CREATION: BELIEVE IT OR NOT*

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Naturalism has replaced Christianity as the main religion of the Western world. Though the teaching that natural evolutionary processes can account of the origin of all living species has never been proven, that teaching is central to the philosophy that now dominates Western scholarly thinking. Even evangelicals have become less willing to defend the early chapters of Genesis against the encroachments of evolutionary thought, although in actuality affirming an “old earth” theory and remaining evangelical is an inconsistency. A “framework” approach to those chapters does not square with a consistent hermeneutical approach to Scripture, because the first chapter of Genesis teaches that God created the world in a normal week of seven days. The purpose of evolution is to explain away the God of the Bible. The absurd teaching of the Big Bang theory of evolution is that nobody times nothing equals everything. It is a theory that raises an almost endless array of unsolvable problems. It is degrading to humanity, hostile to reasons, and antithetical to the truth that God has revealed. When one starts adapting the Word of God to fit scientific theories based on naturalistic beliefs, he has begun his journey on the road to skepticism.

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Introduction

Thanks to the theory of evolution, naturalism is now the dominant religion of modern society. Less than a century and a half ago, Charles Darwin popularized the credo for this secular religion with his book *The Origin of Species*. Although most of Darwin’s theories about the mechanisms of evolution were discarded long ago, the doctrine of evolution itself has managed to achieve the status of a fundamental article of faith in the popular modern mind. Naturalism has now

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replaced Christianity as the main religion of the Western world, and evolution has become naturalism’s principal dogma.

Naturalism is the view that every law and every force operating in the universe is natural rather than moral, spiritual, or supernatural. Naturalism is inherently anti-theistic, rejecting the very concept of a personal God. Many assume naturalism therefore has nothing to do with religion. In fact, it is a common misconception that naturalism embodies the very essence of scientific objectivity. Naturalists themselves like to portray their system as a philosophy that stands in opposition to all faith-based worldviews, pretending that it is scientifically and intellectually superior precisely because of its supposed non-religious character.

Not so. Religion is exactly the right word to describe naturalism. The entire philosophy is built on a faith-based premise. Its basic presupposition—an a priori rejection of everything supernatural—requires a giant leap of faith. And nearly all its supporting theories must be taken by faith as well.

Consider the dogma of evolution, for example. The notion that natural evolutionary processes can account for the origin of all living species has never been and never will be established as fact. Nor is it “scientific” in any true sense of the word. Science deals with what can be observed and reproduced by experimentation. The origin of life can be neither observed nor reproduced in any laboratory. By definition, then, true science can furnish no knowledge whatsoever about where the human race came from or how it got here. Belief in evolutionary theory is a matter of sheer faith. And dogmatic belief in any naturalistic theory is no more “scientific” than any other kind of religious faith.

Modern naturalism is often promulgated with a missionary zeal that has powerful religious overtones. The popular fish symbol many Christians put on their cars now has a naturalist counterpart: a fish with feet and the word “Darwin” embossed into its side. The Internet has become naturalism’s busiest mission field, where evangelists for the cause aggressively try to deliver benighted souls who still cling to their theistic presuppositions. Judging from the tenor of some of the material I have read seeking to win converts to naturalism, naturalists are often dedicated to their faith with a devout passion that rivals or easily exceeds the fanaticism of any radical religious zealot. Naturalism is clearly as much a religion as any theistic worldview.

The point is further proved by examining the beliefs of those naturalists who claim to be most unfettered by religious beliefs. Take, for example, the case of Carl Sagan, perhaps the best-known scientific celebrity of the past couple of

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1Michael Ruse is an evolutionist who testified in the 1980s’ infamous Arkansas creationism trial (McLean v. Arkansas). During the trial, he claimed that creationism is a religion because it is grounded in unproven philosophical assumptions. But Darwinism is a science, he said, because it requires no philosophical or religious presuppositions. Ruse has since admitted that he was wrong, and he now acknowledges that evolution “is metaphysically based”—grounded in unproven beliefs that are no more “scientific” than the set of beliefs on which creationism is based. See Tom Woodward, “Ruse Gives Away the Store: Admits Evolution is a Philosophy” on the “Origins” website (http://www.origins.org/real/ri9404/ruse.html).
decades. A renowned astronomer and media figure, Sagan was overtly antagonistic to biblical theism. But he became the chief televangelist for the religion of naturalism. He preached a worldview that was based entirely on naturalistic assumptions. Underlying all he taught was the firm conviction that everything in the universe has a natural cause and a natural explanation. That belief—a matter of faith, not a truly scientific observation—governed and shaped every one of his theories about the universe.

Sagan examined the vastness and complexity of the universe and concluded—as he was bound to do, given his starting point—that there is nothing greater than the universe itself. So he borrowed divine attributes such as infinitude, eternity, and omnipotence, and he made them properties of the universe itself.

“The cosmos is all that is, or ever was, or ever will be,” was Sagan’s trademark aphorism, repeated on each episode of his highly-rated television series, Cosmos. The statement itself is clearly a tenet of faith, not a scientific conclusion. (Neither Sagan himself nor all the scientists in the world combined could ever examine “all that is or ever was or ever will be” by any scientific method.) Sagan’s slogan is perfectly illustrative of how modern naturalism mistakes religious dogma for true science.

Sagan’s religion was actually a kind of naturalistic pantheism, and his motto sums it up perfectly. He deified the universe and everything in it—insisting that the cosmos itself is that which was, and is, and is to come (cf. Revelation 4:8). Having examined enough of the cosmos to see evidence of the Creator’s infinite power and majesty, he imputed that omnipotence and glory to creation itself—precisely the error the apostle Paul describes in Rom 1:20-22:

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools.²

Exactly like the idolaters Paul was describing, Sagan put creation in the Creator’s rightful place.

Carl Sagan looked at the universe and saw its greatness and concluded nothing could possibly be greater. His religious presuppositions forced him to deny that the universe was the result of intelligent design. In fact, as a devoted naturalist, he had to deny that it was created at all. Therefore he saw it as eternal and infinite—so it naturally took the place of God in his thinking.

The religious character of the philosophy that shaped Sagan’s worldview is evident in much of what he wrote and said. His novel Contact (made into a major motion picture in 1997) is loaded with religious metaphors and imagery. It is about the discovery of extraterrestrial life, which occurs in December 1999, at the dawn

²Scripture quotations are from the New King James Bible unless otherwise noted.
of a new millennium, when the world is rife with Messianic expectations and apocalyptic fears. In Sagan’s imagination, the discovery of intelligent life elsewhere in the universe becomes the “revelation” that affords a basis for the fusing of science and religion into a worldview that perfectly mirrors Sagan’s own belief system—with the cosmos as God and scientists as the new priesthood.

