-188. Yeats says, "While true that membership as a formal term is not found in the text, the concept is clearly presented and used from the earliest inception of the church (96); also Willis says membership "does not arise from a single proof-text, but is ascertained from a systematic investigation of the corporate nature of the new covenant" (184). It is interesting that Volf himself argues, "The boundary between those who belong to the church and those who do not belong should not be drawn too sharply" (Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 148, n. 84). Better on this point is Yeats: "Christianity clearly functions as a bounded set with thresholds of entry centered on living according to the lordship of Jesus Christ" (99).

Moreover, the nature of the eschatological assembly would seem to demand that the membership of the church not only be constituted as membership, but as a regenerate membership.³⁹ Only those in Christ should constitute the membership of the local congregation, because only those in Christ constitute the membership of the eschatological congregation. The vision of the multitude in Revelation 7 clearly demonstrates this point. “These are the ones who have come out of the great tribulation” (7:14); this, however, does not exclude the rest of the people of God. “The larger context favors a point in time when the complete number of the redeemed stand before God.”⁴⁰ Those who “have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (7:14) compose this multitude. This is a specific number of specific individuals: those who have been washed and regenerated.⁴¹ The faith-full, the believers. The eschatological assembly is a believing, *having been* (previously) regenerated assembly. And so should the local assembly be.

This ideal of a regenerate local assembly, “regenerate church membership,” has been championed by Baptists and rightly called “the Baptist mark of the church.”⁴² A fundamental component of this position

³⁹ Cf. Russell D. Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ: The New Evangelical Perspective* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 139-140.

⁴⁰ Mounce, *Revelation*, 164. Cf. Morris argues that most likely “the throng comprises all the saved and not simply the martyrs or some other group” (*Revelation*, 117).

⁴¹ “The complete efficacy of Christ’s atoning death is being strongly asserted” (Morris, 117).

⁴² John Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005), 81. Cf. James Leo Garrett Jr., “Seeking a Regenerate Church Membership,” *Southwestern Journal Of Theology* 3:2 (1961): 25-36; Tom Nettles, *The Baptists: Key People Involved in Forming a Baptist Identity*, vol. 1 (Ross-shire: Scotland, 2005), 14; H. Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 1987), 75-76; Robert G. Torbet, *A History of the Baptists*, 3rd ed. (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1963), 17; Greg Wills, “The Church: Baptists and Their Churches in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries” in Mark E. Dever, ed. *Polity: Biblical Arguments on How to Conduct Church Life* (Washington D.C.: Nine Marks Ministries, 2001), 17. Mark Medley notes, “Baptists will praise Volf for arguing that the local church alone is the church in the strictly theological sense and is not subordinate to any other ecclesial authority” (“After Our

is the assumed proleptic nature of the local assembly as an anticipatory expression of the nature of the eschatological assembly. For example, John Hammett argues, "Simply as a matter of logic, if the universal church is composed of all believers, it seems that the goal of local churches should be to come as close to that standard as possible."⁴³ Similarly a recent volume calling Baptists back to this ideal of regenerate membership is titled by this eschatological connection: *On Earth as It Is in Heaven: Reclaiming Regenerate Church Membership*.⁴⁴ This book calls the local church to "seek with all the integrity it can muster to be an accurate reflection of the coming church universal, the eschatological church."⁴⁵

Thus the local church which lives and moves, exists and acts, with the most comprehensive eschatological fidelity will constitute itself as a believers' church. It will institute a definite boundary of membership and the constituent individuals of its membership will be those who have bathed in the blood of Jesus.⁴⁶ Thus, this one key aspect of baptistic ecclesiology is a direct implication of the proleptic nature of the local church. Next, we will explore a second direct implication: the same local congregation that constitutes itself narrowly of regenerate members will likewise constitute itself broadly of ethnically diverse regenerate members.

Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity," *Review & Expositor* 96:2 [1999]: 311).

⁴³ Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches*, 83.

⁴⁴ Wyman Lewis Richardson, *On Earth as It Is in Heaven: Reclaiming Regenerate Church Membership* (Cape Coral, FL: Founders' Press, 2011). The present paper, titled after my own theological vision, plays on this prayer, "In church as it is in heaven."

⁴⁵ Richardson, *On Earth As It Is in Heaven*, 5.

⁴⁶ "We need to seek a recovery of Baptist principles. On regenerate church membership, for instance, there has been too much compromise. Baptist ecclesiology is not merely a matter of church organization. It stands at the very center of the Baptist vision and goes to the very heart of our theology" (R. Albert Mohler, Jr. "Baptist Identity: Is There a Future?" *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 9:1 [2005]: 8).

Ethnic Diversity

This section will argue that a proleptic and eschatological local church ecclesiology implies not only the normative purity of regenerate membership but also a normative diversity of ethnically differing members.⁴⁷ In other words, a local church, as an anticipatory sign of the eschatological congregation, should be (not simply may be) diverse across boundaries of ethnicity.⁴⁸

Briefly, some terms must be defined. First, “race” is now usually understood as “a concept primarily concerned with biology.”⁴⁹ Second, “culture” can be defined as the values and artifacts produced by a specific population.⁵⁰ Third, these two ideas cohere in the idea of “ethnicity.” Hutchison and Smith note the uncertainty surrounding the term “ethnicity,” which is derived from the Greek ἔθνος.⁵¹ They note the conflation of both “cultural community” and a “sense of ancestry and nativity” associated with the idea.⁵² Denise Kimber Buell notes that “the

⁴⁷ Scot McKnight says that “God has designed the church—and this is the heart of Paul’s mission—to be a *fellowship of difference and differents*” (*A Fellowship of Differents* [Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2014], 20, emphasis original). He uses the metaphor of “a salad bowl” (18) to describe the ethnicity that should typify the local church.

⁴⁸ Contra Richard Willson Hardison, “A Theological Critique of the Multiethnic Church Movement: 2000-2013” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014). Hardison argues that the relationship between the heavenly and early church represents “a point of discontinuity” and that local churches are not required to imitate the ethnic diversity of the heavenly assembly (143-146).

⁴⁹ Elizabeth Tonkin, Maryon McDonald, Malcom Chapman, “History and Ethnicity,” in John Hutchison and Anthony D. Smith, ed. *Ethnicity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 21. Cf. Dewi Hughes, “Following Jesus as His Community in the Broken World of Ethnic Identity,” *Evangelical Review Of Theology* 31:4 (2007): 331-341.

⁵⁰ James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 29.

⁵¹ John Hutchison and Anthony D. Smith, eds. *Ethnicity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 4.

⁵² Ibid., 5.

majority opinion about ethnicity” includes “claims of common kinship.”⁵³ But also, “most definitions [...] acknowledge that other factors (language, place, religion, foodways) may be claimed by a given community as more central than kinship or descent.”⁵⁴ Thus, “ethnicity” exists at the intersection of biological and sociological and cultural identity.⁵⁵ Moreover, closely connected would be the idea of socio-economic status or “class.”⁵⁶

This understanding of ethnicity as occupying the conjunction of race and culture makes the term “multiethnic” as opposed to “multiracial” or “multicultural” preferable when discussing congregational diversity.⁵⁷ Likewise, as Mark DeYmaz and Harry Li note, this term more precisely retains the biblical imperative, μαθητεύσατε πάντα τὰ ἔθνη.⁵⁸ In 2000, the watershed publication of *Divided by Faith* catalyzed the conversation

⁵³ Denise Kimber Buell, *Why This New Race: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 9.

⁵⁴ Buell, *Why This New Race*, 9.

⁵⁵ I was first introduced to ethnicity as this intersection in a talk by Steven Tamayo. (Steven Tamayo, “Biracial” [video of lecture], The Gospel and Race Conference, January 18, 2014, <https://youtu.be/GueAVyv-PwE>). Cf. J. Daniel Hays, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race* (Downer’s Grove: InterVarsity, 2003), 23.

⁵⁶ For the purposes of the discussion below, diverse constituencies of socio-economic status will be implied categorically in the terms “multiethnic” and “ethnic diversity.” Likewise, linguistic differences are assumed in the idea of multiethnicity, but the specific challenges of and solutions to those differences are outside the bounds of this paper. Though the formal boundaries of such concepts may not lie within the technical concept of “ethnicity,” for present purposes they have been bundled together for “rhetorical efficiency.” Cf. Hughes, “Following Jesus as his Community in the Broken World of Ethnic Identity,” 341.

⁵⁷ Cf. Kathleen Garces-Foley, *Crossing the Ethnic Divide: The Multiethnic Church on a Mission*. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2007), 12-13.

⁵⁸ Mark DeYmaz and Harry Li, *Leading a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church: Seven Common Challenges and How to Overcome Them* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 39. DeYmaz and Li also note that it also avoids coordinating congregational diversity with the secular ideal of “multiculturalism.” Various authors use various terms more or less synonymously with the present paper’s definition of “ethnic” and “multiethnic.”

surrounding congregational segregation.⁵⁹ The follow up a few years later, *United by Faith*, defined “a racially mixed congregation as one in which no one racial group is 80 percent or more of the congregation.”⁶⁰ While, of course the New Testament’s eschatological metric of an “innumerable” assembly composed of “every” group does not permit dogmatism on percentages, this 80/20 boundary has developed a solid pedigree and remains a helpful reference point.⁶¹

Given these definitions, this section will argue that the diverse character of the eschatological assembly specifically implies that individual local congregations should likewise be diverse. The comprehensively diverse character of the heavenly assembly is clear: “from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages.” A quartet of population markers defines this diversity: ἔθνος (nation, people, foreigner, Gentile),⁶² φυλή (blood-relative, tribe),⁶³ λαός (people, people-group),⁶⁴ γλῶσσα (tongue, language).⁶⁵ The discussion above staked out the boundaries of “ethnicity” such that it roughly encompasses all four of these characteristics. Put another way, the heavenly assembly does not permit any point of human separation or segregation other than the

⁵⁹ Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁶⁰ Curtiss Paul DeYoung, Michael O. Emerson, George Yancey, and Karen Chai Kim, *United by Faith: The Multiracial Congregation as an Answer to the Problem of Race* (New York: Oxford, 2004), 2.

⁶¹ Cf. DeYmaz and Li, *Leading a Healthy Multi-ethnic Church*, 24. So also Soong-Chan Rah, *The Next Evangelicalism: Freeing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity* (Downer's Grove: InterVarsity, 2009), 85. Additionally, the importance of diverse leadership is emphasized by James David Noble who says that “a multi-ethnic congregation” is “one that has a diversified leadership as well as a diverse membership” (“Preaching to the Great Multitude: An Examination of the Impact of Multi-ethnicity in Select Evangelical Congregations in America” [PhD Dissertation, Mid-America Baptist Theology Seminary, 2013], 5, n. 6). Cf. Crouse, “A Missiological Evaluation,” 241.

⁶² Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 276.

⁶³ Ibid., 1069.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 586.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 201.

watershed of the bloodshed of Christ. “The church itself is not made up of natural ‘friends.’ It is made up of natural enemies.”⁶⁶

The New Testament positions such reconciliation of diverse ethnicities very close to the heart of the gospel itself. Paul’s argument in Ephesians 2:11-22 points this direction.⁶⁷ The exposition of the gospel in 2:1-10 in terms of new life in Christ functions as a ground for the next element in the argument, beginning in 2:11: “Therefore, remember...” The Apostle calls for Gentiles to recollect their former status: “separated,” “alienated,” “strangers,” hopeless, God-less (2:12). But the gospel of the blood of Jesus has brought them near (2:13), a point further explained in 2:14: “For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility.” Two actions, unification of separated groups and destruction of separating barriers, Paul further explains by the purpose clause, introduced by *ivα*, “so that he might create one new humanity” (2:15) and “he might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross” (2:16).

Thus, God, in the gospel, purposes to reconcile separated humanity to himself and to one another “through the violent, bloody death of Jesus.”⁶⁸ Yes, divisions and reconciliation between Jews and Gentiles were more than simply “ethnic” or “racial,” being fundamentally “theological.”⁶⁹ Still, the theology of both groups required reordering in light of the Gospel, whether in large parts true but incomplete (Jews) or

⁶⁶ D.A. Carson, *Love in Hard Places* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002), 61, quoted in Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 131.

⁶⁷ On Ephesians 2:11-22 see Lynn Cohick, *Ephesians*, New Covenant Commentary Series. (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2010) 71-79; Jarvis J. Williams says that “this is perhaps the strongest NT text that addresses racial reconciliation” (“The Post-Racial Church: A Biblical Framework for Multiethnic Reconciliation,” *Themelios* 37:2 [2012]): 408).

⁶⁸ Jarvis J. Williams, “Violent Ethno-racial Reconciliation: A Mystery in Ephesians and Its Jewish Martyrological Background,” *Criswell Theological Review* 12:2 (2015): 125; Gary Gromacki, “Paul’s Ecclesiology of Ephesians,” *Journal Of Ministry & Theology* 19:1 (2015): 82-115 explores the range of ecclesiological metaphors in Ephesians.

⁶⁹ “We must take care, then, today when drawing parallels with current ethnic tensions or racial issues. These analogies are useful but somewhat limited in that no two other groups today carry the theological weight of the Jew/Gentile division” (Cohick, *Ephesians*, 88).

largely misguided (non-proselyte Gentiles). Thus the implications for current discussions of reconciliation still pertain.⁷⁰ The breadth of such diversity shows through in a *locus classicus* on this theme, Galatians 3:28, which permits no division of religious, ethnic, or cultural heritage (“neither Jew nor Greek”) or socio-economic or hierarchical stratum (“neither slave nor free, [...] no male and female”).⁷¹

These texts sing in harmony with the song of Revelation 5:9: “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.” The glory of the slain Lamb is here directly related to the comprehensively diverse congregation he has assembled by virtue of his blood. And, thus, the local church proleptically testifies to and expresses its own eternal nature as it becomes increasingly ethnically diverse.

Diversity as part of the nature of the church, however, should not lead a church to become simultaneously “unfaithful to its own nature.”⁷² This is not diversity for its own sake. It is diversity for Christ’s sake, for his glory in the heavens (Rev. 5:9-10); as Ephesians 3:10 likewise explains that the glory of God is especially displayed in the church. Contextually the church in Ephesians 3:10 must be understood in light of the reconciled diversity expounded by the Apostle throughout the epistle (chapter 2 and elsewhere).⁷³ God receives glory in his church, especially in his ethnically reconciled church. “A unified diverse church is God’s plan of redemption.”⁷⁴ Thus, just as the purity of a local church’s regenerate

⁷⁰ Hays, *From Every People and Nation*, 191; Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 245.

⁷¹ Stephen J. Lennox, “One in Christ”: Galatians 3:28 and the Holiness Agenda” *Evangelical Quarterly* 84:3 (2012), notes how this verse began to be newly appropriated for egalitarian uses following Emancipation (205). Cf. Lynn H. Cohick, “Tyranny, Authority, Service: Leadership and Headship in the New Testament” *Ex Auditu* 28 (2012): 77; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Galatians: Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 257.

⁷² Küng, 301.

⁷³ O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 246.

⁷⁴ Cohick’s entire quote is worth consideration: “Paul does not preach a ‘gospel’ message and then tack onto it an optional picture of a multi-cultural church. Instead, the gospel message in Ephesians unfolds by stressing forgiveness of sins

membership testifies to the character of the one, holy, catholic eschatological assembly, so also does the local church's ethnic diversity.⁷⁵ Both are constituent elements of an eschatologically faithful congregation. Though neither belong to the *sine qua non* of the local church's essence, both stand as key elements of a local church's health and well-being.

A Healthy Church: Pure and Diverse

Church health depends in part upon its membership being an ethnically diverse congregation of regenerate believers. This argument builds upon Jason Duesing's framework of ecclesiological triage, defining the *esse* of the church by the Reformation marks of Word and sacrament/ordinance, along with a mutual intentionality of believers to gather as a church.⁷⁶ All of these first tier elements constitute the *sine qua non* of the local church's being.⁷⁷ In the context of the argument of the present paper, they would be required for the church's *esse* because their absence would render membership itself a non-existent category, thus dissolving the need to discuss the nature of membership.

Secondarily, belonging to the category of *bene esse* is "an almost unlimited list of items one would affirm aid the health of churches."⁷⁸ Here are listed: modes and practices of the ordinances, leadership, church discipline, regenerate membership, mission, and expository preaching. Here this paper proposes the addition of "multiethnic" to "regenerate" as

through Christ's blood (1:7) as a mystery (1:9), which in 3:3–10 is further explained as Gentiles becoming heirs with Jews in Christ. Forgiveness includes not simply a 'not guilty' stamp, but also a new group identity. This reality is an inseparable part of the gospel message, not an optional politically correct stance. A unified diverse church is God's plan of redemption" (Cohick, *Ephesians*, 91).

⁷⁵ Both regeneracy and multiethnicity building on the apostolic foundation express oneness, holiness, catholicity.

⁷⁶ Jason G. Duesing, "A Denomination Always for the Church: Ecclesiological Distinctives as a Basis for Confessional Cooperation," in Allen, *The SBC in the 21st Century*, 120.

⁷⁷ "Items essential to a true church" (Duesing, 120). Cf. Volf, 131.

⁷⁸ Duesing, 119. Cf. Chad Owen Brand and R. Stanton Norman, *On Church Government: Five Views on Church Polity* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2004), 217; Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 263.

an equally constituent element of the local church's *bene esse* in terms of membership.

One might contemplate the two categories by way of theological analogy, with the church's *esse* aligning with individual justification and its *bene esse* with individual progressive sanctification. Justification is the *sine qua non* of an individual's Christian identity. It stands as an either/or reality. Progressive sanctification, however, is the steady and often uneven shaping of a Christian into his or her eschatological self in Christ. It stands constantly in-process-of-being-completed, to a greater or lesser degree, across time. Similarly, the local church will be increasingly shaped in its health (or "sanctified"), but its conformity to its eschatological nature will always be incomplete until the eschaton itself. And therefore a local church whose membership is in part unregenerate or wrongly homogeneous may be irregular or disordered, unhealthy and in need of sanctification.⁷⁹ As Jürgen Moltmann says, "The notion of anticipation [...] picks up the ancient doctrine of sanctification."⁸⁰ Yet this in-process-of-being-sanctified church nonetheless stands "justified" as a true church.

That said, the continued absence of a noticeable progression of sanctifying grace in an individual's life subjectively may indicate the absence of that person's justified standing objectively. Likewise, an obstinate and prevailing unwillingness to pursue purity and diversity can compromise the very *esse* of a church, if it reveals a sufficiently fatal compromise of the gospel. In other words, tolerating sin generally and ethnic alienation or discrimination specifically can compromise the very *esse* of a church itself. As Volf says, "Peter did not merely behave badly by refusing fellowship to Gentile Christians, but betrayed the truth of the Gospel itself (Gal. 2:11-14); so also is a discriminatory church not merely a bad church, but no church at all; it is unable to do justice to the catholicity of the eschatological people of God."⁸¹ How then does a church navigate the sometimes stormy waters of its own sanctification? How does it sing along in harmony with the dissonant music of its own stumbling pursuit of God's best? Next we will explore an answer.

⁷⁹ Of course, this is true of every true church, whether committed to ethnically diverse and regenerate membership or not. "Not that they have already attained it or been made perfect," as the Apostle might have said it.

⁸⁰ Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, 24.

⁸¹ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 158.

Inaugurated Purity and Diversity

Over the past generation inaugurated eschatology has become well established, and the consensus is that “eschatological tension was a characteristic feature of NT theology.”⁸² Prolepsis helps describe more specifically the character of this tension. As quoted above, Paul Leer-Salvesen explains “prolepsis” as “the hope of a future which has already started.”⁸³ Prolepsis, in this way, can be seen as expressing both the subjective and objective hope of the church in its existence “in-between” the kingdom’s inauguration and consummation. Within this “in-between” the church must explore and express the sanctifying work of God in its midst.⁸⁴ The church must constantly renew its apprehension of what it means that it has “already come to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God (Heb. 12:22), but at the same [it seeks] the coming city (Heb. 13:14).”⁸⁵

This space between “already” and “not yet” helps to explain the failure of a local church to arrive in space and time at the indicative and imperative purity and diversity that eschatologically defines it. As Volf says, “The church reflects in a broken fashion the eschatological communion of the entire people of God with the triune God in God’s new

⁸² Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 96. Cf. F.F. Bruce, “Eschatology,” *London Quarterly & Holborn Review* 183 (1958): 99-103. Here Bruce outlines the emergence of this consensus in its nascent stages, crediting Oscar Cullmann and W.G. Kümmel. Most evangelicals have been deeply dependent on the work of George Eldon Ladd, *The Presence of the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974); *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974).

⁸³ Leer-Salvesen, “Reconciliation Without Violence,” 175.

⁸⁴ “Ecclesiology is the theological reflection on the mystery of God’s desire to be among us. More specifically [...] the systematic reflection on the shape which this dwelling of God takes in the community of Christ that journeys between Pentecost and *parousia*” (George Vandervelde, “The Challenge of Evangelical Ecclesiology,” *Evangelical Review Of Theology* 27:1 [2003]: 10).