Sagan’s religion included the belief that the human race is nothing special. Given the incomprehensible vastness of the universe and the impersonality of it all, how could humanity possibly be important? Sagan concluded that our race is not significant at all. In December 1996, less than three weeks before Sagan died, he was interviewed by Ted Koppel on “Nightline.” Sagan knew he was dying, and Koppel asked him, “Dr. Sagan, do you have any pearls of wisdom that you would like to give to the human race?”

Sagan replied,

We live on a hunk of rock and metal that circles a humdrum star that is one of 400 billion other stars that make up the Milky Way Galaxy, which is one of billions of other galaxies, which make up a universe, which may be one of a very large number—perhaps an infinite number—of other universes. That is a perspective on human life and our culture that is well worth pondering.

In a book published posthumously, Sagan wrote, “Our planet is a lonely speck in the great enveloping cosmic dark. In our obscurity, in all this vastness, there is no hint that help will come from elsewhere to save us from ourselves.”

Although Sagan resolutely tried to maintain a semblance of optimism to the bitter end, his religion led where all naturalism inevitably leads: to a sense of utter insignificance and despair. According to his worldview, humanity occupies a tiny outpost—a pale blue speck in a vast sea of galaxies. As far as we know, we are unnoticed by the rest of the universe, accountable to no one, and petty and irrelevant in a cosmos so expansive. It is fatuous to talk of outside help or redemption for the human race. No help is forthcoming. It would be nice if we somehow managed to solve some of our problems, but whether we do or not will ultimately be a forgotten bit of cosmic trivia. That, said Sagan, is a perspective well worth pondering.

All of this underscores the spiritual barrenness of naturalism. The naturalist’s religion erases all moral and ethical accountability, and it ultimately abandons all hope for humanity. If the impersonal cosmos is all there is, all there ever was, and all there ever will be, then morality is ultimately moot. If there is no personal Creator to whom humanity is accountable and the survival of the fittest is the governing law of the universe, all the moral principles that normally regulate the human conscience are ultimately groundless—and possibly even deleterious to the survival of our species.

Indeed, the rise of naturalism has meant moral catastrophe for modern

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society. The most damaging ideologies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were all rooted in Darwinism. One of Darwin’s earliest champions, Thomas Huxley, gave a lecture in 1893 in which he argued that evolution and ethics are incompatible. He wrote that “the practice of that which is ethically best—what we call goodness or virtue—involves a course of conduct which, in all respects, is opposed to that which leads to success in the cosmic struggle for existence.”

Philosophers who incorporated Darwin’s ideas were quick to see Huxley’s point, conceiving new philosophies that set the stage for the amorality and genocide that characterized so much of the twentieth century.

Karl Marx, for example, self-consciously followed Darwin in the devising of his economic and social theories. He inscribed a copy of his book Das Kapital to Darwin, “from a devoted admirer.” He referred to Darwin’s The Origin of Species as “the book which contains the basis in natural history for our view.”

Herbert Spencer’s philosophy of “Social Darwinism” applied the doctrines of evolution and the survival of the fittest to human societies. Spencer argued that if nature itself has determined that the strong survive and the weak perish, this rule should govern society as well. Racial and class distinctions simply reflect nature’s way. There is therefore no transcendent moral reason to be sympathetic to the struggle of the disadvantaged classes. It is, after all, part of the natural evolutionary process—and society would actually be improved by recognizing the superiority of the dominant classes and encouraging their ascendancy. The racialism of writers such as Ernst Haeckel (who believed that the African races were incapable of the superiority of culture or higher mental development) was also rooted in Darwinism.

Friedrich Nietzsche’s whole philosophy was based on the doctrine of evolution. Nietzsche was bitterly hostile to religion, particularly Christianity. Christian morality embodied the essence of everything Nietzsche hated; he believed Christ’s teaching glorified human weakness and was detrimental to the development of the human race. He scoffed at Christian moral values such as humility, mercy, modesty, meekness, compassion for the powerless, and service to one another. He believed such ideals had bred weakness in society. Nietzsche saw two types of people—the master-class, an enlightened, dominant minority; and the “herd,” sheeplike followers who were easily led. And he concluded that the only hope for humanity would be when the master-class evolved into a race of Übermenschen (supermen), unencumbered by religious or social mores, who would take power and

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5“Evolution and Ethics,” The Romanes Lecture, 1893. Huxley nonetheless went on to try to justify ethics as a positive result of humanity’s higher rational functions, and he called upon his audience neither to imitate “the cosmic process” nor to run away from it, but rather to combat it—ostensibly by maintaining some semblance of morality and ethics. But what he could not do—what he and other philosophers of his era did not even bother attempting to do—was offer any justification for assuming the validity of morality and ethics per se on purely naturalistic principles. Huxley and his fellow naturalists could offer no moral compass other than their own personal preferences, and predictably, their philosophies all opened the door wide for complete moral subjectivity and ultimately amorality.

bring humanity to the next stage of its evolution.

It is not surprising that Nietzsche’s philosophy laid the foundation for the Nazi movement in Germany. What is surprising is that at the dawn of the twenty-first century, Nietzsche’s reputation has been rehabilitated by philosophical spin-doctors and his writings are once again trendy in the academic world. Indeed, his philosophy—or something very nearly like it—is what naturalism must inevitably return to.

All of these philosophies are based on notions that are diametrically opposed to a biblical view of the nature of man, because they all start by embracing a Darwinian view of the origin of humanity. They are rooted in anti-Christian theories about human origins and the origin of the cosmos, and therefore it is no wonder that they stand in opposition to biblical principles at every level.

The simple fact of the matter is that all the philosophical fruits of Darwinism have been negative, ignoble, and destructive to the very fabric of society. Not one of the major twentieth-century revolutions led by post-Darwinian philosophies ever improved or ennobled any society. Instead, the chief social and political legacy of Darwinian thought is a full spectrum of evil tyranny with Marx-inspired communism at one extreme and Nietzsche-inspired fascism at the other. And the moral catastrophe that has disfigured modern Western society is also directly traceable to Darwinism and the rejection of the early chapters of Genesis.

At this moment in history, even though most of modern society is already fully committed to an evolutionary and naturalistic worldview, our society still benefits from the collective memory of a biblical worldview. People in general still believe human life is special. They still hold remnants of biblical morality, such as the notion that love is the greatest virtue (1 Cor 13:13); service to one another is better than fighting for personal dominion (Matt 20:25-27); and humility and submission are superior to arrogance and rebellion (1 Pet 5:5). But to whatever degree secular society still holds those virtues in esteem, it does so entirely without any philosophical foundation. Having already rejected the God revealed in Scripture and embraced instead pure naturalistic materialism, the modern mind has no grounds whatsoever for holding to any ethical standard; no reason whatsoever for esteeming “virtue” over “vice”; and no justification whatsoever for regarding human life as more valuable than any other form of life. Modern society has already abandoned its moral foundation.