⁸⁵ Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 34. Darryl Wooldridge and Daniel Lioy “Living in the Not-Yet” *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 71:1 (2015): 1-9, articulate an over-realized eschatology when they say the “not-yet”, experienced ‘now’, ushers in the kingdom life and a glorification of God in his creation especially in human beings in *prolepsis*” (8).

creation.”⁸⁶ Inaugurated eschatology explains this often unfaithful and fractured reflecting, because the church lives in a “transitional period” which “combines characteristics of both [...] the old age prior to the coming of the Messiah and the age to come, the eternal state.”⁸⁷

First, churches fail at the eschatological ideal of regenerate membership. Of course, some true churches (marked by the presence of the gospel, the ordinances, and mutual commitment to gather as the church) willingly and heartily reject regenerate membership as an imperative category.⁸⁸ Here the inaugurated nature of theological understanding provides explanatory help in terms of the noetic limitations of the present age. Here “we know in part” and such ecclesiological short-circuiting is explained by the fact that the consummated kingdom is yet-to-come. But when it does fully arrive, and the purified people of God gather around the throne, Baptists can say cheekily yet wholeheartedly, “We will all be Baptists then.”⁸⁹

Still, Baptist churches themselves fail to attain to their own ideals.⁹⁰ Of course, some may “not evaluate carefully whether people believe before joining the church.”⁹¹ But even those passionately committed to this ideal fall short. Speaking regarding corrective church discipline, Oliver O’Donovan’s point pertains to the admission of members, in that a church’s “judgments are vulnerable to the hiddenness of the future: in that nobody knows what an individual will become.”⁹² This unknown of

⁸⁶ Volf, 235.

⁸⁷ Alexander E. Stewart, “The Temporary Messianic Kingdom in Second Temple Judaism and the delay of the Parousia: Psalm 110:1 and the Development of Early Christian Inaugurated Eschatology,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 59:2 (2016): 270.

⁸⁸ “True churches can be divided between those true churches that are regular and those that are irregular” (Dever, *The Church*, 95, n.12).

⁸⁹ Tom J. Nettles and Russell D. Moore ed., *Why I Am a Baptist* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2001), xviii.

⁹⁰ “I don’t know of any Baptist anywhere who believes that the concept of a regenerate church has guaranteed Baptists a regenerate church,” (Walter B. Shurden, Sr., “Baptist Pavement, Baptist Potholes, and a P.S. Concerning Baptist Freedom,” *Baptist History And Heritage* 1 [2015]: 81).

⁹¹ Thomas R. Schreiner and Shawn D. Wright, eds., *Believer’s Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant in Christ* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2006), 3, n. 7.

⁹² Oliver O’Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 176.

the future, but more specifically of the impossibility of knowing the interior state of a person's heart, means that it is epistemologically impossible to guarantee regenerate church membership. Of course, Jesus himself knew this and thus outlined the practice of church discipline (Mt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5:1-13).⁹³ Thus the local assembly acts with eschatological fidelity when it acts in accordance with its own nature as the purified people of God gathered around the throne, admitting to membership only those bearing the fruit of regeneracy; and, likewise, when it acts consistently to discipline those members who do not bear fruit in keeping with repentance.

Second, how does the in-between location of the church relate to ethnically diverse membership? It interplays in several ways. First, while ensuring regenerate membership is epistemologically impossible "in-between the times," achieving comprehensively ethnically diverse membership ("every tongue, tribe, people, nation") is "not yet" ontologically possible. While actual regenerate membership is possible, ethnic variegation of the local church will always be under-realized until the eschaton. Still, eschatologically faithful churches will recognize in faith that God has "determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place" (Acts 17:26). As such, an individual local church will wholeheartedly embrace its portion from the Lord in terms of the ethnic composition of its location in space and time. This "spatio-temporal" existence constrains the boundaries of any specific church's expression of ethnic diversity.⁹⁴

Within this framework, local churches may express a number of varying degrees of faithfulness to the comprehensive ethnic diversity belonging to their eschatological nature. First, some churches are contextually able but formally unwilling to embrace ethnically diverse members. Such a church stands in terrifying danger of compromising its very *esse* as it has horribly misapprehended the gospel itself.⁹⁵ Second, some churches are contextually able and formally willing to embrace

⁹³ "Paedobaptist churches will necessarily admit unregenerate persons to the membership; credo baptists will only do so accidentally, and they can correct the fault by the exercise of church discipline" (Wright, *Believer's Baptism*, 227)

⁹⁴ Cf. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 148-157.

⁹⁵ Interestingly, Garrett, in the early 1960s no less, floats the idea that practices of "race hatred, prejudice, and violence" are grounds for discipline and excommunication ("Seeking A Regenerate Church Membership," 36).

ethnically diverse members, but functionally they refuse to embrace anything other than their own ethnic expression of the gospel. They are Peter standing away from the Gentiles' table for fear of the Jews. Such churches will accept τὰ ἔθνη into their local fellowship, if only these nations will become as they are. This issue of functionally required ethnic assimilation is perhaps the highest hurdle for the cultivation of multiethnic local churches in the current ecclesial moment.⁹⁶

Third, some churches are functionally and formally willing to cultivate ethnic diversity, but they are spatio-temporally constrained in homogenous communities. Before a church marshals this excuse, however, it must more closely examine its own spatio-temporal context. Many communities in the United States, for example, have diverse populations within a normally drivable distance, and as such they suffer not from homogeneity but segregation.⁹⁷ Likewise, when the cultural and socio-economic connections to ethnicity are understood, it becomes clear that profound diversity is usually possible. For example, the church must recognize that closely connected to the idea of ethnic diversity is socio-economic diversity. Jesus said, "You will always have the poor among you," but many churches verge on making Jesus a liar. On this point, they are socio-economically homogenous. Thus even if formal ethnic diversity

⁹⁶ Cf. Rah, *The Next Evangelicalism*; Mark Lau Branson and Juan Francisco Martínez. *Churches, Cultures and Leadership: A Practical Theology of Congregations and Ethnicities*. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011); Anthony B. Bradley, ed. *Aliens in the Promised Land: Why Minority Leadership is Overlooked in White Christian Churches and Institutions* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2013); Ronald T. Michener, "The Kingdom of God and Postmodern Ecclesiologies: A Compatibility Assessment" *Evangelical Review Of Theology* 34:2 (2010): 119-130, argues that "intentional multi-national, multi-cultural contexts within our churches" offer the best way forward "in the postmodern climate" (130). Thorsten Prill, "Migration, Mission and the Multi-ethnic Church" *Evangelical Review Of Theology* 33:4 (2009): 332-346, says, "Luke points out that at the Council of Jerusalem the early church decided to have a non-assimilation policy" (344).

⁹⁷ Nate Silver, "The Most Diverse Cities Are Often The Most Segregated," *FiveThirtyEight*; <http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/the-most-diverse-cities-are-often-the-most-segregated/>.

eludes a church, there will be other profound opportunities to witness to the diversity of the eschatological bride of Christ.⁹⁸

All three groups of churches, and in fact all churches, should constantly be reminded, “The kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel” (Mk. 1:15). And as they continually repent and renew themselves in the gospel, they will be able to more fully and faithfully anticipate the “great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes.”

Conclusion

This paper has proposed that a local church is a proleptic expression of the eschatological church and that this proleptic character implies that the membership of a healthy local church should be regenerate and ethnically diverse. The inevitable shortcomings in a local church’s conformity to this ideal have been explored in relationship to its place “in-between” the inauguration and consummation of God’s kingdom and the church’s constant need for repentance and renewal in God’s sanctifying grace.

Ecclesiological conviction has been a mark of Baptist distinction for centuries. And in the coming time such ecclesiological conviction can uniquely position Baptists to faithfully cultivate churches that more fully express the purity and diversity of the bride that will gather in astounded worship around the heavenly throne.

⁹⁸ “Paul anticipates that in such a fellowship, the mutual obligation of loving unity across racial, geographic and cultural lines would work itself out in tangible acts of generosity, potentially flowing osmosis-like in both directions as needed (2 Cor 8:13–15)” (Jason B. Hood, “Theology in Action: Paul, the Poor, and Christian Mission,” *Southeastern Theological Review* 2:2 [2011]: 130).

A Defense of Ignatius of Antioch's Martyrdom and View of Redemption

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Introduction

The late first, early second-century bishop Ignatius of Antioch is most remembered for his martyrdom and the seven extant letters he wrote en route to Rome, his likely place of martyrdom: letters to the Ephesians, the Magnesians, the Trallians, the Romans, the Philadelphians, the Smyrneans, and the bishop Polycarp. Among the most prominent themes in these letters is church unity, the role of the bishop, and Ignatius's own expectation of death. Ignatius writes so passionately, even eagerly, of martyrdom that some scholars have raised the question of whether he had an unhealthy desire to suffer for his faith or saw redemptive value in his suffering, either for himself or for others.¹ As one scholar has noted, Ignatius's "language sometimes betrays an exuberance and wildness which could be interpreted as neurotic."² Another scholar writes that "the charge of fanaticism is not entirely without foundation in the case of Ignatius."³ So was Ignatius's desire for martyrdom either neurotic or fanatical, motivated by a salvific view of suffering?

¹ For a good list of recent scholarly works contending that Ignatius viewed his death as having salvific significance, particularly on behalf of those to whom he wrote, see Alexander N. Kirk, "Ignatius' statements of self-sacrifice: intimations of an atoning death or expressions of exemplary suffering?", *The Journal of Theological Studies* 64, no. 1 (April 2013): 67-68.

² L. W. Barnard, "The Background of St. Ignatius of Antioch," *Vigiliae Christianae* 17 (1963): 193.

³ William R. Schoedel, *A Commentary on the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1985), xii.

This paper will argue the opposite. Its thesis is that Ignatius's legal predicament was genuine, his motivating desire for writing was primarily to promote Christian unity and faithfulness, and his outlook on redemption was apostolic in origin and Christocentric in focus. The case will be made by examining Ignatius's own words in his seven letters, referring to the original Greek for a couple of key terms, and by comparing various scholarly interpretations of Ignatius's key themes.

Ignatius's Life and Writings

Little is known directly about Ignatius apart from what he writes of himself in his letters. Church tradition fleshes out his story, and he is mentioned by Christian writers in the centuries following his death, but none of these sources are contemporary to the man himself. Ignatius reveals he is a prisoner being transported from Syria to Rome in his letter to the Ephesians⁴ and that he was bishop of Syria, most likely meaning Antioch, in his letter to the Romans.⁵ Alistair Stewart has argued it is not safe to assume Ignatius was sole bishop of Antioch, because congregations within cities may not have been united under the oversight of a single bishop at this time.⁶ Either way, Ignatius was a bishop, likely of Antioch, and the occasion of the authorship of his seven letters was his trip under guard to Rome.

Depending on how Ignatius's life is dated, Antioch was probably a free city during his spiritual leadership there, later becoming a colonial city under Emperor Antoninus Pius (AD 138-161).⁷ The city was diverse, incorporating different ethnic groups and religions, including a historic Jewish community, and both Roman legions and a well-known pleasure garden were located nearby.⁸ Docetism and Judaism, or more accurately Judaizing, presented challenges to churches throughout Asia Minor; it is possible these heretical impulses came from a single Judeo-Gnostic religious group rather than two different groups.⁹ Ignatius writes against

⁴ Ignatius of Antioch, *Ephesians*, 2.11.

⁵ Ibid., *Romans*, 2.2.

⁶ Alistair Stewart, trans., *Ignatius of Antioch: The Letters* (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press), 11.

⁷ Barnard, 195.

⁸ Ibid., 195-196.

⁹ Ibid., 197, 201.

both false teachings. He displays familiarity with the Gospel of Matthew, Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, and potentially other Pauline letters and Johannine writings, and he has come to be seen as perhaps history's clearest representative of Antiochene Christianity at the turn of the second century.¹⁰

One of the curious terms Ignatius applies to himself in all of his letters is θεορόπος, or “God-carrier.”¹¹ Understanding his context within the pre-Christian Roman Empire and its public cultic practices may shed light on the term. Official gods of the empire were often carried during a city’s religious processions.¹² Ignatius would have seen many such processions in Antioch. If he had this referent in mind when employing the term “God-carrier,” it would have evoked a stark contrast for his original readers between imperial power and God’s power and between secular significance and spiritual significance. There is no reason to believe Ignatius was the only prisoner or even a prominent prisoner during his chained transport to Rome. Thus he was, as Stewart has noted, “a chained figure in an imperial procession, a small part of a larger event, claiming to be the center, as he is the carrier of the true God in the procession of an emperor already divinized by his non-Christian subjects.”¹³

The precise route taken by Ignatius’s captors appears to be unusual. He mentions leaving in the late summer in his letter to the Romans.¹⁴ From Antioch he is taken to Philadelphia, then Smyrna, Troas, and Philippi; if he travels through other cities after Philippi and before arriving in Rome, we have no record of it.¹⁵ This time of year was not ideal for travel, which is what makes the journey unusual, but Ignatius offers no explanation for either the timing or the route by which he was taken.¹⁶

As alluded to earlier, the dating of Ignatius’s letters, and thus of his life and ministry, is subject to debate. He could have written as early as AD 100 or as late as the 130s. The content of his letters is also a matter of interpretation, as there is a manuscript history for several versions. It is worth devoting space to untangling these versions since any study of

¹⁰ Ibid., 205.

¹¹ Stewart, 17.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 19-20.

¹⁴ Ignatius of Antioch, *Romans*, 10.3.

¹⁵ Stewart, 11-12.

¹⁶ Ibid., 12.

Ignatius' life and theology has little else upon which to reliably draw. The testimony of later Christian writers is uncertain, with different schools of thought tending to see in Ignatius support for their own views.¹⁷

In sum, there are three versions of Ignatius's collected letters, which have come to be known as the short, middle, and long recensions. The short recension exists only in Syriac and includes abridged editions of four of his letters: to Polycarp, to the Ephesians, to the Romans, and to the Trallians.¹⁸ The middle recension can be found in manuscripts or manuscript fragments in Greek, Latin, Syriac, Armenian, Arabic, and Coptic, and it includes the unabridged seven letters generally attributed to Ignatius in modern translations of his writings.¹⁹ The long recension was the version most familiar to the Reformers; it can be found in Greek and Latin manuscripts, and it includes expanded versions of the seven letters in the middle recension along with six additional letters: to Mary of Cassobola, to the Tarsians, to the Antiochenes, to Hero, to the Philippians, and from Mary of Cassobola.²⁰

Current scholarly consensus holds that the middle recension is most authentic, with the long recension determined to have appeared in the middle of the fourth century, reflecting concerns of that era, and the short recension seen as an abridgment created by monks for their own use.²¹ Bishop James Ussher, who is perhaps most often remembered in the modern era for his dating of the age of the earth based on biblical genealogies, discovered evidence for the middle recension in the 17th century, which was a boon to those who had objected to the theme of Roman supremacy in the long recension.²² This paper accepts the current consensus and focuses on the middle recension of Ignatius's letters most commonly published today.

The dating of Ignatius's letters merits consideration as well. Stewart has proposed a somewhat novel view, arguing that Ignatius wrote his letters during the summer of AD 134 and that he traveled in a party with the Emperor Hadrian himself, who was returning from Syria to Rome at

¹⁷ See Schoedel, 1, for an example of Chalcedonians and Monophysites both finding support for their Christology in Ignatius.

¹⁸ Schoedel, 3.

¹⁹ Ibid., 2-4.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., 2.

that time after suppressing a Jewish revolt.²³ Three lines of evidence support his view: (1) It allows for Ignatius to be writing against fully formed Gnosticism as taught by Basilides; (2) it provides a context for Ignatius to denounce Judaism, in light of the recent revolt; and (3) it allows time for a more mature system of church offices to have developed.²⁴

Nevertheless, the more commonly held view is that Ignatius wrote earlier, during Emperor Trajan's reign (AD 98 – AD 117). Supposing that Ignatius traveled in the Emperor Hadrian's party, in particular, seems unlikely; if he did, he never mentions it in any of his letters. Precisely when he wrote during Trajan's reign is not agreed upon, with scholars who hold this view proposing different dates within several years of each other.²⁵ For the purposes of this paper, determining an exact year is unnecessary; a range of AD 105 to AD 115 will be accepted as most likely.

Ignatius writes in his letters with passionate wording, feeling free to use the Greek language inventively. According to Ignatius scholar William Schoedel, "There is, indeed, no piece of literature of the time that violates the language in such a sovereign manner."²⁶ His letters follow a Hellenistic epistolary form, and he employs a highly mannered, somewhat florid style that has come to be called "Asianism."²⁷ In short, he is a man of strong expression in his letters, and his vocabulary and rhetoric reflect the urgency of his message.

A few other facts about Ignatius's life have been provided by later writers. Though there is little reason to believe the writers were intending to misinform, their assertions cannot be verified. Eusebius mentions that Ignatius was the second bishop of Antioch, for instance, succeeding Evodius, and that he died in the eleventh year of Trajan's reign (AD 108 or AD 109).²⁸ Theodoret writes of him being appointed by

²³ Stewart, 16.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ See, for example, the dates of AD 110 and AD 113 in James G. Bushur, "Ignatius of Antioch's Letter to the Romans: The Passionate Confession of Christian Identity," *Logia* 24, no. 2 (2015): 14, and Stevan L. Davies, "The Predicament of Ignatius of Antioch," *Vigiliae Christianae* 30, no. 3 (September 1976): 178.

²⁶ Schoedel, 7.

²⁷ Ibid., 7-8.

²⁸ Eusebius, *Church History*, 3.22; *Chronicle*, Trajan. 10.

the apostle Peter,²⁹ and John Chrysostom preaches a sermon in his honor, the “Homily on Saint Ignatius.” This paper will limit its focus to the writings of Ignatius himself and to recent scholarly interpretations of those writings.

The Validity of Ignatius’s Martyrdom, Message, and Understanding of Redemption

Martyrs held a place of special esteem in the early church. Tertullian’s statement is well-known: “The Christian blood you spill is like the seed you sow, it springs from the earth again, and fructifies the more.”³⁰ Yet he is hardly the only affirmer of martyrdom among early Christian writers. Justin Martyr points to the lack of persecution against heretical groups of so-called Christians as proof they are not true believers: “We do know that they are neither persecuted nor put to death by you, at least on account of their opinions.”³¹ Origen, Augustine, and Eusebius all write positively of martyrdom as well, though not in unqualified fashion; there is thus some scholarly debate about whether the early church broadly supported seeking martyrdom as opposed to merely accepting it when inevitable.³²

Regardless, in light of the honor afforded to martyrs, questions of Ignatius’s motives are perhaps unavoidable. He writes, “May I delight in the beasts prepared for me, and I pray they may be found ready for me. I shall encourage them to devour me speedily … even if they do not wish to do so, I share force them.”³³ Language like this could certainly bespeak fanaticism. Was Ignatius a chaser of suffering, akin in his mindset to the follower of a modern-day death cult?

This paper argues against such a conclusion based on three lines of argumentation: (1) Ignatius’s arrest and legal dilemma are legitimate, (2)

²⁹ Theodoret, *Dial. Immutab.*, 1.4.

³⁰ Tertullian, *Apology*, 50.

³¹ Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, 26.

³² See, for example, the discussion in Frederick W. Weidmann, “Rushing Judgment? Willfulness and Martyrdom in Early Christianity,” *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 53, no. 1-2 (January 1999): 61-69, and in Paul Middleton, “Early Christian Voluntary Martyrdom: A Statement for the Defence,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 64, no. 2 (October 2013): 556-573.

³³ Ignatius of Antioch, *Romans*, 5.2.

martyrdom is not a primary theme in his letters, and (3) his Christology and theology of redemption are orthodox. First, though, a brief review of his letters will provide the context for investigating these assertions.

A Survey of Ignatius's Letters

Ignatius writes his first letter to the Ephesians following a visit from Onesimus.³⁴ He focuses on unity among the believers, submission to the bishop, and rejecting false teaching, devoting a couple of paragraphs to a rudimentary summary of the gospel that mentions Jesus' birth, death, and baptism.³⁵ Several times he writes of his forthcoming martyrdom, but he does not concentrate on it overmuch. He views it as an imitation of Christ and the apostles, a matter of faithful discipleship, and, in a passage that sounds similar to the apostle Paul in Colossians 1:24, he portrays his suffering as a kind of service to the Ephesians. As he writes, "I am your expiation, and am being consecrated as such on your behalf, Ephesians."

In his letter to the Magnesians, Ignatius again stresses unity, along with church order under the bishop and presbyters. He devotes space to refuting Judaizers and exhorts his readers to "be keen to stand strong in the opinions of the Lord and the apostles."³⁶ He writes almost nothing about martyrdom in this letter, except that believers must be willing to die for Christ if they belong to him: "[Jesus's] life, if we do not choose willingly to die for truth in likeness of his passion, is not in us."³⁷

To the Trallians Ignatius upholds the bishop and church unity, as he does in nearly every letter, and he writes against what appears to be a form of Docetism that denied Jesus's full humanity. His words against this false teaching include a basic summary of the gospel with affirmation of Jesus's birth from Mary, death, and resurrection.³⁸ He also admits to being tempted toward pride over his pending martyrdom and to his need for humility.³⁹

³⁴ Stewart, 27.

³⁵ Ignatius of Antioch, *Ephesians*, 18.2–19.3.

³⁶ Ibid., *Magnesians*, 13.1.

³⁷ Ibid., 5.2.

³⁸ Ibid., *Trallians*, 9–10.

³⁹ Ibid., 4.2.

Ignatius's letter to the Romans contains by far the bulk of his statements about martyrdom. He appears most eager to experience it here, and, indeed, any argument in support of Ignatius having an unhealthy desire for martyrdom must be based largely on this letter. Yet his vision for martyrdom is framed more as a matter of consummation than salvation. He generally describes it using the term επιτυχεῖν (or, relatedly, τυχεῖν), meaning to "obtain," "acquire" or "attain."⁴⁰ As he writes, "My desire is crucified, and there is no love of the material burning in me. Rather there is living water speaking in me, saying to me, within, 'Come to the Father.'"⁴¹ Ignatius repeatedly asks the Romans not to intervene and stop his martyrdom, which may present a clue as to why he devotes this particular letter to his upcoming death. Of all the recipients of Ignatius's letters, only the Roman believers could have sought to impede his sentence, so he takes pains in this letter to make clear his desire to complete his discipleship and be united in person with God.

In his letter to the Philadelphians, Ignatius returns to his themes of unity and church leadership. This letter also contains both a clear statement of the offer of the gospel and a clear statement about martyrdom. Of the gospel offer, Ignatius writes: "The Lord forgives all who repent if they repent in the unity of God and the council of the bishop."⁴² He sees repentance as the key to forgiveness—not suffering, it is worth noting—with Christian unity and the bishop's oversight being guardrails within which such repentance must occur. On martyrdom, Ignatius writes that he wishes to "attain to the lot which I have received in mercy, as I flee to the gospel"⁴³—an unusual phrase that suggests again a completion of his Christian journey, which is itself a gift.

Ignatius deals most fully with Docetist teaching in his letter to the Smyrneans. Those who would deny Jesus's full humanity either before or after his resurrection are bereft of gospel hope, "advocates of death rather than the truth."⁴⁴ He questions why he should be willing to suffer

⁴⁰ "Επιτυχεῖν," NAS Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible, The Lockman Foundation, 1988, accessed at <http://biblehub.com/greek/2013.htm>.

⁴¹ Ignatius of Antioch, *Romans*, 7.2.

⁴² Ibid., *Philadelphians*, 8.1.

⁴³ Ibid., 5.1

⁴⁴ Ibid, *Smyrneans*, 5.1

physically if Jesus only appeared to suffer, and he connects salvation to Jesus's suffering. “[H]e suffered all this for our sake, so that we might be saved.”⁴⁵ The bishop’s centrality and leadership are again upheld, and Ignatius uses the word “catholic” in this letter to refer to the universality of the church within Jesus.⁴⁶

Finally, in his only letter to an individual, Ignatius writes to Polycarp to exhort him to fulfill his duties as bishop of Smyrna. He includes both pragmatic and spiritual guidance. The several times he mentions his martyrdom, Ignatius speaks of it as a faithful act of discipleship and, again, as a sacrifice on behalf of the church. In particular, he writes, “I am a ransom for those who are subject to the bishop, the presbyters, deacons,”⁴⁷ thus tying his concern for church order to his pending death.

In sum, Ignatius writes in nearly every letter of the importance of church offices and Christian unity and of dispelling false teaching. He mentions his martyrdom regularly but devotes less space to it, except in his letter to the Romans, and he tends to use the wording of *επιτυχεῖν*, or “attain[ment],” to describe it. He also summarizes the gospel in several letters, stressing Jesus’s birth, death, and resurrection in an abbreviated manner that reads like a primitive version of the Apostles’ Creed.

The Legitimacy of Ignatius’s Legal Dilemma

In order to determine that Ignatius was not an unhealthy pursuer of martyrdom who sought a pretext for his arrest and sentencing, the validity of his legal predicament must be demonstrated. This requires clearing a couple of hurdles: first, concerning the existence of persecution against Christians at the time, and second, concerning Ignatius’s legal status and likely reason for being sent to Rome.

During the first two decades of the second century, no coordinated, large-scale suppression of Christians was underway in the Roman empire.⁴⁸ However, Christians were not safe and could be executed if

⁴⁵ Ibid., 2. Also, note the similarity here to Pauline language in verses like 2 Cor. 5:21.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 8.2.

⁴⁷ Ibid., *To Polycarp*, 6.1.

⁴⁸ Kenneth R. Morris, “Pure Wheat of God” or Neurotic Deathwish? A Historical and Theological Analysis of Ignatius of Antioch’s Zeal for Martyrdom,” *Fides Et Historia* 26, no. 3 (September 1994): 26.

brought individually to the attention of authorities. A letter from the Emperor Trajan to Pliny the Younger, governor of Bithynia between AD 109 and AD 112, indicates this sort of piecemeal but still harsh policy: “Do not go out of your way to look for them [Christians]. If indeed they should be brought before you, and the crime is proved, they must be punished.”⁴⁹ The punishments Pliny meted out to Christians included torture and an unspecified verdict that could have been a death sentence.⁵⁰

Pliny also mentions to the emperor that Christianity is spreading not just in cities but in surrounding towns and villages.⁵¹ It is evident from the correspondence between Pliny and Trajan that restoring order and upholding the official civic religion of Rome is part of Pliny’s task. Thus, the stance of Rome toward Christianity during these decades can be summarized as one of opposition and disruption, if not yet a sweeping pogrom, which would explain why Ignatius sees a spiritual conflict underlying his arrest and punishment. As Allen Brent has noted, “Ignatius describes his appearance in Rome in language that clearly implies that his act confronts Roman power with a superior, spiritual alternative.”⁵² Ignatius’s use of the term θεοφόρος, “God-carrier,” to describe himself further casts his procession to Rome as a kind of alternative to processions of the Imperial Cult.⁵³

One other aspect of Rome’s punishment of Christians is worth noting. Public associations of Christians were what the emperor most disliked, particularly gatherings for the Eucharist, which were held under the leadership of bishops. Persecution of individuals was thus meant to undermine corporate Eucharistic services: “Pliny’s aim was precisely the fragmentation of Christian associations.”⁵⁴ This background could explain, in part, Ignatius’s emphasis in his letters on the bishop’s authority, Christian unity, and his suffering on behalf of other believers.

⁴⁹ Pliny, *Letters*, 10.97.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 10.96.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Allen Brent, “Ignatius of Antioch and the Imperial Cult,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 52, no. 1 (February 1998): 31.

⁵³ Ibid., 32.

⁵⁴ James G. Busher, “Ignatius of Antioch’s letter to the Romans: the passionate confession of Christian identity,” *Logia* 24, no. 2 (2015): 13.

The second question about Ignatius's legal predicament revolves around his legal status and the reason for his transport to Rome. Citizens to Rome could appeal verdicts to the emperor; thus, one possible reason for Ignatius's guarded escort could be an appeal he entreated himself. However, Roman citizens generally could not be killed by beasts or fire, the means of death Ignatius mentions in his letters.⁵⁵ This presents a conundrum: If Ignatius were not a citizen, why would he be heading to Rome? If he were a citizen, how could he expect the kind of brutal death he depicts?

There are further problems with viewing him as a citizen. First, Roman citizens under appeal could not be chained, as Ignatius reports he is.⁵⁶ Second, if a governor condemned a citizen to death, it wouldn't be necessary to execute that sentence in Rome.⁵⁷ An appeal would necessitate the trip, but is Ignatius likely, in light of his expectant statements about martyrdom, to have appealed a death sentence? Third, the only means of confirming the crime of Christianity was confession, yet a Roman citizen who confessed to a crime abandoned any right of appeal.⁵⁸ It's difficult to imagine a scenario by which Ignatius as a citizen could be sent to Rome for execution.

Viewing Ignatius as a non-citizen presents a similar problem, as there is no historical record of non-citizens being executed in Rome during this time period, unless those non-citizens were prisoners of war.⁵⁹ Ignatius was not a member of an army or a participant in an armed uprising. If he were not a citizen, how could he have received the ostensible privilege of appeal or death in Rome?

Steven L. Davies has proposed a scenario that correlates the available facts about Ignatius's trip with Roman legal practice. Only a governor or emperor could condemn a person to death. However, a governor's legate could oversee cases while a governor was away without determining a final sentence. In Lyon in AD 177, Christians were arrested and questioned in this manner while the governor was absent, and executions

⁵⁵ Michael A. G. Haykin, "Come to the father": Ignatius of Antioch and his calling to be a martyr," *Themelios* 32, no. 3 (May 2007): 29.

⁵⁶ Stevan L. Davies, "Predicament of Ignatius of Antioch," *Vigiliae Christianae* 30, no. 3 (September 1976): 176.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

were carried out upon his return.⁶⁰ Thus, Ignatius could have been tried before a legate who recommended but could not execute a death sentence; rather than waiting for the governor of Syria, Ignatius could have been sent instead to the emperor.⁶¹ This scenario would explain Ignatius's chains, his expectation of death but also worry that his verdict might be overturned, and the possibility that Roman Christians could intervene, as a legate's recommendation carried less weight than a governor's official sentence.⁶²

In the view of this researcher, Davies's scenario is convincing. There may be alternate, less likely scenarios under which Ignatius as a citizen could have been sent with unusual harshness to Rome for execution. Either way, the existence of targeted persecution of Christians during the early second century and of possible circumstances under which such a prisoner could be sent to Rome for execution bespeak the validity of Ignatius's legal dilemma.

Martyrdom Is Not a Primary Theme of Ignatius's Letters

Ignatius mentions his forthcoming martyrdom often, yet, as stated earlier, he devotes little space to it in most of his letters. Only in his letter to the Romans does it take center stage. If he harbored an unhealthy desire for martyrdom, it might be expected to comprise a major theme in his writing. That case is difficult to make. Scholars differ on how precisely to identify Ignatius's main messages, but together their observations form an approximate consensus.

Michael Haykin summarizes Ignatius's themes as unity in the churches, resisting heresy, and assistance in completing his own "vocation" of martyrdom.⁶³ It is important to clearly differentiate this last point: Ignatius asks his readers to aid him in completing his death sentence faithfully; he does not encourage them to seek a similar sentence.⁶⁴ Ignatius writes as a leader with authority, and his primary messages reflect his instructions. Yet a general commendation of

⁶⁰ Ibid., 177-178.

⁶¹ Ibid., 178.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Haykin, 27.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 37.

martyrdom does not rise to this level in any of his letters, even in his letter to the Romans.

Kenneth Morris lists church unity, church leadership, and false teaching as Ignatius's key themes.⁶⁵ These themes are interrelated. Ignatius endorses unity in different ways, such as "unity in mutual deeds of love, unity in purpose, unity in the Eucharist."⁶⁶ In addition, obedience to the bishop is an expression of unity, and false teaching poses a challenge to unity, as Ignatius stresses in his letter to the Philadelphians.⁶⁷ Thus, in Morris's view, Ignatius highlights an overarching or coordinating theme above all, the theme of unity under which his other concerns cohere.

Further dimensions of Ignatius's view of unity can be identified. For instance, church unity is reflective of heavenly unity in Ignatius's understanding; if church unity is disrupted, then the church's connection to heaven is likewise disrupted.⁶⁸ Unity with the church and bishop also form the basis of unity with Christ and God.⁶⁹ As Ignatius writes, "Those who are of God, and Jesus Christ, are with the bishop. Those who are repentant and who come into the unity of the church will also be God's, so that they may live in accordance with Jesus Christ."⁷⁰ This last phrase, "live in accordance with Jesus Christ," suggests again Ignatius's concern for right doctrine as a component of unity.

John Lawyer, Jr., identifies four themes in Ignatius's letters: the importance of the Eucharist, the centrality of the bishop, church unity, and right teaching.⁷¹ He notes that Ignatius's conception of martyrdom is subsumed in at least one way under his theme of the Eucharist. In the Eucharist feast, Ignatius sees Jesus coming to be with his people; in his own martyrdom he will go to be with Jesus—thus his death on behalf of Christ is "a sort of Eucharist in reverse."⁷² In another demonstration of

⁶⁵ Morris, 31.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 34, 38.

⁶⁸ Richard A. Bower, "Meaning of *epitychein* in the epistles of St Ignatius of Antioch," *Vigiliae Christianae* 28, no. 1 (March 1974): 5.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 5-6.

⁷⁰ Ignatius of Antioch, *Philadelphians*, 3.2.

⁷¹ John E. Lawyer, "Eucharist and martyrdom in the letters of Ignatius of Antioch," *Anglican Theological Review* 73, no. 3 (1991 1991): 280.

⁷² Ibid.

the interrelatedness of Ignatius's primary themes, the bishop and right doctrine can be tied together, because the bishop is in his view the keeper and transmitter of apostolic tradition.⁷³ This may explain the somewhat unusual praise Ignatius gives to silence in a bishop in his letters to the Ephesians and the Philadelphians. Any engagement with false teaching corrupted a local church, but silence left improper doctrine outside of the congregation's holy gathering.⁷⁴

What may be concluded about Ignatius's primary themes? First, concerns about the bishop, church unity, and correct teaching make up the bulk of his letters, and scholars agree on their centrality to his thought, alongside the related and most identifiable aspect of church gatherings, the Eucharist. There is also an internal coherence to Ignatius's thought, as his themes support and reinforce each other. Second, martyrdom is an important personal concern of Ignatius's, but it is not part of his message to the church; he shares no directions concerning it. He understands martyrdom within the framework of his primary themes, and it can be seen as a practical outworking of them or, better, as an act of faithfulness he accepts in light of them.

The Orthodoxy of Ignatius's Christology and Theology of Redemption

Moving beyond Ignatius's main themes, it is helpful to investigate specifically his Christology and theology of redemption. Did Ignatius in any sense view his martyrdom as salvific, either for himself or others? Alexander Kirk lists seven clear instances where Ignatius mentions suffering on behalf of others, three in his letter to the Ephesians, one each in his letters to the Trallians and the Smyrneans, and two in his letter to Polycarp.⁷⁵ What does he write about Christ, redemption, and martyrdom that give us insight into his soteriology?

⁷³ Allen Brent, "History and eschatological mysticism in Ignatius of Antioch," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 65, no. 4 (1989): 309.

⁷⁴ Alvyn Pettersen, "Sending Heretics to Coventry? Ignatius of Antioch on Reverencing Silent Bishops," *Vigiliae Christianae* 44, no. 4 (December 1990): 347.

⁷⁵ Alexander N. Kirk, "Ignatius' statements of self-sacrifice: intimations of an atoning death or expressions of exemplary suffering?", *The Journal of*

Ignatius's Christology

The key criteria to understanding Ignatius's Christology is his submission to apostolic tradition. He distinguishes between the apostles' teaching and his own, and he views apostolic teaching as sitting above his own.⁷⁶ We can understand the goal of his theological reflection to be a faithful representation of the apostolic deposit. Ignatius upholds a high Christology, viewing Jesus as the center of that deposit and of the Old Testament Scriptures.⁷⁷ As he writes, "For me the archives [Scriptures] are Jesus Christ, the sacred archives, his cross and death and his resurrection and the faith which comes by him."⁷⁸ He summarizes in creedal form several times the basic historical facts about Jesus—his birth, death, and resurrection—and it is clear that he views these facts as essential to the Christian faith.⁷⁹

Death and sin are aberrations of God's creation, according to Ignatius, and in the incarnation God the Son overcomes those aberrations.⁸⁰ Ignatius refers to Christ in his letters as the source of life.⁸¹ He restates this point negatively in his letter to the Trallians, writing that the "Father will similarly raise us who believe in him, in Jesus Christ, apart from whom we do not have true life."⁸² It is worth noting that immortality is conditional in Ignatius's view. While death may be an aberration, eternal life is dependent solely on Jesus. As John Romanides has summarized, "In the epistles of St. Ignatius the idea of natural immortality as a proper

Theological Studies 64, no. 1 (April 2013): 66-67. Kirk also quotes on p. 67 an unpublished dissertation by Hendrik Adrianus Bakker that succinctly summarizes the salvific perspective: "Ignatius viewed his death as a sacrifice that augmented Jesus' death. Because Ignatius' identity appeared, therefore, to join with Jesus', and because he saw himself as a 'scapegoat' and a 'ransom', his death has salvific significance."

⁷⁶ Daniel L. Hoffman, "The authority of scripture and apostolic doctrine in Ignatius of Antioch," *Journal of The Evangelical Theological Society* 28, no. 1 (March 1985): 78.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁷⁸ Ignatius of Antioch, *Philadelphians*, 8.2.

⁷⁹ Hoffman, 76. See also John S. Romanides, "Ecclesiology of St Ignatius of Antioch," *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 7, no. 1-2 (1961 1961): 55.

⁸⁰ Romanides, 54.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Ignatius of Antioch, *Trallians*, 9.2.

element of man's soul is completely absent. Both those before and after Christ have the death and resurrection of Christ as their source of life."⁸³

Ignatius argues for Jesus's genuine physical nature and physical suffering, but he just as firmly upholds his divinity, revealed especially in phrases he chooses to describe him. Ignatius refers to Jesus as "the mind of the Father" and "our God," and he describes his blood as "the blood of God"; he also writes that Jesus and the Father are "mingled."⁸⁴ Overall, Ignatius's Christology adheres to apostolic orthodoxy in this affirmation of Jesus' humanity and divinity, as it also does in his grasp of the creedal events of Jesus's incarnation and in his understanding of Christ as the giver of life.

Ignatius's Theology of Redemption

Ignatius's understanding of redemption begins with God, because human salvation has been his plan for eternity.⁸⁵ Jesus is the Savior, the implementer of God's plan. The purpose of Jesus's incarnation is entirely soteriological, he suffered for the sake of humanity, and in doing so he became our healer.⁸⁶ The enemy from whom Jesus saves humanity is not primarily personal sin, but rather death and the devil, though believers are saved to righteousness and imitation of Christ. Jesus's death defeats the devil and earns peace for God's people.⁸⁷

In light of the wording Ignatius uses to frame salvation, L. W. Barnard has concluded that he was unfamiliar with the apostle Paul's concept of salvation from "the flesh" and also that he had "no real appreciation of the Pauline 'righteousness by faith'."⁸⁸ Yet this latter statement may be

⁸³ Romanides, 55.

⁸⁴ These quotes are taken from *Magnesians* and *Ephesians*. For a fuller discussion of Ignatius's understanding of Christ's humanity and divinity, see Edward Fudge, "The eschatology of Ignatius of Antioch: Christocentric and historical," *Journal of The Evangelical Theological Society* 15, no. 4 (September 1972): 233-236.

⁸⁵ Fudge, 236.

⁸⁶ Donald F. Winslow, "Idea of redemption in the epistles of St Ignatius of Antioch," *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 11, no. 1 (1965): 120.

⁸⁷ Romanides, 55.

⁸⁸ Barnard, 203-204.

misleading. While Ignatius never uses language like “righteousness by faith,” he does view salvation coming about by belief.

In Ignatius’s view, the believer experiences redemption, entering into Christ’s church and his salvation, by belief rather than by good works.⁸⁹ As Ignatius writes to the Trallians, “believing in his [Christ’s] death, you may escape death.”⁹⁰ Redemption is then experienced through participation in Christ, because an ongoing connection with Christ is the source of life.⁹¹ Donald Winslow has summarized Ignatius’s understanding of redemption, focused on Jesus’s incarnation, death, and resurrection, as follows: “The Incarnation is the invasion of our world by the divine. The Cross is the instrument of salvation. And the Resurrection is the completion of the redemptive act.”⁹² Redemption is therefore God’s work from beginning to end. Winslow calls this understanding “the bed-rock of Ignatius’s soteriology.”⁹³

Yet the believer does have a role to play in Ignatius’s understanding. Redemption is not a passive act, nor is it a one-time experience. Ongoing participation in Christ requires obedience. Obedience is not an earned condition by which redemption is maintained, but is rather the essence of the redeemed individual’s life, as Jesus allows believers to obey and participate in his life. Obedience is thus a gift “in some way made possible through divine grace and mercy.”⁹⁴

Ignatius’s Perspective on Martyrdom

With Ignatius’s understanding of obedience in view, as well as his perception of salvation being from death and into the life of Christ, his perspective on martyrdom becomes more clear. Ultimately, martyrdom is a kind of trial of obedience; by undergoing it Ignatius will complete his journey of salvation and attain full unity with Christ.⁹⁵ This is the deepest significance of his impending martyrdom. Death and corruption will be left behind when he dies to them and obtains uninterrupted life in Christ.

⁸⁹ Romanides, 55, 57-58.

⁹⁰ Ignatius of Antioch, *Trallians*, 2.1.

⁹¹ Romanides, 59-60.

⁹² Winslow, 121.

⁹³ Ibid., 124.

⁹⁴ Bower, 3.

⁹⁵ Bushur, 14, 18.