As humanity enters the twenty-first century, an even more frightening prospect looms. Now even the church seems to be losing the will to defend what Scripture teaches about human origins. Many in the church are too intimidated or too embarrassed to affirm the literal truth of the biblical account of creation. They are confused by a chorus of authoritative-sounding voices who insist that it is possible—and even pragmatically necessary—to reconcile Scripture with the latest theories of the naturalists.

Of course, theological liberals have long espoused theistic evolution. They have never been reluctant to deny the literal truth of Scripture on any issue. But the new trend is different, comprising evangelicals who contend that it is possible to
harmonize Genesis 1–3 with the theories of modern naturalism without doing violence to any essential doctrine of Christianity. They affirm evangelical statements of faith. They teach in evangelical institutions. They insist they believe the Bible is inerrant and authoritative. But they are willing to reinterpret Genesis to accommodate evolutionary theory. They express shock and surprise that anyone would question their approach to Scripture. And they sometimes employ the same sort of ridicule and intimidation religious liberals and atheistic skeptics have always leveled against believers: “You don’t seriously think the universe is less than a billion years old, do you?”

The result is that over the past couple of decades, large numbers of evangelicals have shown a surprising willingness to take a completely non-evangelical approach to interpreting the early chapters of Genesis. More and more are embracing the view known as “old-earth creationism,” which blends some of the principles of biblical creationism with naturalistic and evolutionary theories, seeking to reconcile two opposing worldviews. And in order to accomplish this, old-earth creationists end up explaining away rather than honestly exegeting the biblical creation account.

A handful of scientists who profess Christianity are among those who have led the way in this revisionism—most of them lacking any skill whatsoever in biblical interpretation. But they are setting forth a major reinterpretation of Genesis 1–3 designed specifically to accommodate the current trends of naturalist theory. In their view, the six days of creation in Genesis 1 are long ages, the chronological order of creation is flexible, and most of the details about creation given in Scripture can be written off as poetic or symbolic figures of speech.

Many who should know better—pastors and Christian leaders who defend the faith against false teachings all the time—have been tempted to give up the battle for the opening chapters of Genesis. An evangelical pastor recently approached me after I preached. He was confused and intimidated by several books he had read—all written by ostensibly evangelical authors—yet all arguing that the earth is billions of years old. These authors treat most of the evolutionists’ theories as indiscutable scientific fact. And in some cases they wield scientific or academic credentials that intimidate readers into thinking their views are the result of superior expertise, rather than naturalistic presuppositions they have brought to the biblical text. This pastor asked if I believed it possible that the first three chapters of Genesis might really be just a series of literary devices—a poetic saga giving the “spiritual” meaning of what actually occurred through billions of years of evolution.

I answered unapologetically: No, I do not. I am convinced that Genesis 1–3 ought to be taken at face value—as the divinely revealed history of creation. Nothing about the Genesis text itself suggests that the biblical creation account is merely symbolic, poetic, allegorical, or mythical. The main thrust of the passage simply cannot be reconciled with the notion that “creation” occurred via natural evolutionary processes over long periods of time. And I do not believe a faithful handling of the biblical text, by any acceptable principles of hermeneutics, can possibly reconcile these chapters with the theory of evolution or any of the other allegedly
scientific theories about the origin of the universe.

Furthermore, much like the philosophical and moral chaos that results from naturalism, all sorts of theological mischief ensues when one rejects or compromises the literal truth of the biblical account of creation and the fall of Adam.

I realize, of course, that some old-earth creationists do hold to the literal creation of Adam and affirm that Adam was a historical figure. But their decision to accept the creation of Adam as literal involves an arbitrary hermeneutical shift at Genesis 1:26-27 and then again at Genesis 2:7. If everything around these verses is handled allegorically or symbolically, it is unjustifiable to take those verses in a literal and historical sense. Therefore, the old-earth creationists’ method of interpreting the Genesis text actually undermines the historicity of Adam. Having already decided to treat the creation account itself as myth or allegory, they have no grounds to insist (suddenly and arbitrarily, it seems) that the creation of Adam is literal history. Their belief in a historical Adam is simply inconsistent with their own exegesis of the rest of the text.

But it is a necessary inconsistency if one is to affirm an old earth and remain evangelical. Because if Adam was not the literal ancestor of the entire human race, then the Bible’s explanation of how sin entered the world is impossible to make sense of. Moreover, if we did not fall in Adam, we cannot be redeemed in Christ, because Christ’s position as the Head of the redeemed race exactly parallels Adam’s position as the head of the fallen race: “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive” (1 Cor 15:22). “Therefore, as through one man’s offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man’s righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous” (Rom 5:18-19). “And so it is written, ‘The first man Adam became a living being.’ The last Adam became a life-giving spirit” (1 Cor 15:45; cf. 1 Tim 2:13-14; Jude 14).

So in an important sense, everything Scripture says about salvation through Jesus Christ hinges on the literal truth of what Genesis 1–3 teaches about Adam’s creation and fall. There is no more pivotal passage of Scripture.

What “old-earth creationists” (including, to a large degree, even the evangelical ones) are doing with Genesis 1–3 is precisely what religious liberals have always done with all of Scripture—spiritualizing and reinterpreting the text allegorically to make it mean what they want it to mean. It is a dangerous way to handle Scripture. And it involves a perilous and unnecessary capitulation to the religious presuppositions of naturalism—not to mention a serious dishonor to God.

Evangelicals who accept an old-earth interpretation of Genesis have embraced a hermeneutic that is hostile to a high view of Scripture. They are bringing to the opening chapters of Scripture a method of biblical interpretation that has built-in anti-evangelical presuppositions. Those who adopt this approach have already embarked on a process that invariably overthrows faith. Churches and colleges that embrace this view will not remain evangelical for very long.

One popular view held by many old-earth advocates is known as the
“framework hypothesis.” This is the belief that the “days” of creation are not even distinct eras, but overlapping stages of a long evolutionary process. According to this view, the six days described in Genesis 1 do not set forth a chronology of any kind, but rather a metaphorical “framework” by which the creative process is described for our finite human minds.

This view was apparently first set forth by liberal German theologians in the nineteenth century, but it has been adopted and propagated in recent years by some leading evangelicals, most notably Dr. Meredith G. Kline of Westminster Theological Seminary.