Ignatius sees further relevancies in his martyrdom. It will provide him an opportunity to imitate Christ and, in so doing, to confess with his own actions Jesus's salvific suffering.⁹⁶ It also will give him the opportunity to practice "exemplary suffering," providing other believers with a model for following, just as he self-consciously follows the apostle Paul's model in self-renunciation and obedience to Christ.⁹⁷ His language about suffering on behalf of others is most clearly understood through this lens. As Kirk has concluded, "These passages do not re-enact Jesus' salvific death on behalf of sinners but rather mimic Paul's intimate bond with his fellow believers forged by his suffering."⁹⁸

A caveat should be highlighted: While martyrdom will be Ignatius's path to final and full unity with Christ, nowhere does he indicate that martyrdom is the primary means by which a believer may complete the path of discipleship. Nor does he suggest that a believer can suffer in a salvific manner for another. Martyrdom is the noble path he must take, however, and Ignatius is determined not to fail the test. His letters reveal the passion of a man confronting his own death and grasping firmly onto his hope of salvation.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that Ignatius of Antioch did not pursue martyrdom in a neurotic manner and that his soteriology was orthodox, mainly by examining persecution against Christians during the early second century, the primary themes of Ignatius's letters, and his theology of redemption. A couple of points can be added in closing. First, Ignatius's letters should be remembered for being occasional, sparked by his arrest and pending sentence. They were not written from a place of peaceful, private reflection. As such, they do not contain a fully developed theology of martyrdom, which doesn't appear to have been Ignatius's aim.⁹⁹ They are, rather, fervent letters and highly personal on the subject of martyrdom.

⁹⁶ Haykin, 34, 39.

⁹⁷ Kirk, 66.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 87.

⁹⁹ Haykin, 32.

Second, during the period in which Ignatius wrote, the truth of Christianity was displayed more convincingly by actions rather than arguments.¹⁰⁰ Christians aimed to undermine the ideologies of the Roman empire not as much through demonstrations of logic as demonstrations of morality and belief. Martyrdom spoke as strongly as any action to the living hope believers had in Christ. Ignatius's words about his coming death may, admittedly, strike modern readers as strange, but to read psychological unbalance into them is anachronistic.¹⁰¹ Instead, he can better be seen as a committed leader of the church who responded to a death sentence with nearly the only positive option available to him, by embracing his opportunity to bear witness to his Savior and to complete his personal path of discipleship.

¹⁰⁰ Morris, 24.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 25.

Familial Covenants:
A Biblical-Theological Analysis of Familial Language
within the Covenants of Genesis 17 and 2 Samuel 7

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Introduction

One of the key themes in any understanding of the Bible is that of covenant, and one of the key themes in any understanding of society is family. Yet, too often, the Scriptures and covenants – the cornerstones of ancient Israel’s societal self-understanding – are not interpreted with the family in view. In this paper, I aim to demonstrate that these themes are intricately wedded in the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants. Specific attention will be given to Genesis 17 and 2 Samuel 7. The underlying hope is that, if these themes can be conjoined in two of the highest peaks of Old Testament theology – the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants – then future research can be explored in more minute areas of the biblical text.

Before exploring the respective passages for biblical-theological insights, it is necessary to clear unwanted brush and pave a trail of common understanding. To do this, two points must be made: one about modern individualism versus ancient corporate reality, and one about the nature of covenants for biblical revelation and Israelite religion.

In the ancient near east, corporate identity and solidarity was pervasive.¹ In the words of Gordon Wenham, “You were who you were because of the family you were born into,” and each family was patrilineal, meaning the descent of the family was traced through the father’s line.² Behind this, “there is the idea that somehow, within the

¹ Jeffrey J. Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008), 138.

² Gordon J. Wenham, “Family in the Pentateuch” in *Family in the Bible: Exploring Customs, Culture, and Context*, edited by Richard S. Hess and M.

very body of the ancestor, the future generations already existed.”³ This notion of corporate personality transcends time; an individual is part of the larger family in the present, in the past, and in the future. To belong to the family is, in one sense, to have one’s entire family history recapitulated in the present, and in another sense, to be pregnant with the family’s entire future.⁴ Thus, when modern readers approach the text of the biblical world, the familial dynamics can be easy to miss and hard to understand. Nevertheless, the concept of ancestry/family/lineage lies within the foundations of the biblical world and the text itself. Its importance for modern readers cannot be overstated. To truly understand the message of the Bible, one must firmly grasp who the family is to which the message belongs, and what that message means for the family community.

The second foundational point relates to the notion of covenant. Simply put, any attempt to understand the major flow of the Bible without underscoring the covenants would be insufficient. The covenants are the means whereby God establishes the formal rubric for the organic center of the entire Bible: his relations with mankind. In the words of Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann, “The covenant is the primary metaphor for understanding Israel’s life with God. It is the covenant which offers to Israel the gift of hope, the reality of identity, the possibility of belonging, the certitude of vocation.”⁵

While it is imperative to grasp the importance of covenants for biblical revelation, it is just as important to grasp the depth of what happens within a covenantal relationship. The covenants are rarely ever merely transactional in the ancient Near East or the Bible. Rather, a

Daniel Carroll R., 17–31 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 20–21. See also Daniel I. Block, “Marriage and Family in Ancient Israel” in *Marriage and Family in the Biblical World*, edited by Ken M. Campbell, 33–102 (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003), 40.

³ Joseph Atkinson, “Roots of the Christian Family in the Old Testament: Corporate Personality” in *Liberty, Life and Family* 4, no. 1 (1999): 68.

⁴ Ibid., 71.

⁵ Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982), 154. This point is also summed up well in the first chapter of Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 21–38.

covenant is a *personal* pledge or oath, establishing a relationship between two parties. Most often, the personal relationship established is familial:

The idea, ‘I am yours, you are mine’ underlies every covenant declaration. This implies a quasi-familial bond which makes sons and brothers. The act of accepting the other as one’s own reflects the basic idea of covenant: an attempt to extend the bond of blood beyond the kinship sphere, or, in other words, to make partner one’s own flesh and blood.⁶

This intrinsic bond – between the motifs of covenant and family – opens the doors for further research beyond the scope of this paper. The aim of this paper is rather brief, demonstrating the familial covenant theme in just two key passages – Genesis 17 and 2 Samuel 7. But of course, much more could be said from a larger scope, be it from the Old Testament, the entire Bible, or from systematics. Nevertheless, with a better understanding of family solidarity and covenantal relationships in the religious life of Israel, the path is now cleared to see how these themes combine in God’s covenants to Abraham and David.

Analysis of Genesis 17

To rightly comprehend the familial emphasis in Genesis 17, one must be familiar with the literary context surrounding the chapter. From the moment God extends his threefold promise to Abraham in Genesis 12 – to make him into a great nation, to make his name great, and to bless all the families of the earth through him – the narrative builds to the conception and birth of the promised seed, Isaac, in both positive and negative ways. In fact, immediately before chapter 17, Abram and Sarai manipulate the situation and attempt to have a proxy-heir through Sarai’s bondservant, Hagar. Though a son is born to Abram, Ishmael, it becomes clear in Genesis 17 that this was not God’s design and will not be the chosen seed through whom the promise will come to fruition.

⁶ Paul Kalluvveettil C.M.I., *Declaration and Covenant: A Comprehensive Review of Covenant Formulae from the Old Testament and the Ancient Near East* (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1982), 212 quoted in Gordon Paul Hugenberger, *Marriage as Covenant: A Study of Biblical Law and Ethics Governing Marriage Developed from the Perspective of Malachi* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994), 179.

Given this preceding context, an easily overlooked but important fact should be pointed out from the text. In verse one of chapter 17, the reader is told that chapter 17 is taking place when Abram is 99 years old, which is 13 years after Ishmael's birth, when Abram was 86. Many commentators call attention to Abram here, noting his old age and his extended waiting period for the promised seed through Sarai. However, the writer is also subtly making a different point about Ishmael. The boy is now 13 years old, which is close to marrying age (and thus reproductive age) for an ancient Israelite son.⁷ The import of this subtle detail is that Genesis 17 comes in the wake of an impending faith-moment for Abram. To whom will he look for an heir? His current son in the flesh, or the long-awaited promised son who still has not come? It is in light of this tension that God appears for the first time in the canon as *El Shaddai* (Gen. 17:1). Of course, this name is often interpreted "God Almighty," but in the context, it is more appropriate to render, "God who is sufficient," stressing God's ability to deliver on his promise.⁸ In the first pericope of chapter 18 immediately following our passage, this emphasis continues as the promised one, Isaac, is foretold by the three visitors to Abraham's tent (Gen. 18:1-15).

Another important point of context is that in Genesis 15, God clearly 'cuts a covenant' with Abram (Gen. 15:18); a smoking pot and flaming torch representing his presence pass through halved animals while Abram is put into a deep sleep. This is the first instance of a covenant being struck between God and Abram following the promises given in Genesis 12. The question, then, is how does chapter 17 fit into the picture? Is chapter 17 a new covenant, or is it a recapitulated enhancement of the first? One's answer to this question is likely to inform one's view of chapter 22, where another covenant event seems to take place after Abraham offers Isaac on Mount Moriah.

Scholars differ on the relationships here, but Gentry and Wellum convincingly argue that the covenant scenes, particularly in chapters 15 and 17, portray one essential covenant with Abraham that is established in chapter 15, then confirmed by God in chapter 17.⁹ This conclusion is

⁷ Daniel I. Block, "Marriage and Family in Ancient Israel," 57n113.

⁸ Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Commentary Series, (London: Tyndale Press, 1967), 128.

⁹ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant*, 266-268.

derived after analyzing the use of the verbs *heqim*, *natan*, and *karat* before the object *berit* within the book of Genesis. In both the flood narrative (Gen. 6-9), and chapter 17, the terms *heqim berit* and *natan berit* are used numerous times, while the term *karat berit*, the more standard language for making an initial covenant, is never used. It can then be deduced that (a) since the flood narrative (Genesis 6-9) is a confirmation of the creation covenant (Genesis 1-3), and (b) since the flood narrative and Genesis 17 share the same lexicon for their respective covenants, then (c) Genesis 17 can be seen as a confirmation of the earlier covenant that was cut (*karat berit*) in Genesis 15:18. The point here is that the two chapters, Genesis 15 and 17, are meant to be read together and in light of one another. Of course, each has respective emphases, but what is true about one is complementary of the other.¹⁰

Upon first reading of Genesis 17, it is hardly possible to ignore the family dimensions throughout the chapter. A simple count of the familial references and allusions is astounding. In just 21 verses, there are 19 familial references and another 23 familial allusions:

Familial References

- ‘father’ (4, 5)
- ‘your offspring after you,’ (7, 7, 8, 9, 10)
- ‘throughout their generations’ (7, 9)
- ‘every male throughout your generations’ (12)
- ‘he who is born in your house’ (13)
- ‘Sarah your wife’ (15)
- ‘Sarah your wife’ (19)
- ‘a son’ (16, 19)
- ‘a child’ (17, 17)
- ‘his offspring after him’ (19)
- ‘father twelve princes’ (20)

¹⁰ Given this point and the lopsided blessings from God to Abraham throughout Genesis 15, 17, and 22, I would hold that these passages, taken together, should be considered a grant-type covenant; see Scott W. Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant: A Canonical Approach to the Fulfillment of God’s Saving Promises* (New Haven: Yale University, 2009), 101. For a helpful description and comparison of the different types of covenants, see Hahn’s summary on pages 28-31.

Familial Allusions

- ‘Abraham,’ i.e. ‘father of a multitude’ (5, 9, 15, 17, 18)
- ‘Sarah,’ i.e. ‘princess’ (15, 17, 19, 21)¹¹
- ‘Ishmael,’ i.e. illegitimate son (18, 20)
- ‘Isaac,’ i.e. legitimate son (19, 21)
- ‘multiply you greatly,’ i.e. Abraham’s reproduction (2)
- ‘make you exceedingly fruitful,’ i.e. Abraham’s reproduction (6)
- ‘make you into nations,’ i.e. Abraham’s reproduction (6)
- ‘kings shall come from you,’ i.e. Abraham’s reproduction (6)
- ‘every male among you,’ i.e. Abraham’s descendants (10)
- ‘she shall become nations,’ i.e. Sarah’s reproduction (16)
- ‘kings of peoples shall come from her,’ i.e. Sarah’s reproduction
- ‘make him fruitful’ i.e. Ishmael’s reproduction (20)
- ‘multiply him greatly’ i.e. Ishmael’s reproduction (20)
- ‘make him into a great nation’ i.e. Ishmael’s reproduction (20)

These 42 family-related words or phrases punctuate the importance of understanding Abraham’s covenant in familial terms.

Nevertheless, as one continues to read the passage, the initial dominance of the quantity of references gives way to the prioritization of key familial aspects. To begin with, Scott Hahn argues that the entire covenant in Genesis 17 is intended to be a fulfillment of God’s promise to Abram in Genesis 12:2c to give him a “great name.” He gives six reasons. First, the term, “your name” is not repeated after 12:2c until Genesis 17:5. Second, Abram and Sarai receive new names in Genesis 17. Third, Abram’s new name, Abraham, is longer, and thus “greater” than his first. Fourth, a “great name” is associated with royalty in the Bible, and it is said in Genesis 17:6 that “kings shall come from you.” Fifth, because Abraham is promised to be the father of multiple *nations* (not merely kings), this would contribute to him achieving a “great name.” And sixth, Genesis 17 limits the inheritance of the land to Isaac and his descendants, thus accenting the “great name” of chosen descendants,

¹¹ Bruce Waltke notes, “Both *Sarai* and *Sarah* are probably dialectical variants meaning ‘princess.’ The promise that she will bear kings supports this interpretation. *Sarai*, her birth-name, probably looks back on her noble descent, whereas *Sarah*, her covenantal name, looks ahead to her noble descendants.” See Bruce K. Waltke with Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2001), 262.

whereas in Genesis 15 the land promise seems to be for any “offspring” (Gen. 15:19).¹² For Hahn, these six points show that God is giving Abraham a “great name,” that is, a royal family dynasty by which Abraham will be the “father of many nations.” In other words, this emphasis on Abraham receiving a great name aligns with the continuation and propagation of his family’s progeny and prosperity.

Additionally, Kenneth Mathews draws attention to three new elements found in Genesis 17 compared to the covenant establishment in chapter 15: the perpetuity of the covenant (vv. 7,8,13,19), the sign of circumcision (vs. 11), and new names for Abraham and Sarah.¹³ Given the keen focus on God’s intention to make good on his promises, anything new in the accounts of the covenants becomes particularly important. For, as God makes bigger promises, he is bound to deliver in bigger ways. As such, the three alterations acknowledged by Mathews are veering points in the story. It is immensely important, then, to notice that all three alterations contain familial changes, familial promises, or familial significance.

The first alteration noticed by Mathews is the perpetuity of the covenant. The everlasting nature of the covenant in Genesis 17:7 is only so because it pertains to “your offspring after you throughout their generations.” The eternality of the covenant, in this rendering, is only possible through sons and heirs. Moreover, that this is God’s first direct covenant with Abraham’s offspring is significant.¹⁴ The second element of newness noted by Mathews is the sign of circumcision. It is not unintentional that this sign is directed to the organ of procreation.¹⁵ Rather, this goes to show that the theme of the covenant revolves around the issue of family lineage and procreation. Additionally, the covenant sign of circumcision is not merely negative, signifying the removal (or “cutting off”) of the person who fails to maintain the covenant (though it certainly does mean this). It is also a positive sign, not for the *public*, but for *select family members* – the individual, the parents, and the

¹² Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant*, 105-107.

¹³ Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2005), 193.

¹⁴ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word Books, 1994), 22.

¹⁵ Waltke, *Genesis*, 264.

(future) wife.¹⁶ Circumcision positively associates the boy/man as a covenant member of Abraham's line and God's blessing to these select family members. Mathews' final element of newness in Genesis 17 is the renaming of Abram and Sarai. The new names, Abraham and Sarah, both imply a multitude of nations and royalty in the future. These new names accentuate the central theme of the passage, the promise of many descendants, or as argued previously, a "great name."¹⁷ This is the primary carrier theme that incorporates the idea of family into the passage.

While the theme of 'family' can clearly be seen in the number of references, the centrality of God giving Abraham a "great name" through a multitude of descendants, and through the new aspects of the Abrahamic covenant compared to Genesis 12-16, it remains to be seen how this familial theme plays out in God's covenant with David, and how the two relate to each other. To appropriately answer this question, we will analyze 2 Samuel 7, then make concluding remarks at the end of the paper.

Analysis of 2 Samuel 7

The first thing to be said about 2 Samuel 7 is that it does not explicitly call itself a covenant, yet, other parallel passages in Scripture do consider it to be one (2 Sam. 23:5, Jer. 33:21, Ps. 89, Ps. 132:12, 2 Chron. 13:5).¹⁸ Thus, its status as a covenant is not questioned by scholars, but what kind of covenant is much debated. Some authors argue that the Davidic covenant contains elements that are similar to a suzerain-vassal treaty, but the majority of scholars in the last thirty years assert that it is a royal-grant covenant, in which a superior king carries the bulk of the obligations for the benefit of the other inferior party.¹⁹ Scholars arguing that the covenant is a suzerain-vassal treaty do so in large part because of the stipulations for discipline in verses 14-15. It is claimed that such conditional disciplinary measures could not exist in the royal-grant

¹⁶ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 273.

¹⁷ Also, Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 20: "The promise of a multitude of descendants is the key theme to this chapter."

¹⁸ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 392-393.

¹⁹ For an overview of scholars on each side, see Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 397n18.

model which is the most unconditional of all covenant types. However, the view adopted here follows Scott Hahn, who argues that the key to understanding the complexity of the matter is understanding the text's Sonship language: "The threat of punishment comes precisely because of [unconditional] divine Sonship, not in spite of it."²⁰ It is a true son who may be disciplined and so lose the full exercise of his privileges (conditional element), but he can never again lose the status of Sonship or the love of his father (unconditional element).

In regards to the context surrounding 2 Samuel 7, the themes of a barren wife and an heirless father reign supreme again. David's wife, Michal, dies childless in the verse immediately preceding 2 Samuel 7, and David is left with no heir-apparent for his throne. Immediately following the chapter, "the succeeding narrative blazes a sordid trail of sin and internecine fighting within the Davidic house."²¹ Just as with Genesis 17, the whisper of the narrative asks, "Where is the son of promise?" For this reason, this portion of the narrative is well known as "The Succession Narrative," punctuating the family theme even before the passage begins.²²

Again, it is helpful to evaluate the number of times a family reference or allusion is cited in the 29 verses of 2 Samuel 7. While there are certainly not as many as were found in Genesis 17, a total of 23 words or phrases show that the theme of family is still highly prominent in the Davidic covenant:

References

- 'great name' (9)
- 'house' (11, 15, 18, 19, 25, 26, 27, 29, 29)
- 'your fathers' (12)
- 'your offspring after you' (12)
- 'his kingdom,' i.e. son's kingdom (12, 13)
- 'he,' 'him,' i.e. pronouns referring to the promised son (13, 14, 14, 14, 15)
- 'I will be to him a father' (14)

²⁰ Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant*, 198.

²¹ Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Biblical Theology of the Hebrew Bible* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003), 143.

²² Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 142n12.

'he shall be to me a son' (14)

Allusions

'who shall come from your body,' i.e. David's seed (12)

These references underline two key motifs: David's "house," and the multiple layers of father-son relations at play. These familial words are the electric current in the conduit of the Davidic covenant.

The central word of the entire chapter is the word *bayit*, or "house." This word can mean a literal dwelling, a temple or a dynasty.²³ In the words of David Firth, "It is the interplay between these senses that drives the narrative as the focus shifts from David's desire to build Yahweh a house through to Yahweh's promise that he will build David a house, a lasting dynasty."²⁴ Of particular note for our purposes, this word serves as a catch-all in ancient Israel to describe the corporate solidarity of a family unit.²⁵ If one wanted to speak of the incorporated family of a father – past, present, and future – they would use the word *bayit*. As such, the driving point of this passage is that David's royal family – his *bayit* – will be established by God himself.

This last point is of supreme importance. In one sense, it is misleading to refer to this as the "Davidic covenant." The primary substance of God's oath comes in verses 11b-16, with 11b – God's promise to make David a "house" – serving as the crescendo.²⁶ Yet, David is not the beneficiary in verses 11b-16. The promises are made to David's offspring.²⁷ Whereas the Abrahamic promise was made "to you and your offspring," naming both the patriarch and his sons, these Davidic promises are given solely "to your offspring after you" following the days when "you lie down with your fathers." In other words, there is no way to describe the Davidic covenant apart from family terminology; the promises are for David's family. And yet, the promise for David's offspring is viewed as a covenant with David himself. In verse 16, even though David's son's kingdom and

²³ David G. Firth, *1 & 2 Samuel*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary (Nottingham: Apollos, 2009), 382.

²⁴ Firth, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 382.

²⁵ Atkinson, "Roots of the Christian Family in the Old Testament," 75.

²⁶ Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant*, 182.

²⁷ See Edmund P. Clowney, *The Unfolding Mystery: Discovering Christ in the Old Testament* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1990), 157-158.

throne will be established forever, God still says to David through Nathan, “Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever.” This stands to reason because in the ancient Near East, for a son to sit on his father’s throne (continuing the dynasty), to fulfill his mission (in this case, building a temple), and to continue in covenant with his father’s God (“I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son”) is to give the patriarch an honorable and “great name.”²⁸ Indeed, “a man’s name was perpetuated in his progeny.”²⁹

The final point to be made about 2 Samuel 7 is that within the center of Nathan’s oracle, in verses 11b-16, a chiasm exists. At the center of the chiasm stands the father-son relationship between God and his covenant partner, David’s son.³⁰ This filial relationship is monumental. Until this point in the Old Testament, God has only been known as a father to Israel corporately (Exod. 4:22, Deut. 32:6), but never to an individual singularly. It is no wonder that one author calls this segment “the ideological summit of ‘Deuteronomistic History’ but also of the OT as a whole.”³¹ More pointedly for our purposes, this statement in verse 14 is the perfect marriage of the family and covenant themes. The covenantal formula – I am yours and you are mine – is now wrapped into one of the most sacred familial bonds possible, that of father and son. If there was any doubt that the two themes of family and covenant were meant to be understood together, this statement from God shatters it. This verse demands reinterpretation of God’s relationship with his creatures. Many notions of the Davidic king’s divine sonship have been construed.³² A.A. Anderson is correct, however, in stating that the divine sonship portrayed here consists of three overlapping concepts: adoption, covenant, and royal grant.³³ Legal and literal sonship could be derived from each of these structures, and all three are present in this text.

²⁸ Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant*, 182.

²⁹ P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., *II Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984), 203.

³⁰ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 394.

³¹ David R. Tasker, *Ancient Near Eastern Literature and the Hebrew Scriptures About the Fatherhood of God* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), 93.

³² For a summary, see Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant*, 194.

³³ A. A. Anderson, *2 Samuel*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 122.

In sum, the significance of the elements of David's covenant may be found not only in the number of familial references in the passage, but more importantly, in the centrality of the familial language for understanding the message. The covenant is primarily about David receiving a "great name" through a "house" or royal dynasty. This house will be established as a son of David will sit on the throne eternally. This son will be called a son of God and will live in a harmonious covenant relationship with him. These themes – a house, a Davidic son, and a divine son – intertwine the themes of family and covenant in 2 Samuel 7.

Concluding Observations

Our first observation concerns the relationship between the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants – to each other and to the other biblical covenants. The similarities between Abraham and David are striking. Both covenants are set in the context of illegitimate sons and a barren wife. Both covenants are soon followed by the birth of the promised son. Both covenants are extended to future generations, namely through the promised seed who is yet unborn.³⁴ Both covenants are eternal and secure a kingly lineage through their offspring. Both covenants discuss the possibility of disobedience from the sons. Both covenants apply the covenant formula (I am yours and you are mine) to future generations. Both covenants secure a great name for the recipient. And both covenants borrow from other covenantal themes in biblical revelation, both building and narrowing at the same time.³⁵

The second observation picks up where the first left off. The clear trend of the covenants, even as displayed in Genesis 17 and 2 Samuel 7, is one of expansion and simultaneous contraction. God's initial covenant is established with Adam and recapitulated with Noah. Then he narrows the blessings to the family of Abraham. Then Abraham's family is narrowed exclusively for Isaac. This trend continues through Jacob and Judah's lines until David arrives.³⁶ In David's covenant, the same occurs.

³⁴ Firth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 385.

³⁵ For more on these connections, see Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 143; Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant*, 196; and Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 389.

³⁶ Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 203.

David's covenant benefits the promised son after him, Solomon, and his line. This theme, of course, works itself throughout the rest of the Bible, but it is necessary to note here that it happens through family covenants. Without the covenants, and without the families of those covenants, this narrowing of the line of promise does not exist. Nor, in fact, does the expansion of the promise. Just as the line is narrowed in some ways, in other ways the magnitude of the promises is elevated and expanded. What starts as descendants for Abraham becomes nations, then a multitude of nations, then kings. Then with David, the promise of a kingdom is expanded to be eternal, and the natural filial relationship is extended beyond the biological to the theological. These themes – of narrowing and expanding – happen primarily through the familial language of the covenants.

The third and final point is rather blunt: the family language in biblical covenants is dizzyingly complicated. One must sift through multiple kinds of familial ties. From merely the two passages evaluated here, 17 different kinds of familial bonds surface:

- Patriarch and matriarch (Abraham and Sarah)
- Patriarch and legitimate son (Abraham and Isaac; David and Solomon)
- Patriarch and illegitimate son (Abraham and Ishmael)
- Patriarch and other legitimate biological sons (circumcision mandate)
- Patriarch and non-biological members of household (circumcision mandate)
- Patriarch and distant sons (Abraham and 'your offspring after you throughout their generations')
- Patriarch and king-sons (Abraham and kings)
- Patriarch and nation-sons (Abraham and multitude of nations)
- Patriarch and fathers (David and his fathers)
- Matriarch and legitimate son (Sarah and Isaac)
- Matriarch and illegitimate son (Sarah and Ishmael)
- Matriarch and king-sons (Sarah and kings of peoples)
- Matriarch and nation-sons (Sarah and nations)
- Legitimate son and sons (Isaac and offspring)
- Illegitimate son and sons (Ishmael and offspring)
- Illegitimate son and prince-sons (Ishmael and 12 princes)

God and patriarch's son (I shall be to him a father and he shall be to me a son)

Several other familial relationships exist in-between these descriptors – implied inferences (e.g. the brotherhood of Ishmael and Isaac), intertextual references, typological relationships, or theological relationships, but since they were not explicitly mentioned in the texts, they were not included here.

This means it is magnificently easy to misinterpret the familial bonds of the covenants, but direly important to get them right. Some of the most critical divides in church history and systematic theology derive from differing interpretations of the families of the covenants. In fact, covenantal-family issues trace all the way back to Paul (Rom. 2:12-29; Gal. 3), and even to Jesus. In one sense, it is a disagreement about the family of the covenant that got Jesus killed (Jn. 8:31-59; Mt. 22:41-46).

It has been the contention of this paper that a major theme in the biblical covenants is family. This wedding of family and covenant has been demonstrated within Genesis 17 and 2 Samuel 7. From these two landmark passages, one can see that the major movements of the Bible take place in and through a family. This is crucially important for understanding the narrative flow of the Bible and God's overall purposes for humanity. Indeed, to rightly understand God's heart for the world, one must reckon with familial themes and motifs in the Scriptures. This emphasis builds throughout the Old Testament, and comes to fruition in the New Testament with the birth of God's true son, Jesus Christ.

Time Management and the Pastor

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Introduction

One of the most critical responsibilities of a good basketball coach is the appropriate usage of their timeouts. When it appears that the opposing team is gaining momentum and overwhelming his team, a good coach will call a timeout to allow his team to catch their breath, regain their composure, and develop a new plan for victory. From time to time throughout my ministry I have been blessed by an appropriately called timeout. God has afforded me times and opportunities to take a short break from the daily and weekly grind of ministry in order to catch my breath, regain my composure, and develop a fresh plan to overtake new obstacles. While this paper has been in process for far too long, it is primarily the product of a ministerial timeout to reflect and study how I could gain better control of my schedule and my calendar. I pray that it will be a blessing to others.

The Symptoms of Poor Time Management

Time is the most valuable non-replenishing resource that God has given to us. As pastors there is nothing more valuable than our time. Time is a resource that God has entrusted to us as stewards. A good steward will manage his time wisely. Paul in Ephesians 5:15-16 encourages us to “be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil.”¹ In Psalm 90 Moses instructs us to “number our days, that we may present to You a heart of wisdom.” Both Paul and Moses indicate that the appropriate use of our time is a reflection of wisdom. We could also then surmise that an

¹ All scripture quotations are taken from *The New American Standard Bible*, La Habra: Foundation Publications, Inc., 1995.

inappropriate or neglectful use of our time would be a reflection of foolishness. But how then do we avoid such foolishness?

First, good time management principles are seldom modeled and rarely taught in college or seminary. For this reason, proper time management skills are often hard to learn. Second, we often associate poor time management with laziness and inefficiency. While these are certainly examples of poor time management, the greater culprit within ministerial circles is often busy-ness. We tend to honor a full schedule and a full calendar. Running from meeting to meeting and hospital to hospital while making phone calls and answering emails can often times be viewed as a badge of honor. In this scenario it is very easy to fall into the activity trap that involves more work without being effective.² So how can we identify when we have crossed the line between good productivity and poor time management? Every disease has symptoms and poor time management is no different. Here are some that are easily identifiable.

Missed Meetings and Poor Punctuality

There are few things worse than receiving a call or email from someone with whom you had an appointment and you didn't show up. Repeatedly showing up late to meetings is equally egregious. Both of these are clear symptoms of a lack of poor management and even worse a demonstration of a lack of value for both your time and also the person with whom you are meeting. As pastors there are few things as important as the relationships we build with the people to whom God has given us and a lack of punctuality will certainly strain or even worse destroy those relationships. The reality is that when our lives become a constant running from one demand to the next we become forgetful.³

² Stephen Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (New York: Free Press, 1989), 98.

³ Lisa TerKeurst, *The Best Yes: Making Wise Decisions in the Midst of Endless Demands* (Nashville: Nelson Books, 2014), 9.

Indecisiveness

When the pastor is overcome by a multitude of tasks the danger is indecisiveness. The overwhelming nature of too many choices and too many tasks can lead to paralysis by analysis.⁴ The need for clarity and focus makes for easier choices.

Saying “Yes” to Everything

Most requests that reach the pastor are good requests. Pastors are in the people business and people matter. However, when a pastor says “yes” to every request he will often neglect the most important matters for the sake of urgent matters.⁵ This can be very difficult to navigate especially since most pastors tend to be people pleasers. The danger of saying “yes” to everything is that the most important matters will be overcome by the urgent matters which leads to a very exhausted and ineffective leader.⁶

Frustration

Too many meetings along with a lack of clarity and focus can lead to frustration. Frustration and impatience is a sure sign of poor time management. When a pastor has failed to allow sufficient time for a task or procrastinated it will often lead to a short temper with co-workers or even family.

Lack of Excellence

Often times a pastor can get away with poor time management for a while but eventually it catches up with him. Poor time management creates a lack of margin time. Margin time is what allows the pastor to still excel even when the surprises of ministry arise. Margin time also allows the pastor time to improve the ministry and not simply maintain

⁴ Charles Duhigg, *Smarter Faster Better: The Secrets of Being Productive in Life and Business* (New York: Random House, 2016), 303.

⁵ TerKeurst, 20.

⁶ Will Mancini, *Church Unique: How Missional Leaders Cast Vision, Capture Culture, and Create Movement* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 89.

the ministry.⁷ This is critical. With a lack of margin time the effectiveness and excellence of the ministry will falter.

Each of these symptoms could also be identified as the result of a bad habit. Charles Duhigg in his book the power of habit identifies the three components of a habit; the cue, the routine, and the reward.⁸ When a person feels overwhelmed by too many tasks this can become a cue that leads to a time wasting routine that we often call procrastination that leads to a temporary reward of distraction.

The Process for Improvement

Having defined the symptoms and determined the diagnosis of poor time management the pastor must move forward with a process for improvement. The goal of this process is to assess your current time stewardship status and develop a structure that will allow for a more effective use of time. A common fallacy is that if a person will simply work harder with greater discipline, then better time management will be produced. While hard work and discipline are critical to better time management, they must be combined with a structure that will provide guardrails to keep him out of time management ditches. The structure will also provide a means of accountability, a measurement for success, and a clearer picture of priorities.

Define your current time usage.

In order for a pastor to improve his time management he must first have a proper evaluation of his current time usage. How much time is being spent on activities that aren't high priority? How much time is being spent on activities that prevent him from focusing on what he uniquely offers the church? Often times a pastor will feel that he has very little wasted time but upon further evaluation is surprised by how much time is misused or wasted. One of the frequent complaints of pastors is that they don't have enough time. The reality is that every person has the same amount of time and will find the time for that which is most

⁷ Andy Stanley, Reggie Joiner, and Lane Jones, *Seven Practices of Effective Ministry* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah Books, 2004), 148.

⁸ Charles Duhigg, *The Power of Habit* (New York: Random House, 2012), 42.

important to him. How can he fully know where his time is being spent? One of the most useful ways is a time log.

Time Log

A time log (also known as an activity log) is a written record of how a person spends his or her time. The time log helps a person to have a more accurate picture of where they are investing their time and wasting their time.

The process for keeping a time log is pretty simple. A person can use any number of recording mechanisms. This could be as simple as keeping a small notebook and pen or recording their activities in their phone. The ability to make a record of the activity as quickly as possible after the activity is critical.

The written record of the activity should include the date and time along with an accurate activity description. It is also important to make a brief description of how you feel following the activity. Finally, the duration of the activity should be recorded along with an assigned value (high, medium, low, none). It is important that throughout the process of a time log evaluation that you don't change your normal behavior or work schedule. The person then records everything they do throughout the day.

What I found to be personally helpful was a brief summary description of how I felt both at the end of the day and at the end of the week. The time log should be kept for at least two weeks in order to get an accurate picture of your current time usage. This can be a somewhat cumbersome process. It is important to remind yourself that this is a temporary system that is moving you towards a more effective schedule and become a more effective time manager.

Evaluating the Time Log

It has been said, "If you show me your bank account summary statement, I will tell you what you value." Jesus said it this way, "Where your treasure is there your heart will be also." In other words, where you spend your money is a picture of what you value. In a similar way, where you spend your time will give you a clearer picture of what is most important to you. In the end one will often find that what they think

they value and where they actually spend their time are very distinct. When what we value and where we actually spend our time separate we encounter frustration. To the extent that your time log equals your values is probably the extent to which you experience fulfillment and the distance between your time log and your actual values will be equal to your frustration.

As you begin to analyze your time log it is helpful to group some activities together. For instance, group all the time spent in meetings together. You may want to have sub-categories for meetings. Pastoral counseling might be one form of meeting. Meeting with prospective members is another category. Here is a list of some of the categories that I came up with during the analysis of my time log:

- Family Time – (43%)
- Church Time – (57%)
- Meetings (29%)
- Staff Meetings
- Meetings with Prospective Members
- Pastoral Counseling.
- Hospital Visits – (5%)
- Sermon Preparation/Personal Prayer & Devotional Time - (30%)
- Email (8%)
- Appreciation Notes (1%)
- Vision – Organizational Health – (5%)
- Participating in Church Services – (15%)
- Misc. Margin Time – (7%)

These were the broad categories that I defined as I began to analyze my time log. In general, my days began around 5:30 a.m. and ended around 10 p.m. This equaled to an average of 7.5 hours of sleep per day and an average of 16.5 waking hours of productive time per day and 115.5 waking hours of productive time each week. On average I spent 65 hours per week at work which equaled out to be about 57% of my week. After interviewing pastors of churches with similar sized congregations, I found this number to be a bit high. On average I spent 18 hours per week (29%) in meetings with the vast majority (almost 90%) of my meetings spent with staff. I spent relatively no time at the hospital visiting members and very little time connecting with guest and first-time

visitors at the church. My margin time was on average around 5.5 hours per week. My final analysis based on my time log was that I was efficient with my week. I found that I had very little wasted time. I also found, however, that much of my week was spent on things that I did not value highly. As Will Mancini states in his book Church Unique, “Not all activity is progress.”⁹ This doesn’t mean that all my activities were necessarily bad activities, they just were not the best activities for me and the church. Meaning, they were not the best use of my time. My values and were I was actually spending my time didn’t match up and I was experiencing a lot of frustration. This leads us to the next step.

Determine Your Priorities

What you value should occupy the majority of your time in order for you to be effective in your home and within your church. If you want to be effective at growing a healthy marriage, a healthy family, and leading a healthy organization you must schedule your life around your values.

How does a person go about determining their values? Let me first state the obvious. Every value and priority needs to be backed by Scripture. The Word of God must be the foundation of all our priorities and values. Moving from that foundation, a good question to ask yourself is, “What can I uniquely do that no one else can?”

Personal Priorities

When it comes to the family this question becomes very simple. No one else can be a husband to my wife and no one else can be a father to my boys. Therefore, being a husband and being a father is a high priority in my life. It is not enough, however, to state the value. We can talk all day long about how I love my wife and boys but if there is no scheduled time for my family then I would call that an empty value. Remember, the schedule and the time indicates the value. A person may say, “I value that relationship or this activity, but I just don’t have time.” I respectfully believe this is an excuse. During my time log experiment I was blown away by the wasted time of checking out espn.com, my weather app, and browsing twitter. We will find time for what is valuable to us. The most

⁹ Mancini, 177.

effective leaders I know have the fullest schedules. Yet they still find time for those things that they value.

As husbands and fathers we must do our best to schedule time for family. Scheduling a weekly lunch with my wife and scheduling a free afternoon for time with my family has become a high priority in my life. I have found that I now schedule almost every area of my vocational life. Why would I not treat my family with this same value? Placing my family on my schedule guards against over-scheduling and speaks value to my wife and kids. My wife and I make sure to schedule vacations with the boys and weekends to ourselves. I have found that if I don't schedule these time they will be overrun by lesser important tasks. Scheduling time with my family has become an important personal priority that has helped me to lead a healthy and strong family.

Personal time alone in God's Word is also a priority because no one else can do this for me. I cannot delegate my personal spiritual health. For this reason, my personal devotional time gets the very first portion of my day. My personal health is a high priority to me.

Organizational Priorities

Within the church or organizational environment this question becomes a bit more difficult. This is often difficult for a pastor since talking about what only you can do within the church seems arrogant or prideful. Pastors must move beyond this. The reality is that if God has called you to be the pastor then He has uniquely gifted you to lead that congregation. When determining what only you can do for your church it is often helpful to consider the pastoral responsibilities into three important categories.

1. Lead

Lead would refer to the administrative leadership of the church. Depending on the size of the church and the staff structure this responsibility may fall heavily on an executive pastor or someone in a similar role. Even in the case of an executive pastor or an associate pastor the responsibility of leading the church and the staff to some extend falls heavily upon the lead pastor. This would include leading staff meetings,

determining direction/vision, and guarding organizational and staff culture.

Direct reports are a significant part of the lead category. Within the smaller church context all employees will report to the Senior Pastor. Within the mega-church the amount of direct reports must be limited. The appropriate amount of direct reports is a bit subjective but should probably be no more than seven.

2. Feed

Feed is the proclamation, preaching, and teaching aspect of the lead pastor role. This would include sermon preparation and study. For the mega-church pastor this role becomes increasingly difficult to guard. Many pastors will spend large portions of their days at home or at an offsite location in order to guard this time from interruption. It is one of the most influential aspects of the pastoral role. While others can occasionally fill the pulpit, this is often one of the responsibilities that only the pastor can provide for the church. For this reason, this responsibility is normally given more attention and time than the other two areas.

3. Care

Care refers to overall care of the members. This would include hospital visits, counseling, funerals, weddings, and guest follow-up. Within many mega-churches the pastor will become less involved with this portion of pastoral care. As the church grows the ability to stay connected with the overall church body becomes more difficult. Church members within mega-church will often have less of an expectation for pastoral care from their lead pastor. This does not make this responsibility any less critical. The pastor's ability to minister to families during critical times is the primary means of building and developing spiritual equity. Spiritual equity is critical when making changes and adjustments in the church body.

Every pastor will place different levels of importance upon each of these categories. Again, the question that must be asked is "What is it that only I can do?" This question does not mean that you are personally indispensable. No one is indispensable. This question does imply,

however, that you are the only person that God has placed as pastor of the church. Therefore, given your current responsibilities, resources, and opportunities, what is it that only you can do?

For some pastors this will involve more of the feed role. This would mean that the majority of their time each week should be spent upon sermon preparation and personal study. For example, if this is my number one organizational priority then I may want to start with the understanding that I will spend at least 24 hours per week in this area. It may also mean that before I move on to any other responsibility I will make sure that I have completed this responsibility. This activity is a non-negotiable and a top priority. Steven Covey would refer to this as beginning with the end in mind. I have a clear picture of what I desire to accomplish and everything else is evaluated through that lens.¹⁰ For other pastors the lead category will be of higher significance and will consume a greater portion of the pastor's resources and time. Whatever the case may be at some point the pastor must decide what matters most to him and schedule their time and their week around that priority. Good time management does not mean that the pastor does more, it simply means that he does more of what matters most. It is a ministry and a life that characterized by an uncompromising focus on a few things that make the greatest impact.¹¹

As was referred to earlier, frustration is a result of spending too much time and resources on those activities that don't matter to you. In order for the pastor to be a successful leader and develop a health and growing church he must learn to determine and schedule his values both in his personal life and his organizational life. He must give the very best of his time, energy, and resources to what is best and what matters most.

Develop a Structure

Some form of structure is vitally important to achieving success in the area of time management. The best time managers have systems of structure all around them that help them to say "no" to the numerous

¹⁰ Covey, 99.

¹¹ Stanley, 86.

amount of smaller distractions so that they can say “yes” to the bigger issues of greater importance.¹²

Structure for Staff

Administrative help is the pastor’s first line of defense for improved time management. When the pastor’s administrative support clearly understands his values she can guard against unnecessary meetings and interruptions. As a pastor who moved from a smaller church to a mega-church it was extremely difficult to transition from scheduling all my own appointments to having people work through my administrator. I felt as though pushing people to go through my secretary would come across as being arrogant. I found, however, that most people are very understanding and that working through my admin ensures that I don’t overload my schedule and that I don’t forget to assign meetings.

An administrator can help with meeting preparation and analysis. My administrative assistant currently takes notes in every meeting I attend and sends me a copy and files a copy for my review later. This allows me stay engaged in the meeting without having to take notes and keeps me better prepared for future meetings as I can easily review past meetings. This support alone has cut my time preparing for meetings in half and helped me to feel better prepared for my meetings.