The framework hypothesis starts with the view that the “days” of creation in Genesis 1 are symbolic expressions that have nothing to do with time. Framework advocates note the obvious parallelism between days one and four (the creation of light and the placing of lights in the firmament), days two and five (the separation of air and water and the creation of fish and birds to inhabit air and water), and days three and six (the emergence of the dry land and the creation of land animals)—and they suggest that such parallelism is a clue that the structure of the chapter is merely poetic. Thus, according to this theory, the sequence of creation may essentially be disregarded, as if some literary form in the passage nullified its literal meaning.

Naturally, advocates of this view accept the modern scientific theory that the formation of the earth required several billion years. They claim the biblical account is nothing more than a metaphorical framework that should overlay our scientific understanding of creation. The language and details of Genesis 1 are unimportant, they say; the only truth this passage aims to teach us is that the hand of divine Providence guided the evolutionary process. The Genesis creation account is thus reduced to a literary device—an extended metaphor that is not to be accepted at face value.

But if the Lord wanted to teach us that creation took place in six literal days, how could He have stated it more plainly than Genesis does? The length of the days is defined by periods of day and night that are governed after day four by the sun and moon. The week itself defines the pattern of human labor and rest. The days are marked by the passage of morning and evening. How could these not signify the chronological progression of God’s creative work?

The problem with the framework hypothesis is that it employs a destructive method of interpretation. If the plain meaning of Genesis 1 may be written off and the language treated as nothing more than a literary device, why not do the same with Genesis 3? Indeed, most theological liberals do insist that the talking serpent in chapter 3 signals a fable or a metaphor, and therefore they reject that passage as a literal and historical record of how humanity fell into sin. Where does metaphor ultimately end and history begin? After the Flood? After the tower of Babel? And why there? Why not regard all the biblical miracles as literary devices? Why could not the resurrection itself be dismissed as a mere allegory? In the words of E. J. Young, “If the ‘framework’ hypothesis were applied to the narratives of the virgin birth or the resurrection or Romans 5:12 ff., it could as effectively serve to minimize the importance of the content of those passages as it now does the content of the first
chapter of Genesis.”

Young points out the fallacy of the “framework” hypothesis:

The question must be raised, “If a nonchronological view of the days be admitted, what is the purpose of mentioning six days?” For, once we reject the chronological sequence which Genesis gives, we are brought to the point where we can really say very little about the content of Genesis one. It is impossible to hold that there are two trios of days, each paralleling the other. Day four . . . speaks of God’s placing the light-bearers in the firmament. The firmament, however, had been made on the second day. If the fourth and the first days are two aspects of the same thing, then the second day also (which speaks of the firmament) must precede days one and four. If this procedure be allowed, with its wholesale disregard of grammar, why may we not be consistent and equate all four of these days with the first verse of Genesis? There is no defense against such a procedure, once we abandon the clear language of the text. In all seriousness it must be asked. Can we believe that the first chapter of Genesis intends to teach that day two preceded days one and four? To ask that question is to answer it.

The simple, rather obvious, fact is that no one would ever think the time-frame for creation was anything other than a normal week of seven days from reading the Bible and allowing it to interpret itself. The Fourth Commandment makes no sense whatsoever apart from an understanding that the days of God’s creative work parallel a normal human work-week.

The framework hypothesis is the direct result of making modern scientific theory a hermeneutical guideline by which to interpret Scripture. The basic presupposition behind the framework hypothesis is the notion that science speaks with more authority about origins and the age of the earth than Scripture does. Those who embrace such a view have in effect made science an authority over Scripture. They are permitting scientific hypotheses—mere human opinions that have no divine authority whatsoever—to be the hermeneutical rule by which Scripture is interpreted.

There is no warrant for that. Modern scientific opinion is not a valid hermeneutic for interpreting Genesis (or any other portion of Scripture, for that matter). Scripture is God-breathed (2 Tim 2:16)—inspired truth from God. “[Scripture] never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet 1:21). Jesus summed the point up perfectly when He said, “Thy word is truth” (John 17:17, KJV). The Bible is supreme truth, and therefore it is the standard by which scientific theory should be evaluated, not vice versa.

And Scripture always speaks with absolute authority. It is as authoritative when it instructs us as it is when it commands us. It is as true when it tells the future as it is when it records the past. Although it is not a textbook on science, wherever

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2Ibid.
it intersects with scientific data, it speaks with the same authority as when giving moral precepts. Although many have tried to set science against Scripture, science never has disproved one jot or tittle of the Bible—and it never will.

It is therefore a serious mistake to imagine that modern scientists can speak more authoritatively than Scripture on the subject of origins. Scripture is God’s own eyewitness account of what happened in the beginning. When science deals with the origin of the universe, all it can offer is conjecture. Science has proven nothing that negates the Genesis record. In fact, the Genesis record solves the mysteries of science.

A clear pattern for interpreting Genesis is given in the NT. If the language of early Genesis were meant to be interpreted figuratively, we could expect to see Genesis interpreted in the NT in a figurative sense. After all, the NT is itself inspired Scripture, so it is the Creator’s own commentary on the Genesis record.

What do we find in the NT? In every NT reference to Genesis, the events recorded by Moses are treated as historical events. And in particular, the first three chapters of Genesis are consistently treated as a literal record of historical events. The NT affirms, for example, the creation of Adam in the image of God (Jas 3:9).

Paul wrote to Timothy, “Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression” (1 Tim 2:13-14). In 1 Cor 11:8-9, he writes, “Man is not from woman, but woman from man. Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man.”

Paul’s presentation of the doctrine of original sin in Rom 5:12-20 depends on a historical Adam and a literal interpretation of the account in Genesis about how he fell. Furthermore, everything Paul has to say about the doctrine of justification by faith depends on that. “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive” (1 Cor 15:22). Clearly Paul regarded both the creation and fall of Adam as history, not allegory. Jesus Himself referred to the creation of Adam and Eve as a historical event (Mark 10:6). To question the historicity of these events is to undermine the very essence of Christian doctrine.

Moreover, if Scripture itself treats the creation and fall of Adam as historical events, there is no warrant for treating the rest of the creation account as allegory or literary device. Nowhere in all of Scripture are any of these events handled as merely symbolic.

In fact, when the NT refers to creation (e.g., Mark 13:19; John 1:3; Acts 4:24; 14:15; 2 Cor 4:6; Col 1:16; Heb 1:2, 10; Rev 4:11; 10:6; 14:7), it always refers to a past, completed event—an immediate work of God, not a still-occurring process of evolution. The promised New Creation, a running theme in both Old and New Testaments, is portrayed as an immediate fiat creation, too—not an eons-long process (Isa 65:17). In fact, the model for the New Creation is the original creation (cf. Rom 8:21; Rev 21:1, 5).