The role of an executive pastor is viewed by some pastors to be extremely critical to their effectiveness and time management. A good executive pastor can handle much of the administrative work and handle a majority of the meetings. Every executive pastor has his or her strengths and the best pastor/executive pastor relationships appear to be those where the executive pastor is geared more towards administration or lead category and the senior pastor is geared more towards the preaching or feed category. For this relationship to work both pastors must be both humble and secure. The danger of this relationship is that the executive pastor becomes the filter for all information. Receiving information regarding the church’s overall health and unity can be dangerous. The executive pastor can also create too much of a gap or separation between the senior pastor and the rest of the staff. I have not had an executive pastor but can see both the positives

¹² Covey, 157.

and the negatives as it relates to time management. At the end of the day it appears that the critical issue is not so much the role as it is the person who fills the role. If the executive pastor and the senior pastor have a great relationship that complements each other then there is no doubt that this role can be a huge benefit.

The important issue is that the pastor has a means of healthy delegation among his staff. This may come in the form of five to seven staff reports who each handle an area of the church to which the pastor can direct delegation. For example, the pastor may have an associate pastor of pastoral care who organizes, oversees, and handles all the hospital visits. He may also have an associate pastor of operations who is empowered to handle the day to day business and operations of the church. Much of the counseling can be handed off to a trained and professional staff counselor. A good leader and an effective time manager will delegate as much authority as possible and empower other leaders to make decisions.¹³ At the end of the day the pastor must structure his staff in such a way that they can effectively handle the responsibilities and activities that do not fall within his core values and priorities.

Structure for Meetings

There are few things more painful than a bad meeting. There are two critical factors to a bad or painful meeting. First, a painful meeting is a boring meeting. Meetings that involve painful reports and unengaging lectures from uninspired staff when other critical activities are waiting can be incredibly painful. Second, a painful meeting is an ineffective meeting. Talking in circles around issues and problems that do not contribute to the greater effectiveness of the church is painful and a poor stewardship of everyone's time including the pastor. The good news is that if the pastor dislikes the meetings or if they are painful, he has the ability and the authority to change them.

Good meetings that contribute to good time management often involve conflict. To create a more engaged meeting structure that reveals the information most quickly the pastor must mine for conflict that

¹³ David Marquet, *Turn the Ship Around!* (New York: Penguin Group, 2012), 74.

uncovers “relevant, constructive ideological conflict.”¹⁴ Far too often pastors do their best to avoid conflict and tension in meetings.¹⁵ The pastor, however, must work to create an environment of trust where healthy conflict leads to more information and better decisions.¹⁶ Healthy conflict will keep all members of the staff engaged and prevent redundant conversations that don’t produce results or decisions.

A good meeting structure also involves more meetings that have distinct purposes. At first this may seem counterproductive to good time management. Most pastors would probably argue that good time management would involve fewer meetings. The reasoning behind this thought is based on our current meeting structure where too much time is wasted and very little gets accomplished. The solution to this problem is not to eliminate meetings but to make your meetings better. As Peter Lencioni states, “When meetings are properly utilized they actually become time savers.”¹⁷ Poorly executed meetings result in the need for further clarification with staff at other times when the clarification should have come during the assigned meeting. By eliminating the need to revisit items we remove repetition and unnecessary phone conversations, emails, and voicemails. This is what Lencioni calls “sneaker time.”¹⁸

For our staff I have modified our staff structure to include three distinct meetings. We have two weekly staff meetings. One involves only the executive staff and the other involves all staff in the building. In the executive staff meeting we seek to make decisions as they pertain to the weekly service items. In the all-staff meeting we seek to clarify and communicate all the weekly activities and promotions. Both of these meetings last no more than an hour.

Each month the executive staff takes a day for an off-site meeting. During this meeting we address larger issues that often arise out of the weekly staff meetings. This meeting usually lasts an entire day and we try address no more than four critical issues. Finally, twice a year we seek to

¹⁴ Patrick Lencioni, *Death by Meeting* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 149.

¹⁵ Patrick Lencioni, *The Five Dysfunctions of Team* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002), 128.

¹⁶ Ibid., 120.

¹⁷ Lencioni, *Death by Meeting*, 167.

¹⁸ Ibid.

take a two-day offsite retreat to address future plans and analyze the state of our current ministries.

By reducing my amount of direct staff reports and moving to a more organized staff meeting structure I have significantly reduced the amount of times in meetings. I have also reduced “sneaker time” and become more efficient, effective, and productive. The staff seem to enjoy the meetings we have and stay more engaged and unified while engaging in healthy conflict that produces results.

Structure for Personal Productivity

Every highly effective pastor or leader needs a personal system for productivity. Stephen Covey offers a four quadrant system for personal productivity that has been widely used by effective leaders.¹⁹ This model helps the pastor sift through the urgent and important tasks and those that are not urgent and unimportant. For many the structure might be as simple as writing down a to-do list on a 5 x 8 note card and prioritizing the list each morning. The amount of available apps for productivity is almost overwhelming. Apps such as Wonderlist and Todist are extremely popular. The best system and structure for you is the one that you will use. It is not so important which one you choose but that you are consistent in using a system to stay on task and accomplish your daily goals. There is nothing more discouraging than to complete a day with a lot of activity and feel like you got nothing accomplished. On the other hand, there is nothing more rewarding than completing a day, no matter how exhausted you feel, and knowing that you have completed tasks and moved closer to your goals. I know of no other way to experience the latter without some form of personal structure for productivity.

The pastor must also develop a structure for his personal and work calendar. The ability for both my wife and my admin to view and modify my calendar has proven to be especially helpful. They are both able to monitor my schedule and they have both helped me to avoid the awkwardness of overscheduling or missing a meeting. Fewer and fewer people are using manual day planners as technology has advanced to the point of being able to quickly add tasks and schedule appointments on our phones. I will often carry small note cards with me on Sunday

¹⁹ Covey, 151.

morning and make notes about meetings or tasks as I move through the day. I will then review the notes move necessary meetings and tasks to the calendar on my computer or phone. I have used this system because I don't like to leave my phone on during Sunday morning services.

Discipline & Habits

We all have the ability to become better time managers. Systems, staff, and administrators can all be a huge aid to honing our time management skills. All these aids are only as good as our discipline to use them.²⁰ Wisdom lies not in the accumulation of knowledge but in the application of that knowledge to our lives. So it is with time management.

Throughout my study and research of highly effective pastors I was amazed both by how much responsibility they carried and the ease with which they carried it. While they were busy they didn't seem tired. While they were highly productive they did not appear overwhelmed. They had disciplined their lives with appropriate boundaries and focused the majority of their time and efforts on those areas where their passion, ability, giftedness, and effectiveness all matched up. They had the personal discipline to say "no" to a lot of good things so that they could say "yes" to the most important. Their schedules were driven by their values rather than the urgent requests of the moment. They were effective because they were disciplined to schedule their values and structure their lives to become the productive leaders and pastors that God could use for His glory.

Conclusion

Again, this research and an appropriate and divine ordained "time-out" have allowed me the opportunity to become a better pastor and leader by becoming a more effective time manager. I have a clearer picture of my current time usage and identified areas that need improvement. I have learned to schedule and prioritize my values. I have created a staff structure that allows me to delegate the tasks that others can do and focus my time on that which only I can do. I have developed a better meeting structure that has allowed our church and staff to

²⁰Lencioni, *The Five Dysfunctions of Team*, 138.

become more productive and spend less time in meetings. I have learned the keys to eliminating bad habits and developing the habits that lead to better time management.²¹ I have become more disciplined with my time and schedule. Finally, by becoming a better time manager I am growing a healthy marriage, family, staff, and become a better leader of my church.

²¹ Duhigg, *The Power of Habit*, 387.

BOOK REVIEWS 110-140

Recapturing the Voice of God: Shaping Sermons Like Scripture.
By Steven W. Smith. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2015. 240 pp.
\$24.99, Paperback. ISBN-13 978-1-4336-8250-6

A consensus on what exactly constitutes expository preaching is notoriously elusive. There are numerous preachers claiming to preach expositional sermons, but the degree of exposition these pastors employ in explaining the biblical text ranges from thorough to non-existent. To address this ambiguity, the text-driven movement from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary seeks to promote precise homiletical discussions that center on the nature and practice of biblical preaching. Steven W. Smith advances the text-driven model as a preaching professor at Southwestern. He defines text-driven preaching as “the interpretation and communication of a biblical text in a sermon that re-presents the substance, structure, and the spirit of the text” (17). In *Recapturing the Voice of God*, Smith addresses the role that literary genre must play in the preaching event for the preacher to faithfully exposit God’s word. In Smith’s analysis, to be text-driven is to be genre-driven.

Smith’s goal for this book is to help preachers see that a text’s genre contributes more than just a hermeneutical grid for proper interpretation. Since genre contributes to the meaning of a passage, a text-driven sermon must “re-present” the genre within the sermon itself (2). This means that a preacher is not only responsible for accurately interpreting the passage through genre recognition, but also preaching the passage in such a way that the “voice of God” is heard by “saying what God says, the way God says it” through genre re-presentation (2).

After establishing and defending his thesis in chapters 1-2, Smith explores the role of genre for hermeneutical and homiletical faithfulness in chapter 3. Here, Smith organizes all nine genres found in Scripture into three main categories: story, poem, and letter. In the category of story are the genres of Old Testament narrative, law, Gospel/Acts, and parables. In the category of poem are the genres of Psalms, prophecy, and wisdom literature. In the category of letter are the genres of epistles and Revelation. The remaining nine chapters are devoted to each respective genre. These chapters explore how each particular genre should be interpreted and then communicated within the sermon. The final section of each chapter contains a “step-by-step approach to preaching” the genre and an extended sermon outline that provides a concrete example

of what it looks like to re-present the text (56). A bibliography of recommended reading is also provided for further study on genre recognition and re-presentation.

The strength of *Recapturing the Voice of God* lies in its thorough and thoughtful integration of the disciplines of hermeneutics and homiletics. This book rightfully sees genre as an essential component of a text's meaning. Hermeneutically sound interpreters recognize that a text's genre must be taken into account for understanding a passage's meaning. However, if the preacher synthesizes the meaning of the passage and repackages the meaning in another form during the sermon, he changes the thrust of the text and loses the fullness of the text's intended meaning. In other words, any process of generalization will inevitably result in a loss of specificity. Since each passage of the Bible articulates a specific theology and covenantal demand, this specificity must be preserved by allowing "the substance, structure, and spirit of the text" (genre) to determine "the shape of the sermon" (19). As Smith argues, "The shape of the sermon is not arbitrary" (19). "Preaching sermons that honor the genre is the choice to die and let the genre of the text live. It is an extension of a high view of Scripture" (34).

For those desiring to preach the genre of a biblical text, Smith provides solid guidance. Of particular helpfulness is Smith's broad scope in dealing with all of the biblical genres in one cohesive and accessible work. He explains how the genres function as literary devices, how they are to be interpreted, how they are to be explained, and how they are to shape the sermon. Combined with its practical focus and concrete examples, Smith advances a sound methodology for uncovering and preaching a text's genre.

My main critique of *Recapturing the Voice of God* is that Smith does not consistently focus on the emotive dynamic of genre throughout his book. To be sure, Smith does not deny that genres communicate on an emotional level. He says that genres "influence the feel of the text—that is the author-intended emotional design of the text" (2). Smith also admits that "it is important to convey the tone of all the literary genres of the Bible" (139). Though Smith recognizes this as important, he primarily focuses on the way each genre communicates intellectual information. A notable exception to this is the way he explains the genre of the Psalms. Smith says, "Poems do not operate at a purely intellectual level. The words a poet uses, and the way they move, are intended to

produce an emotional effect on the listener" (131). Thus, he argues that preachers should "show [the congregation] the affective element of the psalm. They will understand from the meaning that the psalm has an emotional design, but showing it to them in the text actually reinforces this in profound ways. We then teach the listener that the Holy Spirit has inspired these affective designs" (137). Since engaging the heart (intellect, emotions, and will) with the word of God in the sermon is essential for faithful preaching, it would have been advantageous for Smith to make explicit how each specific genre contributes to the engagement of the emotions.

As a whole, Smith's book is a valuable contribution in an area that has received limited attention in the evangelical homiletical literature. The unique helpfulness of this book means that it should serve as the go-to resource for students and pastors looking for an introduction on the role of genre for preaching.

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The History of Theological Education. By Justo L. Gonzalez. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2015. xi + 155 pp. \$39.99. Paperback. ISBN-13: 978-1426781919.

Justo L. Gonzalez has provided a helpful review of the development of theological education while at the same time providing a prognosis for its future. Originating as lectures Gonzalez delivered on two occasions, the esteemed and prolific church historian refined his presentations into a short volume for any interested in this topic.

Rather than provide a mere historical overview, which Gonzalez does well, *The History of Theological Education* is organized around several premises. In addition to showing that theological education has always been a part of the church, Gonzalez explores how contemporary traditional theological education is in crisis, though wider non-traditional theological education is not. Exploring these themes over sixteen brief chapters, Gonzalez attempts to show how the study of the history of theological education can help provide guidance for the future.

In the early church, Gonzalez shows how there were Christian schools, like Justin Martyr's in Rome and the Alexandrian catechetical school, but these were not formal environs for the training of pastors but rather the simple study to the Christian faith (5-6). This informal catechetical study was the only requirement for pastors, yet it was also required for every believer. However, alumni from these schools would go on to form more formal projects in the second and third centuries following the conversion of Constantine. From this point until the Middle Ages, universal training declined and the training of individual teachers increased along with the introduction of monastic schools (22). With the arrival of the Germans into Roman territory, one of the few educated class of leaders that remained were in the church. Yet, even their training was limited and thus by the sixth and seventh centuries, Cassiodorus wrote his *Institutions* to train clergy first in what would become known as the *quadrivium* (logic, arithmetic, geometry, and music) before studying Scripture (25). This was followed by the more significant *Pastoral Rule* of Gregory the Great, which focused predominately on the task of the clergy (27). In the early Middle Ages, clergy were trained by the monastic schools as well as schools attached to cathedrals wherein bishops would prepare candidates for ordination. However, most clergy remained untrained and even though under Charlemagne there was a revived interest in education, "general chaos and ignorance seemed to reign until the end of the eleventh century" (35). That, and during this period, most who did study were directed toward the application of tasks for ministry in administration, which Gonzalez notes, is why they employed the term clerks or clerics, for they saw their work as "clerical" (35).

With the dawn of the twelfth century an "economic and intellectual awakening" overtook Western Europe and with it came growth to the cathedral schools (41). This growth paved the way first for scholasticism and then the birth of the university. Schools in Paris, Bologna, and Oxford were noted for their study of theology and, in particular, the practice of 'lecture,' wherein a professor "commented on a text" (44). From Peter Lombard's *Sentences* to Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologica* (which Gonzalez notes was in part "a handbook for those undertaking missionary work among Muslims" (52)), a new form of theological education emerged. Yet, as Gonzalez relates, most of the clergy still did not receive training due to cost and lack of basic education

(53). By the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, scholasticism saw a separation between faith and reason, and the academy and the church. This led to greater educational darkness even for parish clergy and, even more, a lack of desire or need seen for education to aid or help in the task of ministry (61). In reaction to this trend arose the humanists and Desiderius Erasmus with new proposals “for pastors and church leaders for whom it was impossible to separate study from devotion and the practice of charity” (68).

The Protestant Reformation launched via the work of a university professor, Martin Luther, and theological education saw reformation and formalization. Philip Melanchthon led the creation of public schools and the revamping of the theological curriculum at the University of Wittenberg, which would influence many other universities and future theological educators (71-74). In 1556, Andreas Hyperius proposed a three part curriculum still followed by many Protestant seminaries: (1) the study of the Bible, (2) doctrinal theology, and (3) practical studies (74). In Geneva, John Calvin shaped significantly the development of theological education among the Reformed with his writings and in the Academy of Geneva (75). In his 1541 *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*, Calvin established the church office of “doctor” to “teach the faithful the correct doctrine” and saw the need for this to take place in schools (76). Gonzalez notes that “the early leaders of the Radical Reformation were highly educated,” yet, due to persecution, this tradition would wait until much later to establish schools for theological education (77).

The Roman Catholic Church responded in the Council of Trent with a renewed emphasis on the education of priests (79). In 1563, the Council instructed each diocese to establish “seminaries,” a term first used seven years earlier by the Archbishop of Canterbury (80-81). These “seedbeds” Gonzalez explains were schools who were “to plant a large number of candidates, care for them in their growth process, and finally transplant them to the places where their ministry was to take place” (81). The next generation of Protestants engaged in the task of systematizing the doctrines of the Reformation for organization and teaching, which naturally led them to focus on theological education (89). While still opposed to Roman Catholicism, the Protestants would follow the same educational methods, especially in the establishment of seminaries (94).

Yet, as is often the fracturing nature of Protestantism, Gonzalez relates that “in protest against the intellectualism of Protestant

orthodoxy” the Pietists appeared and their approach to smaller churches within the church, or schools of piety (95, 98). Also connected to the University of Halle, a school that would shape Zinzendorf and the Moravians, thus connecting theological education to Protestant missionary advance.

In the Modern Era, theological education was shaped by Schleiermacher, one who rejected Pietism in favor of defining theological education in light of the Enlightenment (107). This leftward plunge into the scientific and historical critical method of studying both history and Bible brought many changes to theological education. Gonzalez recognizes a further divide between the academy and the church, liberalism and fundamentalism that resulted in change in many of the early American universities, such as Harvard, Yale, and Princeton and their approaches to theological education (110).

In this section Gonzalez explains that the fundamentalists “tended to reject many of the discoveries and theories that seemed to contradict the teaching of scripture” and calls this a ‘canonization of ignorance,’ explaining that these “theologians and religious leaders insisted on their traditional positions, ignoring the challenges of modernity” (110). Focusing on the Presbyterians, he lists as examples Charles Hodge and J. Gresham Machen. Gonzalez then expounds further explaining that this canonization of ignorance often results in “biblical imperialism” wherein “the pastor, on no other grounds than being a supposed specialist on divine matters, attempts to tell scientists how to follow their disciplines [w]hich isolates them from those who do not accept the pastor’s imperialism but do see the pastor’s ignorance” (112).

In his final two chapters, Gonzalez uses his historical groundwork to speak to contemporary theological education administration calling for a transformation beyond curriculum to a return to theological education for every believer (119). He provides seven directives aimed at reconnecting the academy to the local church that center on concepts like “community,” “relating,” “contemplation,” “responding to evolving circumstances,” “redefine the relationship to ordained ministry,” “train mentors,” and in light of these, “redefining faculty publication expectations” (127-129). He further assesses that “seminaries are not doing their job properly” as “the denominations that traditionally have been most insistent on the need for seminary education in order to practice the pastorate are also the denominations whose membership is

most rapidly declining" (132). While these assessments are ripe for debate, Gonzalez rightly notes one area for needed change is in understanding demographics as these denominations are seeing growth "among people belonging to ethnic minority backgrounds other than those traditionally associated with a particular denomination" (134). He states, "It will no longer be enough for a denomination to have an office or a department of racial-ethnic minority ministries. It will not be enough to recruit a few ethnic minority students and faculty. It will be necessary to reexamine the very structure, ethos, and form of government of a denomination, in order to see how these promote or impede its witness in the presently shifting circumstances" (135).

Gonzalez's work will no doubt be seen as the primary source to cite for the history of theological education, and while for the most part this is helpful, it is regrettable for his dim assessment of the twentieth century and the future. For one example of those following Gonzalez's lead, Christian Scharen and Sharon Miller cite Gonzalez in their *Auburn Studies* report, "Bright Spots in Theological Education" (Sept 2016). In this influential periodical, they note that the future of theological education is either dim or bright based on whether schools follow Gonzalez's call for total reorientation and redefinition.¹ In particular they use Gonzalez's work to see a dim future for schools "committed to the Master of Divinity as the gold standard for leadership preparation in declining mainstream churches" (Sharen and Miller, 5).

Gonzalez's work further lacks an assessment of how a doctrinal or confessional core shaped and sustained many Protestant seminaries, and led to guiding the future of many denominations and missionary expanse. In his sections on the modern era, there is barely a mention of Andover seminary, the first non-university divinity school started by the Congregationalists (not the Baptists as Gonzalez states) that trained many leaders after the Great Awakenings and contributed to the start of formal participation by American Protestants in foreign missions (132). Further, there is no treatment of the founding and reclamation of Southern Seminary, its founder James P. Boyce and his formative "Three Changes" address. The growth and expansion of the modern Evangelical movement, the founding of Fuller Seminary, the influence of Dallas

¹ Christian Sharen and Sharon Miller, "Bright Spots in Theological Education," *Auburn Studies No. 22* (September 2016).

Seminary and many others, do not appear in this volume. Further, there is no discussion of the pivotal role of accreditation and the historical development of the Association of Theological Schools. With these oversights, Gonzalez's concluding reflections and prescriptions ring hollow and uniformed. With that said, this is a volume worth reading, but reading critically, as the earlier historical chapters are quite helpful for assembling a basic understanding of the history of theological education.

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Make Peace before the Sun Goes Down: The Long Encounter of Thomas Merton and His Abbot, James Fox. By Roger Lypsey. Boston: Shambhala, 2015. 313 pp. \$18.05, Paperback. ISBN 978-1-61180-225-2.

Any vocational pastor ministering within a multi-staff church is aware of the advantages and disadvantages of working alongside peers. Many of the advantages include professional camaraderie, community of ministry-minded clergy, and spiritual encouragement and accountability. One of the disadvantages is the possibility of a dysfunctional relationship among the pastoral staff. Conflict in a relationship without reconciliation has the potential to have a negative impact on each person and the ministry. In *Make Peace before the Sun Goes Down*, Lipsey explained the dysfunctional relationship between Catholic monk Thomas Merton and his Abbot, James Fox, at the Monastery of Gethsemani, located in Kentucky,

This book concerns a long relationship periodically and excruciatingly difficult. It was a relation that would founder in abysses of disagreement, misunderstanding, imposition, and resentment, yet emerge into the light as a willing partnership, only to founder again. Willingness and profound disagreement would often coexist (5).

Make Peace is a biography of two spiritual brothers who were never able to reconcile their differences. Yet, they were able to grow and learn

from each other, albeit often unintentionally. They were modern examples of how iron sharpens iron (Prov. 27:17). Their relationship, as Lypsey detailed, was defined by how they differed and disputed over nearly every aspect of the ministry at Gethsemani – from how to raise funds to defining the primary function of a monk. The relationship between Merton and Fox in *Make Peace* can be summed up with three differences: between contemplation and community, the authoritative control of Fox over Merton, and the misunderstanding between trust and truth.

There was a marked dissimilarity between the contemplative Merton and the community builder Fox. The signature difference between Merton and Fox was their approach to monastic life during the post-WWII era. Merton proved to be a prolific writer, producing his bestselling work, *The Seven Story Mountain*. This work brought him international notoriety, as well as funding for the Abby. However, Merton was a man of two sides. On the one side, he desired to be on pilgrimage in the world, seeking to draw spiritually closer to God. On the other, he was a man who desired absolute monastic aloneness. These two polar opposites would be the main point of contention between himself and the abbot. Lypsey described how Fox "...was at heart a community builder and a man of prayer, not a contemplative" (22). His priority was the functioning and overseeing of one of the largest monasteries in America. He felt responsible for the spiritual formation of his younger protégé. Therefore, he neither allowed Merton to travel, nor did he allow him permanent seclusion on the monastery grounds. Merton proved to be the obedient servant, while Fox continued to block any opportunity for his personal and spiritual desires to be met.

Merton and Fox's entire relationship appeared to be based upon Fox's authoritative control to keep Merton close and Merton's incessant requests to travel or to enter seclusion as a hermit. Lypsey described the nature of their relationship in a way that the reader often cheered for Merton. Journaling his life and encounters with Fox, Merton wrote in 1956, "I need plenty of grace now. I am coming to a crucial point in my life in which I may make a complete mess of everything – or let Jesus make a complete success of everything" (80). For Fox, he wrote letters to superiors to present his case against Merton. At one time Fox described Merton as, "...a neurotic in the strictly scientific meaning of the word"

(145). This biography revealed that one of the key sustainers for their inability to reconcile was their unrepentant use of the pen.

Finally, the other biographical link within *Make Peace* that kept Fox and Merton at odds was their misunderstanding of one another's position as related to trust and truth. Any request Merton sent to Fox for either a pilgrimage or hermitage was denied year in and year out. Fox claimed that if he had let Merton go, he would slip into the ways of the world and never return to Gethsemani. Lipsey weaved this tension throughout the work ensuring that the reader remained aware that the main irreconcilable difference between the two brothers was their inability to either trust each other or not believe their intentions true.

This biography summarized in great detail the complex and multifaceted relationship between Thomas Merton and James Fox. Although this is a biography on two catholic monks, it is a ministerial-rich read for any protestant minister who functions within a multi-staffed organization. It is not difficult to hear the words of the Apostle Paul ringing out on each page, noting that Jesus gave us, "... the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18)."

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Theodore Beza: The Man and the Myth. By Shawn D. Wright. Ross-Shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2015. 256 pp. \$14.99, Paperback. ISBN 978-1-78191-684-1.

"Theodore Beza? Who is he? Why should I care about him" (9)? With these basic questions Shawn D. Wright, Associate Professor of Church History at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, sets up the puzzle box that he attempts to solve with this accessible and rich biography. With the death of John Calvin in 1564, Theodore Beza (1519-1594), fellow Frenchman and protégé to Calvin, took the theological reins of the Reformed revolution centered in Geneva. It is with the rise of Beza's leadership that many Reformation scholars have insisted on a divergence of the pure Biblicalism of Calvin in Reformed thought to a more

Aristotelian and Scholastic flavor of later Calvinism (41-42). The cold and unyielding logic of later Calvinism with its focus on predestination and reprobation are seen as mutations of or additions to Calvin's earlier system. These changes along with the hyper-Calvinistic accesses of later Reformed generations are laid specifically at the feet of Theodore Beza. It is here that Wright pushes against the prevailing opinions of Reformation scholarship. Wright wants the reader to see "the real Beza," through Beza's own words, clearly and honestly displaying the contextual discontinuities with Calvin, but also the boldly reaffirming continuity with the father of Reformed thought.

The opening chapters attempt to place Beza in his context so that the reader will better understand why Beza appears different from Calvin, and yet remains in agreement with Calvin. Using a precise historical account of Beza's life and ministry (chapter two) as well as a broad vision of Beza's theology and thought (chapter three), Wright deftly gives the reader a proper contextual foundation. In essence, Wright seeks to explain in these chapters that Beza's supposed divergences from Calvin are in fact primarily differences of style and emphasis, which can be explained by Beza's political and theological context. As an example, Wright points particularly to the explosion of French persecution of Protestants during Beza's career. Wright also defends against Beza's critiques by successfully demystifying the bogeyman label of "scholasticism." Standing upon the "Muller Thesis" Wright explains, "The discontinuities...were not due to substantial theological reorientation but were rather driven by external realities" (43-44). These realities fall into two categories. First, Protestant Scholastics needed to codify their theological views as they taught this early generation of Protestants. Second, there was a need to systematize and bolster their theological positions as they were responding to a revival of Roman Catholic opposition in the aftermath of the council of Trent (44). Beza's "Scholasticism" was not necessarily a divergence from Calvin's original thought, but rather a necessary codification and extrapolation due to the circumstances on the ground at this stage of the Reformation. As Wright summarizes, "We must realize that 'scholasticism' should not bear any negative connotations. It was merely the way in which theology was taught from the late twelfth century through the seventeenth century" (45).

Having established a broad historical and theological foundation for his defense of Beza's treatment of Calvin's legacy, Wright moves to the center of his argument with a thorough evaluation of several key primary sources (chapters four through eight). Each chapter takes a particular work of Beza, and follows a uniform outline: a succinct explanation of the historical setting, an outline and explanation of the work's content, and a devotionally centered application of the text in question. With each chapter the reader will find a continuation of Wright's thesis, as he defends Beza against the caricature that was created by many of his critics. Throughout the exposition of each of these texts, the reader finds Wright continuing his march against the myth of Beza as a cold and hollow systematizer.

A stand out example of Wright's expositional defense of Beza is his treatment of Beza's *Tabula Praedestinationis* (chapter four). This chapter is perhaps Wright's best defense of Beza and highlights an area that is regularly cited as a point of Reformed mutation: the prominence of predestination on Reformed theology and, specifically, the precise nature of double predestination. For example, Roger Olson insists that Beza was obsessed with predestination beyond even Calvin and created seemingly out of thin air supralapsarianism (111). To counter critics like Olson, Wright meticulously interacts with Beza's *Tabula Praedestinationis* and Beza's full explanation of double predestination. Wright explains that the asymmetry of the infamous "chart of salvation" found within the *Tabula*, along with corresponding theological explanations, show that Beza is articulating that sinners are judged centrally due to their own sin (114). Wright continues this defense by bringing Calvin back into the discussion, showing Beza was not original in his formulation of double predestination (123). Wright skillfully makes it clear that Beza, in fact, does not confuse the concepts of reprobation and condemnation, but rather holds them in distinct tension. Wright's aim here is to show the reader that Beza's doctrine of predestination is to see "The response of those whom God has saved should be able to preach His mercy to all, recognizing that all humanity alike deserves His wrath" (134).

Two particular strengths of this work can be noted for those interested in this volume. First, it is refreshing to see an accessible biography place the primary sources of the individual as central to the substance of the work. Far too often modern Christian historical biography careens into one of two ditches: that of borderline historical

fiction where the “story” overshadows the details and actual words of the subject or that of mere stenography where the primary sources are repeated but without context or explanation, which often loses the reader not already well-versed in the world of the subject. Second, Wright masterfully accomplishes what should be the goal of any good work of Christian historical biography: applying the historical and theological concerns of the subject to the reader’s world today. The reader will find at the end of each of the core chapters (four through eighth) a clear application of each of the texts expounded. Also, discussion questions at the end of these chapters further help the reader apply the author’s conclusions to their own spiritual life and development. Not only does this aid the reader in personal application of Beza’s work but also helps facilitate group studies, encouraging the often neglected discipline of doing historical theology in community.

While no formal critiques are offered here, there are two warnings that the reader should be aware of as they engage with this work. First, the overall writing style of the book is almost glaringly informal. First person pronouns abound and the writing is often casually conversational in tone and expression. For those accustomed to more formal works this may be initially off-putting, but should not necessarily be a cause for devaluing the quality of the work. Another warning is that, for better or worse, Wright spends little time directly engaging with the often-mentioned critics of Beza as a proper inheritor of Calvin’s legacy. It is possible that Wright’s defense of Beza would be strengthened by a more thorough treatment of those who have created the myth of Beza, but this would most likely lead to a decrease in the accessibility of the book. Wright’s work is a valuable addition to Reformation studies generally, and Reformed studies particularly. This accessible, and yet exceptionally credible, work will serve students and scholars well as the study of Theodore Beza continues to grow.

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Going Public: Why Baptism Is Required for Church Membership. By Bobby Jamieson. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2015. 256 pp. \$24.99, Paperback. ISBN 978-1-4336-8620-7.

Going Public: Why Baptism Is Required for Church Membership is another contribution in the ever growing field of 9Marks' ecclesiological discussion. For Bobby Jamieson, a PhD student at Cambridge University, the main point of the book is tied in to the ecclesiological nature of baptism and church membership. "This whole book aims toward the conclusion that churches should require prospective members to be baptized—which is to say, baptized as believers—in order to join" (1). He does so in three major parts.

In part one, "Getting Our Bearings," Jamieson spends the first two chapters by laying his groundwork carefully. In chapter one Jamieson argues that "according to Scripture baptism is required for church membership and for participating in the Lord's Supper, membership's recurring effective sign" (8). As the book is Baptist in its truest fashion, this is to exclude paedo-baptists since they have not been baptized biblically and, therefore, are excluded from participation in the Lord's Supper (8–11). This, he believes, is a debate worth having. In chapter two Jamieson highlights six reasons open membership "feels right," but is incorrect. Of the strongest, especially within Reformed circles, is the desire for evangelical cooperation across lines between Presbyterians and Baptists.

Part two is Jamieson's attempt to build a case for the points he has argued thus far. In chapter three he stays close to the biblical text to argue that believer's baptism is when a Christian's faith is made public. "If you're looking for a visible hook to hang your hat on when you speak about conversion, baptism is the natural choice" (41). He also takes on Piper's stance on open membership (50–52).

Chapters four through seven seek to answer the question: "How does baptism relate to the church" (55)? In other words, is baptism an individual matter or is it connected to the church and, therefore, has an ecclesial shape to it? Jamieson argues yes to each of these questions. Chapter four examines baptism through the lens of the new covenant and the Kingdom of God in order to describe its ecclesial shape. Baptism "is the initiating oath-sign of the new covenant, and this makes baptism

necessary for church membership" (56). Thus, "baptism is a solemn, symbolic vow which ratifies a person's entrance into the new covenant" (63), but it is not akin to circumcision in that circumcision was a conditional self-malediction covenant (73–75). Chapter five discusses baptism as a passport to the kingdom because through baptism "you swear an oath of citizenship and are thereby formally recognized as a citizen of the kingdom of Christ" (94).

Chapter six "attempts to define the sense in which the Lord's Supper constitutes a local church" (108). Jamieson provides four foundations for the ecclesial shape of the Lord's Supper and attempts to connect it with the constitutive rite of baptism (110–120). His five conclusions that flow from his argument attempt to present the argument that the Lord's Supper should only be administered to those who have been properly baptized, namely by immersion (124–133). Chapter seven finds Jamieson bringing together his biblical and theological statements in order to provide a practical and pastoral statement concerning church membership. "Baptism promotes and protects the gospel by requiring those who believe the gospel to publicly confess the gospel. When a church removes baptism from the requirements for membership, it privatizes Christian profession" (156).

Part three is Jamieson's defense of his position amidst the questions provided by paedo-baptists and those who hold to open communion and open membership. Chapter eight provides a brief review of Jamieson's positions that have been developed. Chapter nine begins his answers to his objectors, and he lists seven significant arguments provided by his dissenters. He writes, "If baptism is a public profession of faith, then infant baptism isn't baptism" (175). The problem, he argues, is that intention is not enough to mark a Christian distinct from the world; rather, baptism is what accomplishes this. To those who suggest inviting paedo-baptists to preach but excluding them to preach is inconsistent, Jamieson notes the New Testament does not teach church membership is a requirement to fill a pulpit. "Unity between churches is made of different stuff than unity within churches" (190). In chapter ten Jamieson engages with open membership and engages effectively against this trend. Fundamentally he argues that open membership builds on error because "it enters a faulty value into the ecclesiological equation" (194). The final chapter provides the practical application of Jamieson's view in the life of the church. He provides a guide of transition for those

who have allowed paedo-baptists into membership (210–211) and how the church may have meaningful membership rather than simply the name of the member on a list (219–223).

Jamieson is unapologetically “baptistic” in his polemical language regarding baptism. This would be a concern if he did not defend his arguments as well as he did. He delivers solid arguments for his “closed membership” position and he does not lack in his historical research. His Baptist historical analysis for both closed and open membership positions only strengthens the overall argument of his thesis. Furthermore, his willingness not only to address dead but also living theologians is commendable. He is firm and steadfast concerning closed membership despite possible friends that might be ostracized from participation in the Lord’s Supper as a result.

There were times when Jamieson could have been clearer than he was, or simply teased out his argument further. For example, his discussion on page 129 regarding “visiting Communion” perhaps would be strengthened had he elaborated further or provided more than one resource in the footnotes as to prove his point. Another example is his statement that baptism is an effective sign of church membership, which is valid. However, he then remarks that one cannot make Christians into a church without baptism so that, including the components of the Gospel, churches need to agree on baptism. By this Jamieson suggests baptism by immersion, which leaves the question of whether he would consider a paedo-baptist congregation a church? He would, but this issue was left open-ended.

Bobby Jamieson has provided a helpful resource that promotes true biblical church membership. He is to be commended for his clear writing, careful exegetical work, and cordial tone with those in disagreement. This is a discussion worth having, and Jamieson’s work is a worthy contribution to a difficult topic.

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Arminian and Baptist: Explorations in a Theological Tradition.
By J. Matthew Pinson. Nashville: Randall House, 2015. 262 pp.
Paperback, \$22.99.

Matt Pinson serves as President of Welch College, the primary locus of the theological perspective (primarily within Free Will Baptists) known as Reformed Arminianism – that is, a theological perspective which follows Arminius himself, who was much closer to the early Reformers than later Arminians represented in the Wesleyan and Holiness traditions. Two of the foremost theologians associated with Reformed or Classical Arminianism – Leroy Forlines and Robert Picirilli – also serve on the faculty of Welch College.

In this volume, Pinson makes available to a larger audience a further development of a number of professional presentations and articles he had previously published. Earlier versions of three of the essays (chapter four on Thomas Helwys, chapter five on Thomas Grantham, and a review essay of the book *Whosoever Will* which I co-edited, were published in *The Journal for Baptist Theology and Ministry*. Some of the content from chapters one and six on the theology of Jacobus Arminius and John Wesley were previously published in *Integrity: A Journal of Christian Thought*. Earlier versions of chapter two addressing Arminius' view of the atonement, and a review essay on Roger Olson's *Arminian Theology: Myths and Realities* were previously published in the *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*. The article on the Free Will Baptist tradition was previously published in *Evangelicals and Nicene Faith*, edited by Timothy George, and the introduction to *Classical Arminianism*, a survey of Leroy Forlines' thought which Pinson himself edited, are also part of the collection. The only previous article not published in any format is a comparison of the thought of early Baptists John Smyth and Thomas Helwys.

The reader might imagine that such a collection of articles might be disconnected or uneven, but this is not the case. Pinson has significantly revised some of the articles, and each chapter builds upon previous chapters in a logical, historical order. There is some repetition of content at points, which is nonetheless helpful in comparing and contrasting the views of earlier and later theologians.

The view of Reformed Arminianism that emerges in these essays is one that with the magisterial reformers, affirms doctrines such as

original sin and human depravity, salvation by God's grace alone, and the penal substitution theory of the atonement. It also shares an appreciation for confessional commitments that are products of the Christian community, as opposed to an individualistic view of soul competency. It has a strong appreciation for the need for Christian sanctification, and affirms a blend of both confessional orthodoxy and pietism. Reformed Arminianism eschews some doctrines affirmed by later Arminians, such as the governmental theory of atonement and Christian perfectionism or so-called "entire sanctification."

One doctrine unique to the tradition of Grantham and Wesley is the strong distinction between the application of the passive and active obedience of Christ in the atonement. The passive obedience of Christ (His going to the cross) took God's wrath for sin upon Himself and paid the penalty for believers' sins. Jesus' active obedience (His sinless life) was not what purchased our atonement, as most in the Reformation tradition affirm. Reformed Arminianism allows for apostasy, as distinguished from Southern Baptist belief in the security of the believer, but only for those who fall into unbelief, not by simply committing any particular sin. However, this variety of Arminianism affirms that one who falls into final disbelief cannot be renewed to salvation.

This book is a must-read for any evangelical theologian. Arminian theology is sometimes stereotyped in ways that are not representative of most or all Arminians. This volume unpacks what Arminius, Helwys, Grantham, and Wesley actually believed, and how that tradition is represented today by Reformed Arminians. Thus, the work is highly recommended.

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An Invitation to Analytic Christian Theology. By Thomas H. McCall. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015. 183 pp. Paperback, \$17.84. ISBN-13: 978-0830840953.

In *An Invitation to Analytic Christian Theology*, Thomas H. McCall explores how philosophy and theology interact and benefit one another. McCall summarizes the focus of his book: "I introduce non-specialists to analytic theology. I try to make clear both what it *isn't* and what it *is*. Accordingly, I discuss what makes analytic theology *analytic*, and I try to lay out what makes analytic theology really *theology*" (9). Analytic theology (also called philosophical theology) has garnered new interest over the last 20 years. Eager young philosophers, coming out of a religious background, are surveying how (and if) philosophy is applicable to their faith. If one is to label a book valuable or noteworthy by the author's success in detailing his thesis, then McCall's book is valuable and noteworthy. In fact, if one is looking for an introduction to philosophical theology, McCall should be on your reading list.

In chapter 1, McCall defines analytic theology and gives it some historical context. According to McCall, analytic theology is generally defined as signifying "a commitment to employ the conceptual tools of analytic philosophy where these tools might be helpful in the work of constructive Christian theology" (16). With that McCall argues that analytic philosophy is beneficial to the theologian (and Christian believer) in that it gives the theologian logical tools to better understand Christian belief.

Christian philosophy has made significant inroads within a skeptical contemporary academic environment. Philosophers, such as, Alvin Plantinga, Richard Swinburne, Brian Leftow, Nicholas Wolterstorff, and others have made not only an impact with Christian philosophy; these philosophers have made an indelible impact on the discipline itself. McCall writes that Christian theologians can adopt the general motivation of analytic philosopher: "a commitment to truth wherever it may be found, clarity of expression, and rigor of argumentation" (21). The goal according to McCall is not to remove all of the mystery in theology, nor is it to reduce the analytic theology to apologetics. The purpose is simple: analytic philosophy is a constructive tool to better understand Christian doctrine.

The focus of chapter 2, titled *Analytic Theology and Christian Scripture*, is to explore the relation between analytic theology and Scriptural study. The chapter does not merely ask the question: Which has priority: reason or Scripture? McCall asks, what hath the philosopher to do with biblical interpretation? The importance of this chapter to the overall focus of the book cannot be overstated: McCall is calling for an erosion of the false dichotomy between reason and biblical truth. Humans are endowed with rational abilities. By what mechanism does humanity understand the Spirit and Scripture, if not via the rational process? McCall concedes, reason must be tempered by divine revelation, but that does not mean reason is a hindrance or impediment to biblical interpretation or biblical understanding.