Hebrews 11:3 even makes belief in creation by divine fiat the very essence of faith itself: “By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.” Creation ex nihilo is the clear and consistent teaching of the Bible.

Evolution was introduced as an atheistic alternative to the biblical view of
creation. According to evolution, man created God rather than vice versa. And as we have seen, the evolutionists’ ultimate agenda is to eliminate faith in God altogether and thereby do away with moral accountability.

Intuition suggests a series of questions to the human mind when we contemplate our origin: Who is in control of the universe? Is there Someone who is sovereign—a Lawgiver? Is there a universal Judge? Is there a transcendent moral standard to live by? Is there Someone to whom we will be accountable? Will there be a final assessment of how we live our lives? Will there be any final judgment?

Those are the very questions evolution was invented to avoid.

Evolution was devised to explain away the God of the Bible—not because evolutionists really believed a Creator was unnecessary to explain how things began, but because they did not want the God of Scripture as their Judge. Marvin L. Lubenow writes,

The real issue in the creation/evolution debate is not the existence of God. The real issue is the nature of God. To think of evolution as basically atheistic is to misunderstand the uniqueness of evolution. Evolution was not designed as a general attack against theism. It was designed as a specific attack against the God of the Bible, and the God of the Bible is clearly revealed through the doctrine of creation. Obviously, if a person is an atheist, it would be normal for him to also be an evolutionist. But evolution is as comfortable with theism as it is with atheism. An evolutionist is perfectly free to choose any god he wishes, as long as it is not the God of the Bible. The gods allowed by evolution are private, subjective, and artificial. They bother no one and make no absolute ethical demands. However, the God of the Bible is the Creator, Sustainer, Savior, and Judge. All are responsible to him. He has an agenda that conflicts with that of sinful humans. For man to be created in the image of God is very awesome. For God to be created in the image of man is very comfortable.9

To put it simply, evolution was invented in order to eliminate the God of Genesis and thereby to oust the Lawgiver and obliterate the inviolability of His law. Evolution is simply the latest means our fallen race has devised in order to suppress our innate knowledge and the biblical testimony that there is a God and that we are accountable to Him (cf. Rom 1:28). By embracing evolution, modern society aims to do away with morality, responsibility, and guilt. Society has embraced evolution with such enthusiasm because people imagine that it eliminates the Judge and leaves them free to do whatever they want without guilt and without consequences.

The evolutionary lie is so pointedly antithetical to Christian truth that it would seem unthinkable for evangelical Christians to compromise with evolutionary science in any degree. But over the past century and a half of evolutionary propaganda, evolutionists have had remarkable success in getting evangelicals to meet them halfway. Remarkably, many modern evangelicals—perhaps it would even be fair to say most people who call themselves evangelicals today—have already

been convinced that the Genesis account of creation is not a true historical record. Thus they have not only capitulated to evolutionary doctrine at its starting point, but they have also embraced a view that undermines the authority of Scripture at its starting point.

So-called theistic evolutionists who try to marry humanistic theories of modern science with biblical theism may claim they are doing so because they love God, but the truth is that they love God a little and their academic reputations a lot. By undermining the historicity of Genesis they are undermining faith itself. Give evolutionary doctrine the throne and make the Bible its servant, and you have laid the foundation for spiritual disaster.

Scripture, not science, is the ultimate test of all truth. And the further evangelicalism gets from that conviction, the less evangelical and more humanistic it becomes.

Scripture cautions against false “knowledge” (1 Tim 6:20)—particularly so-called “scientific” knowledge that opposes the truth of Scripture. When what is being passed off as “science” turns out to be nothing more than a faith-based worldview that is hostile to the truth of Scripture, our duty to be on guard is magnified. And when naturalistic and atheistic presuppositions are being aggressively peddled as if they were established scientific fact, Christians ought to expose such lies for what they are and oppose them all the more vigorously. The abandonment of a biblical view of creation has already borne abundant evil fruit in modern society. Now is no time for the church to retreat or compromise on these issues. To weaken our commitment to the biblical view of creation would start a chain of disastrous moral, spiritual, and theological ramifications in the church that will greatly exacerbate the terrible moral chaos that already has begun the unravelling of secular society.

With that in mind I undertook an earnest study of Genesis a couple of years ago. Although the bulk of my ministry has been devoted to a verse-by-verse exposition of the whole NT, I recently turned to the OT and began preaching a series on Genesis in our church. This article is part of the fruit of my research and teaching in Genesis 1–3. We find there the foundation of every doctrine that is essential to the Christian faith. And the more carefully I have studied those opening chapters of Scripture, the more I have seen that they are the vital foundation for everything we believe as Christians.

Sadly, it is a foundation that is being systematically undermined by the very institutions that should be most vigorously defending it. More and more Christian educational institutions, apologists, and theologians are abandoning faith in the literal truth of Genesis 1–3. I recall reading a survey a few years ago which revealed that in one of America’s leading evangelical accrediting associations, whose membership boasted scores of evangelical Bible colleges and universities, only five or six college-level schools remain solidly opposed to the old-earth view of creation. The rest are open to a reinterpretation of Genesis 1–3 that accommodates evolutionary theories. Scores of well-known Bible teachers and apologists see the whole question as moot, and some even aggressively argue that a literal approach to Genesis is detrimental to the credibility of Christianity. They have given up the
battle—or worse, joined the attack against biblical creationism.

I am thankful for those who are still faithfully resisting the trend—organizations like Answers in Genesis, the Creation Research Society, and the Institute for Creation Research. These organizations and others like them involve many expert scientists who challenge the presuppositions of evolutionists on technical and scientific grounds. They clearly demonstrate that scientific proficiency is not incompatible with faith in the literal truth of Scripture—and that the battle for the beginning is ultimately a battle between two mutually exclusive faiths—faith in Scripture versus faith in hypotheses opposed to the God of the Bible. It is not really a battle between science and the Bible.

My aim in this article is to examine what Scripture teaches about creation. Although I am convinced that the truth of Scripture has scientific integrity, for the most part I intend to leave the scientific defense of creationism to those who have the most expertise in science. My purpose is chiefly to examine what Scripture teaches about the origin of the universe, and to show why it is incompatible with the naturalists’ beliefs and the evolutionists’ theories.

As Christians, we believe the Bible is truth revealed by God, who is the true Creator of the universe. That belief is the basic foundation of all genuine Christianity. It is utterly incompatible with the speculative presuppositions of the naturalists.

In Scripture the Creator Himself has revealed to us everything essential for life and godliness. And it starts with an account of creation. If the biblical creation account is in any degree unreliable, the rest of Scripture stands on a shaky foundation.