Furthermore, chapter 2 draws out the distinction and the benefit of the various hermeneutical disciplines. McCall writes,

“This does not mean that analytic theology finally supersedes or replaces biblical theology; nothing here implies that biblical theology is merely some pile of theological data or confused, immature rendering that only provides some raw materials for analytic theology and then can safely be discarded once the ‘real’ work of analytic theology has been done. To the contrary, one may affirm what I have said to this point and also affirm the continuing importance of a biblical theology that follows the shape of the complement to biblical theology; it need not replace or undermine biblical theology” (79).

In other words, analytic theology, according to McCall, can give the Christian a bigger picture of the text. Thus, analytic theology should not replace other hermeneutical disciplines, but it deserves a place in the conversation. To further his claim, McCall does not simply argue his point: he gives a lengthy case study of the debate between theological determinism and free will to show how philosophy can clarify such nuanced discussions.

Chapter 3 takes a close look at analytic and historical theology. In the chapter, McCall offers more case studies. He writes, “One shows how analytic theology can help us to better understand and defend classical orthodoxy in light of contemporary objections to it; the other shows how the creedal orthodoxy might serve as a guide to recent constructive work in analytic theology” (84). The first case study focuses on the dual natures of Christ; showing how analytic theology has been historically used within this conversation. The second case study addressed some recent

work on physical Christology (an idea that claims Jesus is identical with His body). In both studies, McCall shows the invaluable assistance of analytic theology to determine what is compatible with orthodox Christianity and what is not.

Contesting for the veracity and authority of Scripture is a perpetual battle in the contemporary world (issues such as the compatibility of science and faith, the historical Adam, etc.). In chapter 4, McCall sets out to show the reader that analytic theology is not merely a tool for the Christian wanting to better understand theology; analytic theology is a tool for the church to engage global issues. As with chapter 3, chapter 4 uses case studies to show that analytic theology is a guide for the Christian wading into the sometimes quixotic mire of Christian theology.

Chapter 5 is McCall's concluding chapter and an apology for analytic theology within Christian spirituality. I find this last chapter to be claiming: The study of Christian doctrine is a study of God.² Thomas Aquinas writes, "The chief aim of sacred doctrine is to teach the knowledge of God, not only as he is in himself, but also as he is the beginning of things and their last end."³ The person who knows God is a person that flourishes. Studying Christian doctrine is a necessary, though not sufficient, discipline to knowing God. And analytic theology is a tool to avoid theological obfuscation and staleness. McCall writes, "Theology is not—and cannot be—a merely intellectual exercise if it involves genuine knowledge of God" (169). In this important last chapter, McCall elucidates the need for theology to go beyond the verbiage and jargon of an intellectual enterprise—that is, theology may have "feet."

Any reader of *An Invitation to Analytic Christian Theology* will quickly recognize this short book will live on for many years to come. It not only introduces the reader to analytic theology, but McCall discloses that analytic theology introduces the Christian to a beauty of the majesty and glory of God that may not be experience (in this life) otherwise.

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²I adopt Wayne Grudem definition of "doctrine." He writes that "doctrine" is "What the whole Bible teaches us today about a particular topic" (Wayne Grudem, *Bible Doctrine: Essential Teachings of the Christian Faith*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999, 20).

³Thomas Aquinas, *Summa*, I.2.

The Things of Earth: Treasuring God by Enjoying His Gifts. By Joe Rigney. Wheaton: Crossway, 2015. 271 pp. \$16.99, Paperback. ISBN 978-1-4335-4473-6

The book of Isaiah says this: “Holy, holy, holy is the lord of hosts! The whole earth is full of His glory!” (Isaiah 6:3 ESV). However, as Joe Rigney points out in *The Things of Earth*, there is more to it. “A more literal rendering” would be “the fullness of the whole earth *is* His glory” (73). He presents two ideas that have their basis in this text. In referencing Jesus’ words in Matthew 6:9 about Solomon’s royal clothing being “his glory,” he argues that the creation *is* the glory of God (73). The other possibility is that the earth is like a bride, referencing 1st Corinthians 11:7 where a woman “is the glory of man” and “the bride of Christ, as ‘the fullness of him who fills all in all’ (Eph. 1:23)” (74). In Isaiah 6:3, the earth, as a part of God’s creation, and all its *fullness*, or all that it contains, is like a glorious robe or bride for God. It’s an adornment and treasure. Creation is meant to communicate God’s nature and glory. As Christians, we surrender our lives to serve this living God in what John Piper calls, a “wartime” lifestyle (198-214). However, one can get the impression that Christianity means asceticism. This is a dangerous idea and those who are prone to it experience a false sense of guilt for enjoying God-given pleasures. This book’s main focus is the fact that Scripture reveals God creating all things for *His* glory, and that He is to be glorified in its enjoyment.

Additionally, the book unpacks the Triune God using two different models of analogy. The “Psychological Model” is drawn from Jonathan Edwards and the “Family Model” is used as well (39-40). Those who are saved by God, are invited and even swept into the fullness of the Trinity (40-46). The “mutual indwelling” of the Triune God, or *perichoresis*, is illustrated using the two different models (36-40). Rigney, in citing John 17:5 and 17:24, points out that the “glory of God” is “the Trinitarian fullness” (40-41).

It is from the foundation of perichoresis and the glory of God in creation that Rigney builds his case for the necessity for Christians to enjoy the “things of earth” as gifts. Drawing heavily from Jonathan Edwards, C.S. Lewis, John Piper, and Douglas Wilson (15), the case is made for pure pleasure in earthly, created things. In fact, pleasures are

intended to draw us closer to God, when understood and used appropriately. This frees those who feel a sense of false guilt for enjoying life as Christians, but the book also warns against the inevitable pitfalls of idolatry that are present in earthly enjoyment. Rigney begins by unpacking divine sovereignty and human freedom through the analogy of story (47-60). As God is sovereign over all creation, so are writers over their stories, like C.S. Lewis and Narnia (49-54). The author and the characters in the story are equally responsible for the actions of the characters (49-52). In our story, God is the main character, and Christ comes to the earth and becomes a “*human character*” to redeem mankind (60).

As aforementioned, creation itself is a form of communication from God (Psalm 19:1 and Romans 1:20), and Scripture brings meaning to it through the use of “typology, analogy, and metaphor” (62-66). Rigney quotes C.S. Lewis’s analogy of a toolshed, where light is peering in, illuminating floating dust particles and one “looks along” the shaft of light to the source of it (66-67). Rigney argues that created things are those “shafts” leading to God (66-72). As one must “taste” honey in order to know its sweetness, and understand the “*spiritual benefit*” of it to grasp the sweetness of God, so must we embrace God’s gift of creation (71-75). Rigney also underlines the fact that the good gifts of God are meant to be “provisions” for the Christian mission on earth, as well as “gifts for our enjoyment and pleasure” (83, 85). A threefold vocation of man is illustrated with Adam in the Garden of Eden (83-85). Adam has a kingly, priestly, and prophetic role to play in the dominion and leadership roles assigned by God. The gifts are a part of and help to accomplish the roles. The gift that Adam directly praises is Eve (82-83). Rigney illustrates how the appreciation of her beauty and kinship to Adam is not condemned but advocated (81-86). However, in valuing things, one must keep in mind the “proportionate regard” of the infinite value of God (86-90). In seeking to value things for what they are worth, God’s superior value must be regarded comparatively and in an integrative way (95-99). These “tests” of where we set our minds and the greatest treasures of our hearts, are to be done in a “rhythm” to prevent idolatry and maintain “godwardness” (99-124). Thus, we can then safely “know God better” by “knowing the world better” (125).

Rigney unpacks the “cultural mandate” given in Genesis 1:28, equating Adam’s task of naming the creatures with our own task of

“naming” in “creativity” and “culture making” (137-147). Rigney completes this with a chapter of personal examples of grasping God through weaving examples from his own family, poetry, seeing natural beauty, story, and understanding of Scripture. Finally, the challenge of Christian “sacrifice, self-denial, and generosity” is addressed in regard to the proper use of wealth (175-192). The right motivation is gratitude, and not guilt, citing Paul’s example of the Macedonians’ generosity (193-196).

Rigney uses himself as an example to point out that this “wartime” mindset of Christian living allows mission-minded generosity, which John Piper promotes from Scripture (198-214). However, it can go wrong when one forsakes the goodness of God’s gifts in the process. He further points out that gratitude does not depend on good gifts, but the loss of these gifts can actually provide a test for what we really treasure. As Narnia was merely a “shadowland” which was pointing to the real Narnia to come, so is this created order merely a shadow of better things to come for Christians (228). Therefore, we can have joy and hope even when our gifts are taken away, since we await a heavenly city to come (228-230). Finally, Rigney concludes by exhorting Christians whose passion is singularly both the glory of God and their own joy (231). He invites them to “embrace their creatureliness,” to “seek to be *like* God,” and not “seek to be God,” having Christ “in the good gifts,” in receiving and giving gifts away “in the cause of love,” or “in the loss of everything that is precious to you” (234-235).

The strength of the book is how it soundly addresses the *ditch* of asceticism with some warning against extreme narcissism as well. Thankfulness and gratitude are soundly argued for in the Christian life. However, if taken wrongly, it could give the impression of a selfish Christianity that only thinks about personal desires. A prior reading of John Piper’s works would be helpful as well.

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Baptist Foundations: Church Government for an Anti-Institutional Age. Edited by Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman. Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2015, 380 pp. \$44.99, Hardback. ISBN: 978-1-4336-8104-2.

There are many situations in Baptist church life that cause lively discussion among the members of the congregation, one such is the issue of church government. Different views exist on this subject, and each view will have its adherents and opponents. Yet, the independent nature of Baptist churches demands that each congregation seek an answer to the question of how to best operate a church so as to bring glory to God and effective unity of purpose.

Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman have entered a clarifying volume into this discussion. This work carries enough valuable information to increase understanding for anyone who desires to learn of Baptist roots and traditions. Roots grow in the historical background and foundational effort within Baptist ecclesiology, and tradition asserts the governing methods which have held sway over Baptist churches for many decades.

Each major section of this book highlights what the authors and editors indicate are the best methods for governing Baptist churches. These sections include Congregationalism, Ordinances, Church Membership and Discipline, Elders and Deacons, and a final section on how churches are to relate to other church groups inside and outside the Baptist denomination. The flow from section to section feels very natural as one subject leads to the next. Each chapter contains Scriptural excerpts as historical underpinnings which buttress the chapter's arguments. All of these attributes make this volume a well-executed work on the subject of Baptist church government.

Three attributes within *Baptist Foundations* are briefly showcased here. First, Leeman introduces three historical individuals whose names may not be familiar to many Baptist congregations. In the section titled "Unity, Holiness, and Apostolicity," the author gives Tertullian, Cyprian, and to a lesser degree, Augustine, opportunity to speak from history on the issue of holiness and apostolic authority as it relates to church unity. While some within the confines of Baptist life might wince at the use of church "Fathers" to illustrate contemporary arguments, Leeman does a service to the reader who may not be up-to-speed with how such men influenced the early church.

Leeman then brings John Calvin's views on holiness, unity, and apostolic authority into the mix. This is also an appreciated foray into Protestant historical background. While the name of Calvin brings mixed responses from different quarters, his view, per Leeman, "...represents something of a ecclesiological halfway point between the previous three authors (Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine) and the free church perspective...." (344).

Second, it is this free church perspective that both Dever and Leeman, as well as the other authors in this work, argue for in the context of both congregational and elder leadership. Without the historical frame of reference, their arguments would not have been as persuasive. This perspective appears in Calvin's view of the doctrine of imputed righteousness which the authors present. Baptist theology maintains that each person is accountable for his or her belief or non-belief in regard to the Lordship of Christ (often referred to as *soul competency*). Calvin taught that righteousness attached itself to every citizen in Geneva that belonged to the church whether or not the person had salvific faith. The use of this historical reference makes a clear distinction between the Reformed perspective and the Baptist understanding of righteousness. The authors showcase the fact that the believer stands as an individual before God and is justified on the basis of a personal saving faith in Jesus Christ and not on his or her standing as a part of any group.

Third, this idea leads to one of the most important concepts within this work. The individual's status as a believer shows through his or her membership in the local church. This is where the idea of individual faith and unity of the Body of Christ coalesces in the realm of the local congregation. The single member is crucial to the overall work and holiness of the Baptist church. The individual partners with others to form the congregation, and it is the congregational model of church polity that the authors repeatedly emphasize and explain. Within the context of this congregational polity, other important church-governance situations which are addressed include membership, ordinances, leadership, and church discipline. Each of these situations are given explicit Scriptural foundations and step-by-step guidance for implementation.

However, there are two areas which need further discussion. First, although it may not have been intended by the authors and editors, several passages within the text appear almost patrician in approach. For

example, the issue of deacons in leadership roles, as well as the possibility of women serving as deacons, appeared in Chapter 16. Benjamin Merkle states, “Just as the apostles delegated administrative responsibilities to the Seven (the first deacons), the elders are to delegate responsibilities to the deacons so the elders can focus their efforts elsewhere” (320). While this statement is historically accurate, to some readers it may seem to be a power-shift from deacon-led polity to an elder-led polity.

Second, there are those who would disagree with Shawn Wright’s statement that shut-ins should not be given communion. He writes, “Special consideration must be given to whether to give the Supper to church members who are ‘shut-ins’.... It’s our opinion that bringing the elements of the Supper to them is not the way to encourage them. Giving them the elements apart from the communion of the whole fellowship...may weaken, not strengthen, their faith” (161). This statement is controversial especially since the chapter ends with Wright stating, “Far from being bare memorials, both baptism and the Supper are rich means of encouragement and blessing ordained by Christ” (163). The author initially denies the Lord’s Supper to people who may not be physically able to attend a communion service and then praises the act as ordained by Christ. Does the author wish to deny such a blessing to a person unable to be with the congregation? The author makes valid points as to the function, service, and importance of the Supper, but denies it to shut-ins based on the necessity of physically being at the service. This practice displaces the shut-in from the Body through no fault of their own. The idea presented appears at best legalistic and at worst sacerdotal.

Despite the above mentioned drawbacks, this volume is concise, easily readable, and well-researched. It could easily act as a text book for seminarians as well as church congregations. It answers often asked questions concerning the historical rationale for church practices, and it delivers an important reemphasis on the necessity of being part of a local congregation. Its practicality is its greatest asset, and it avails itself as a resource for anyone interested in the debate over church polity.

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A Message from the Great King: Reading Malachi in Light of Ancient Persian Royal Messenger Texts from the Time of Xerxes. By R. Michael Fox. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015. xiii + 170 pp., \$42.50, Hardback, ISBN-13: 978-1-57506-394-2.

When one reads the Book of Malachi, it does not take long to ask the question, “Why are there so many messengers?” In *A Message from the Great King*, R. Michael Fox not only attempts to answer that question but also presents Malachi as a *royal message* from YHWH, the Great King, while dating the book to *Xerxes’ time*. This new classification of Malachi and its date come from Fox’s extensive historical reconstruction and a deeper reading of the text with an emphasis on messenger language. He asserts that Malachi is full of such language governed by the Persian royal-messenger root metaphor (1-2).

Reading Malachi through the messenger metaphor showcases several strengths for this book. First, it is innovational to classify Malachi’s form as a *royal message* by applying Michael Ward’s methodology—donegality—to a biblical text, since scholars had previously classified Malachi in various forms: disputations (E. Pfeiffer), discussions (H. Boecker), hortatory discourse (E. Clendenen), or a covenant lawsuit (J. O’Brien) (120-121). “Donegality,” the term coined by Ward to explain C. S. Lewis’ series *The Chronicles of Narnia*, represents a unique atmosphere of a story and provides an interpretive lens. Using this lens, Ward showed that the medieval perception of a planet’s traits governs each *Chronicle* (28-42).

By adapting Ward’s method, Fox succeeds in showing that the messenger donegality rooted in the Persian royal-messenger system permeates Malachi. Reading Malachi through the messenger lens constructed in Chapter 3 reveals that the entire text is decorated by messenger metaphors (*poiema*, ποίημα) of various gradations: the brilliant, bright, and subtle decorations. These messenger decorations range from the obvious messenger term (מֶלֶךְ, 1:1; 2:7; 3:1) and YHWH as a Great King (מלך גָּדוֹל, 1:14) to the use of subtle decorations including the treaty language of love/hate (1:2-5) and the connection between YHWH’s visit for the fiery purification of Jerusalem (3:1-7) and Xerxes’ destroying the Athenian Acropolis with fire (117-118). These ubiquitous messenger

metaphors unveil Malachi's high literary quality and challenge its negative evaluations from scholars such as W. De Wette, J. M. P. Smith, G. von Rad, and E. Hammershaimb (133-135). Thus, classifying Malachi as a *royal message* is a convincing assertion, and its original audience who would be familiar with Persian messengers would have easily understood Malachi's oracles as a royal message from YHWH (120-121).

Second, specifying Malachi's date as *Xerxes' time* (486-464 BC) is notable because there has been no firm agreement on Malachi's date among scholars. Most scholars agree that Malachi is from the post-exilic Persian era after the Temple reconstruction based on three clues: the term "governor" (נָזֵר, 1:8), the restored Temple (1:6-2:9), and the desolation of Edom (1:2-5). Yet, since this broad period (515-330 BC) does not pin down a precise date, scholars such as Hill, Smith, and P. Verhoeven have attempted to date Malachi by using similar issues in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. The proposed time frames include during the reign of Darius I (c. 490-486 BC), shortly before Ezra's arrival (c. 470-460 BC), between Ezra and Nehemiah's second visit (458-433 BC), and after Nehemiah's second visit (after 433 BC) (14-18).

In this unsettled situation concerning Malachi's date, Fox makes a persuasive proposition by asserting that Xerxes' era satisfies two issues: Judah's religious apathy and Sabbath violations. The historical context of Xerxes' time explicates Judah's apathy. Under Darius I, Judah suffered due to the high taxation for supporting Darius' war against Greece. Thus, Darius' defeat at Marathon (490 BC) and his death (486 BC) would have generated the Judeans' concern with YHWH worship rather than apathy, because they could have seen their hope of Judah's coming restoration in Darius' failure. Yet, Darius' successor, Xerxes, soon stabilized Persia and further heightened taxes as he prepared for revenge against Greece. Therefore, severe poverty in Judah caused by Xerxes' policies and drought explains Judah's social strife, ethical decay, and religious apathy. Also, Xerxes' era (480s BC) provides enough time before Ezra's and Nehemiah's reforms to clarify why Malachi does not address the Sabbath violations which were rampant by Nehemiah's first visit (16-20).

Third, interpreting Malachi through messenger donequality presents a balanced view of Malachi's theological message (*logos, λόγος*). Scholars who have shown interest in Malachi's theology, such as W. Kaiser, Clendenen, and Hill, have stressed YHWH's love/faithfulness over His judgment (128-133). Yet, messenger donequality highlights both of these

aspects (love/faithfulness and judgment) of God with equal value. YHWH is a faithful God who loves His people and defeats their enemy, Edom (1:2-5). He desires to purify His covenant people by inviting them to repent (3:3-4, 7), to heal the land (3:8-11), to give them a place of prominence (3:12), to possess the faithful as a treasure (3:17), and to provide healing for the faithful by sending a messenger (4:2, 5-6) (130). However, YHWH is not only a faithful covenant keeper but also the Great King, the head of the army (*יהוה צבאות*), who threatens war against the unfaithful by judgment (1:10; 3:1-7; 4:1, 3). Therefore, messenger donegality presents a balanced portrait of YHWH: His love and hate, election and rejection, healing and destruction, security and threat, and life and death. Malachi, YHWH's messenger, rightly delivers a royal message from the Great King (131-133).

Despite the above strengths, there are a few concerns with this book regarding the confusion of the identities of the messengers within Malachi. First, the identity of Malachi/My Messenger (1:1) is blurred. Fox states on page 77 that identifying Malachi (*מֶלֶךְ*) as a proper name or title does not make a difference to his study. Yet, he refers to this Malachi as the titular prophet on page 117, where Fox presents him with the other three messengers in the book: the priests (2:7) and two eschatological messengers (3:1).

Second, the identities of future messengers (3:1) are also obscured. Per Fox, the king's messengers (the priests) were so horrendous that YHWH sent Malachi to address them over the king's displeasure in Judah's treachery (123). Due to this unfaithfulness, the king would send the messengers (3:1) to warn Judah of a destructive visit from the king. Here, these messengers blur together as the identities of the messenger of the covenant and the king overlap (125).

Finally, the identity of Elijah (4:5) is unclear because Fox calls him a messenger (128) while asserting that there are four messengers in Malachi (117). Since the identities of Malachi the prophet and the priests are relatively clear, it appears that Fox relates YHWH's forerunner (*מֶלֶךְ*, 3:1) to Elijah and the messenger of the covenant (*מֶלֶךְ הַבָּרוּךְ*, 3:1) to YHWH. If not, is Fox intentionally blurring the identities of these messengers? Despite his emphasis on messenger metaphors, it would have been better for Fox to further clarify the identities of these messengers.

Overall, despite the ambiguity of the messengers, Fox's work proved itself as an innovative addition to Malachi scholarship. Its creativity, starting with its innovational methodology, not only resulted in the new classification of Malachi as a *royal message* and its specific date in *Xerxes' time* but also demonstrated its impact on the interpretation of Malachi's theology as well as the assessment of Malachi's literary quality. Messenger donegality indeed has the capacity to influence future studies on Malachi and other biblical texts.

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