But the foundation is not shaky. The more I understand what God has revealed to us about our origin, the more I see clearly that the foundation stands firm. I agree with those who say it is time for the people of God to take a fresh look at the biblical account of creation. But I disagree with those who think that calls for any degree of capitulation to the transient theories of naturalism. Only an honest look at Scripture, with sound principles of hermeneutics, will yield the right understanding of the creation and fall of our race.

The Bible gives a clear and cogent account of the beginnings of the cosmos and humanity. There is absolutely no reason for an intelligent mind to balk at accepting it as a literal account of the origin of our universe. Although the biblical account clashes at many points with naturalistic and evolutionary hypotheses, it is not in conflict with a single scientific fact. Indeed, all the geological, astronomical, and scientific data can be easily reconciled with the biblical account. The conflict is not between science and Scripture, but between the biblicist’s confident faith and the naturalist’s willful skepticism.

To many, having been indoctrinated in schools where the line between hypothesis and fact is systematically and deliberately being blurred, that may sound naive or unsophisticated, but it is nonetheless a fact. Again, science has never disproved one word of Scripture, and it never will. On the other hand, evolutionary theory has always been in conflict with Scripture and always will be. But the notion that the universe evolved through a series of natural processes remains an unproven and untestable hypothesis, and therefore it is not “science.” There is no proof
whatsoever that the universe evolved naturally. Evolution is a mere theory—and a questionable, constantly-changing one at that. Ultimately, if accepted at all, it must be taken by sheer faith.

How much better to base our faith on the sure foundation of God’s Word! There is no ground of knowledge equal to or superior to Scripture. Unlike scientific theory, it is eternally unchanging. Unlike the opinions of man, its truth is revealed by the Creator Himself! It is not, as many suppose, at odds with science. True science has always affirmed the teaching of Scripture. Archaeology, for instance, has demonstrated the truthfulness of the biblical record time and time again. Wherever Scripture’s record of history may be examined and either proved or disproved by archaeological evidence or reliable independent documentary evidence, the biblical record has always been verified. There is no valid reason whatsoever to doubt or distrust the biblical record of creation, and there is certainly no need to adjust the biblical account to try to make it fit the latest fads in evolutionary theory.

Therefore my approach in this article will be simply to examine what the biblical text teaches about creation. My goal is not to write a polemic against current evolutionary thinking. I do not intend to probe in-depth scientific arguments related to the origin of the universe. Where scientific fact intersects with the biblical record, I will highlight that. But my chief aim is to examine what the Bible teaches about the origin of the universe, and then look at the moral, spiritual, and eternal ramifications of biblical creationism to see what it has to do with people in today’s world.

I am indebted to several authors who have treated this subject before and whose works were very helpful in framing my own thoughts on these matters. Chief among them would be Douglas F. Kelly, John Ankerberg and John Weldon, Phillip E. Johnson, Henry Morris, and Ken Ham.

Again, a biblical understanding of the creation and fall of humanity establishes the necessary foundation for the Christian worldview. Everything Scripture teaches about sin and redemption assumes the literal truth of the first three chapters of Genesis. If we wobble to any degree on the truth of this passage, we undermine the very foundations of our faith.

If Genesis 1–3 does not tell us the truth, why should we believe anything else in the Bible? Without a right understanding of our origin, we have no way to understand anything about our spiritual existence. We cannot know our purpose, and we cannot be certain of our destiny. After all, if God is not the Creator, then maybe He is not the Redeemer. If we cannot believe the opening chapters of Scripture, how can we be certain of anything the Bible says?

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3Reason in the Balance: The Case against Naturalism in Science, Law, and Education (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1995).
4The Genesis Record (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976).
Much depends, therefore, on a right understanding of these early chapters of Genesis. These chapters are too often mishandled by people whose real aim is not to understand what the text actually teaches but who want to adjust it to fit a scientific theory. The approach is all wrong. Since creation cannot be observed or replicated in a laboratory, science is not a trustworthy place to seek answers about the origin and fall of humanity. Ultimately, the only reliable source of truth about our origin is what has been revealed by the Creator himself. That means the biblical text should be our starting place.

I am convinced the correct interpretation of Genesis 1–3 is the one that comes naturally from a straightforward reading of the text. It teaches us that the universe is relatively young, albeit with an appearance of age and maturity—and that all of creation was accomplished in the span of six literal days.

To those who will inevitably complain that such a view is credulous and unsophisticated, my reply is that it is certainly superior to the irrational notion that an ordered and incomprehensibly complex universe sprung by accident from nothingness and emerged by chance into the marvel that it is.

Scripture offers the only accurate explanations that can be found anywhere about how our race began, where our moral sense originated, why we cannot seem to do what our own consciences tells us is right, and how we can be redeemed from this hopeless situation.

Scripture is not merely the best of several possible explanations. It is the Word of God. And my prayer for everyone who studies the opening chapters of the Bible is that he will believe what God has spoken.

Creation: Believe It or Not (Gen 1:1)

It is hard to imagine anything more absurd than the naturalist’s formula for the origin of the universe: \( \text{Nobody times nothing equals everything.} \) There is no Creator; there was no design or purpose. Everything we see simply emerged and evolved by pure chance from a total void.

Ask the typical naturalist what he believes about the beginning of all things, and you are likely to hear about the Big Bang theory—the notion that the universe is the product of an immense explosion. As if an utterly violent and chaotic beginning could result in all the synergy and order we observe in the cosmos around us. But what was the catalyst that touched off that Big Bang in the first place? (And what, in turn, was the catalyst for that?) Something incredibly large had to fuel the original explosion. Where did that “something” originate? A Big Bang out of nowhere quite simply could \textit{not} have been the beginning of all things.

Is the material universe itself eternal, as some claim? And if it is, why has it not wound down? For that matter, what set it in motion to begin with? What is the source of the energy that keeps it going? Why has entropy not caused it to devolve into a state of inertia and chaos, rather than (as the evolutionist must hypothesize) apparently developing into a more orderly and increasingly sophisticated system as the Big Bang expands?

The vast array of insurmountable problems for the naturalist begins at the
most basic level. What was the First Cause that caused everything else? Where did matter come from? Where did energy come from? What holds everything together and what keeps everything going? How could life, self-consciousness, and rationality evolve from inanimate, inorganic matter? Who designed the many complex and interdependent organisms and sophisticated ecosystems we observe? Where did intelligence originate? Are we to think of the universe as a massive perpetual-motion apparatus with some sort of impersonal “intelligence” of its own? Or is there, after all, a personal, intelligent Designer who created everything and set it all in motion?

Those are vital metaphysical questions that must be answered if we are to understand the meaning and value of life itself. Philosophical naturalism, because of its materialistic and anti-supernatural presuppositions, is utterly incapable of offering any answers to those questions. In fact, the most basic dogma of naturalism is that everything happens by natural processes; nothing is supernatural; and therefore there can be no personal Creator. That means there can be no design and no purpose for anything. Naturalism therefore can provide no philosophical basis for believing that human life is particularly valuable or in any way significant.

On the contrary, the naturalist, if he is true to his principles, must ultimately conclude that humanity is a freak accident without any purpose or real importance. Naturalism is therefore a formula for futility and meaninglessness, erasing the image of God from our race’s collective self-image, depreciating the value of human life, undermining human dignity, and subverting morality.

Evolution Is Degrading to Humanity

The drift of modern society proves the point. We are witnessing the abandonment of moral standards and the loss of humanity’s sense of destiny. Rampant crime, drug abuse, sexual perversion, rising suicide rates, and the abortion epidemic are all symptoms that human life is being systematically devalued and an utter sense of futility is sweeping over society. These trends are directly traceable to the ascent of evolutionary theory.

And why not? If evolution is true, humans are just one of many species that evolved from common ancestors. We are no better than animals, and we ought not to think that we are. If we evolved from sheer matter, why should we esteem what is spiritual? In fact, if everything evolved from matter, nothing “spiritual” is real. We ourselves are ultimately no better than or different from any other living species. We are nothing more than protoplasm waiting to become manure.

As a matter of fact, that is precisely the rationale behind the modern animal-rights movement, a movement whose raison d’être is the utter degradation of the human race. Naturally, all radical animal-rights advocates are evolutionists. Their belief system is an inevitable byproduct of evolutionary theory.

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) is well known for its stance that animal rights are equal to (or more important than) human rights. They maintain that killing any animal for food is the moral equivalent of murder; eating meat is virtually cannibalism; and man is a tyrant species, detrimental to his environment.
PETA opposes the keeping of pets and “companion animals”—including guide dogs for the blind. A 1988 statement distributed by the organization includes this: “As John Bryant has written in his book *Fettered Kingdoms*, [companion animals] are like slaves, even if well-kept slaves.”

Ingrid Newkirk, PETA’s controversial founder, says, “There is no rational basis for saying that a human being has special rights. . . . A rat is a pig is a dog is a boy.” Newkirk told a *Washington Post* reporter that the atrocities of Nazi Germany pale by comparison to the killing of animals for food: “Six million Jews died in concentration camps, but six billion broiler chickens will die this year in slaughterhouses.”

Clearly, Ms. Newkirk is more outraged by the killing of chickens for food than she is by the wholesale slaughter of human beings. One gets the impression she would not necessarily consider the extinction of humanity an undesirable thing. In fact, she and other animal-rights advocates often sound downright misanthropic. She told a reporter, “I don’t have any reverence for life, only for the entities themselves. I would rather see a blank space where I am. This will sound like fruitcake stuff again but at least I wouldn’t be harming anything.” And the summer issue of *Wild Earth* magazine, a journal promoting radical environmentalism, included a manifesto for the extinction of the human race, written under the pseudonym “Les U. Knight.” The article said, “If you haven’t given voluntary human extinction much thought before, the idea of a world with no people in it may seem strange. But, if you give it a chance, I think you might agree that the extinction of Homo sapiens would mean survival for millions, if not billions, of Earth-dwelling species. . . . Phasing out the human race will solve every problem on earth, social and environmental.”

That is worse than merely stupid, irrational, immoral, or humiliating; it is deadly.

But there is even an organization called The Church of Euthanasia. Their Web page advocates suicide, abortion, cannibalism, and sodomy as the main ways to decrease the human population. Although the Web page contains elements of parody deliberately designed for shock value, the people behind it are deadly serious in their opposition to the continuance of the human race. They include detailed instructions for committing suicide. The one commandment church members are required to obey is “Thou shalt not procreate.” By deliberately making their views sound as outrageous as possible, they have received widespread coverage.

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13Ibid.


15They “advocate” cannibalism, for example, with the slogan “Eat people, not animals”—to make the point that in their view the act of eating any animal is the moral equivalent of cannibalism.
on talk shows and tabloid-style news programs. They take advantage of such publicity to recruit members for their cause. Despite their shocking message, they have evidently been able to persuade numerous people that the one species on earth that ought to be made extinct is humanity. Their Web site boasts that people in the thousands have paid the $10 membership fee to become “church members.”

That sort of lunacy is rooted in the belief that humanity is simply the product of evolution—a mere animal with no purpose, no destiny, and no likeness to the Creator. After all, if we got where we are by a natural evolutionary process, there can be no validity whatsoever to the notion that our race bears the image of God. We ultimately have no more dignity than an amoeba. And we certainly have no mandate from the Almighty to subdue the rest of creation.

And if a human being is nothing more than an animal in the process of evolving, who can argue against the animal-rights movement? Even the most radical animal-rights position is justified in a naturalistic and evolutionary worldview. If we really evolved from animals, we are in fact just animals ourselves. And if evolution is correct, it is a sheer accident that man evolved a superior intellect. If random mutations had occurred differently, apes might be running the planet and humanoids would be in the zoo. What right do we have to exercise dominion over other species that have not yet had the opportunity to evolve to a more advanced state?

Indeed, if man is merely a product of natural evolutionary processes, then he is ultimately nothing more than the accidental byproduct of thousands of haphazard genetic mutations. He is just one more animal that evolved from amoeba, and he is probably not even the highest life-form that will eventually evolve. So what is special about him? Where is his meaning? Where is his dignity? Where is his value? What is his purpose? Obviously he has none.20

It is only a matter of time before a society steeped in naturalistic belief fully embraces such thinking and casts off all moral and spiritual restraint. In fact, that process has begun already. If you doubt that, consider some of the televised debauchery aimed at the MTV/Jerry Springer generation.

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20The fact that we can carry on this rational dialogue and animals cannot is itself reason to believe man is far above animals—possessing sensibility and personhood, which are totally absent in the animal realm.
Evolution Is Hostile to Reason

Evolution is as irrational as it is amoral. In place of God as Creator, the evolutionist has substituted chance—sheer fortune, accident, happenstance, serendipity, coincidence, random events, and blind luck. Chance is the engine most evolutionists believe drives the evolutionary process. Chance is therefore the ultimate creator.

Naturalism essentially teaches that over time and out of sheer chaos, matter evolved into everything we see today by pure chance. And this all happened without any particular design. Given enough time and enough random events, the evolutionist says, anything is possible. And the evolution of our world with all its intricate ecosystems and complex organisms is therefore simply the inadvertent result of a very large number of indiscriminate but extremely fortuitous accidents of nature. Everything is the way it is simply by the luck of the draw. And thus chance itself has been elevated to the role of creator.

John Ankerberg and John Weldon point out that matter, time, and chance constitute the evolutionists’ holy trinity. Indeed, these three things are all that is eternal and omnipotent in the evolutionary scheme: matter, time, and chance. Together they have formed the cosmos as we know it. And they have usurped God in the evolutionist’s mind. Ankerberg and Weldon quote Jacques Monod, 1965 Nobel Prize-winner for his work in biochemistry. In his book Chance and Necessity, Monod wrote, “[Man] is alone in the universe’s unfeeling immensity, out of which he emerged by chance. . . . Chance alone is at the source of every innovation, of all creation in the biosphere. Pure chance, absolutely free but blind, [is] at the very root of the stupendous edifice of evolution.”21

Obviously, that is a far cry from being created in the image of God. It is also utterly irrational. The evolutionary idea not only strips man of his dignity and his value, but it also eliminates the ground of his rationality. Because if everything happens by chance, then in the ultimate sense, nothing can possibly have any real purpose or meaning. And it is hard to think of any philosophical starting point that is more irrational than that.

But a moment’s reflection will reveal that chance simply cannot be the cause of anything (much less the cause of everything). Chance is not a force. The only legitimate sense of the word chance has to do with mathematical probability. If you flip a coin again and again, quotients of mathematical probability suggest that it will land tails-up about fifty times out of a hundred. Thus we say that when you flip a coin, there’s a fifty-fifty “chance” it will come up tails.

But “chance” is not a force that can actually flip the coin. Chance is not an intellect that designs the pattern of mathematical probabilities. Chance determines nothing. Mathematical probability is merely a way of measuring what actually does happen.

Yet in naturalistic and evolutionary parlance, “chance” becomes something

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that determines what happens in the absence of any other cause or design. Consider Jacques Monod’s remark again: “Chance . . . is at the source of every innovation, of all creation.” In effect, naturalists have imputed to chance the ability to cause and determine what occurs. And that is an irrational concept.

There are no uncaused events. Every effect is determined by some cause. Even the flip of a coin simply cannot occur without a definite cause. And common sense tells us that whether the coin comes up heads or tails is also determined by something. A number of factors (including the precise amount of force with which the coin is flipped and the distance it must fall before hitting the ground) determine the number of revolutions and bounces it makes before landing on one side or the other. Although the forces that determine the flip of a coin may be impossible for us to control precisely, it is those forces, not “chance,” that determine whether we get heads or tails. What may appear totally random and undetermined to us is nonetheless definitively determined by something. It is not caused by mere chance, because chance simply does not exist as a force or a cause. Chance is nothing.

Fortune was a goddess in the Greek pantheon. Evolutionists have enshrined chance in a similar way. They have taken the myth of chance and made it responsible for all that happens. Chance has been transformed into a force of causal power, so that nothing is the cause of everything. What could be more irrational than that? It turns all of reality into sheer chaos. It therefore makes everything irrational and incoherent.

The entire concept is so fraught with problems from a rational and philosophical viewpoint that one hardly knows where to begin. But let’s begin at the beginning. Where did matter come from in the first place? The naturalist would have to say either that all matter is eternal, or that everything appeared by chance out of nothing. The latter option is clearly irrational.

But suppose the naturalist opts to believe that matter is eternal. An obvious question arises: What caused the first event that originally set the evolutionary process in motion? The only answer available to the naturalist is that chance made it happen. It literally came out of nowhere. No one and nothing made it happen. That, too, is clearly irrational.

So in order to avoid that dilemma, some naturalists assume an eternal chain of random events that operate on the material universe. They end up with an eternal but constantly changing material universe governed by an endless chain of purely random events—all culminating in magnificent design without a designer, and everything happening without any ultimate cause. At the end of the day, it is still irrational. It evacuates purpose, destiny, and meaning from everything in the universe. And it therefore leaves no ground for anything rational.

In other words, nihilism is the only philosophy that works with naturalism. Nihilism is a philosophy that says everything is entirely without meaning, without
logic, without reason. The universe itself is incoherent and irrational. Reason has been deposed by pure chance.

And such a view of chance is the polar opposite of reason. Common-sense logic suggests that every watch has a watchmaker. Every building has a builder. Every structure has an architect. Every arrangement has a plan. Every plan has a designer. And every design has a purpose. We see the universe, infinitely more complex than any watch and infinitely greater than any manmade structure, and it is natural to conclude that Someone infinitely powerful and infinitely intelligent made it. “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made” (Rom 1:20, NASB).

But naturalists look at the universe, and despite all the intricate marvels it holds, they conclude no one made it. Chance brought it about. It happened by accident. That is not logical. It is absurd.

Abandon logic and you are left with pure nonsense. In many ways the naturalists’ deification of chance is worse than all the various myths of other false religions, because it obliterates all meaning and sense from everything. But it is, once again, pure religion of the most pagan variety, requiring a spiritually fatal leap of faith into an abyss of utter irrationality. It is the age-old religion of fools (Ps 14:1)—but in modern, “scientific” dress.

What could prompt anyone to embrace such a system? Why would someone opt for a worldview that eliminates all that is rational? It boils down to the sheer love of sin. People want to be comfortable in their sin, and there is no way to do that without eliminating God. Get rid of God, and you erase all fear of the consequences of sin. So even though sheer irrationality is ultimately the only viable alternative to the God of Scripture, multitudes have opted for irrationality just so they could live guilt-free and shamelessly with their own sin. It is as simple as that.

Either there is a God who created the universe and sovereignly rules His creation, or everything was caused by blind chance. The two ideas are mutually exclusive. If chance rules, God cannot. If God rules, there’s no room for chance. Make chance the cause of the universe and you have effectively done away with God.

As a matter of fact, if chance as a determinative force or a cause exists even in the frailest form, God has been dethroned. The sovereignty of God and “chance” are inherently incompatible. If chance causes or determines anything, God is not truly God.

But again, chance is not a force. Chance cannot make anything happen. Chance is nothing. It simply does not exist. And therefore it has no power to do anything. It cannot be the cause of any effect. It is an imaginary hocus-pocus. It is contrary to every law of science, every principle of logic, and every intuition of sheer common sense. Even the most basic principles of thermodynamics, physics, and biology suggest that chance simply cannot be the determinative force that has brought about the order and interdependence we see in our universe—much less the diversity of life we find on our own planet. Ultimately, chance simply cannot account for the origin of life and intelligence.
One of the oldest principles of rational philosophy is “Ex nihilo, nihilo fit.” Out of nothing, nothing comes. And chance is nothing. Naturalism is rational suicide.

When scientists attribute instrumental power to chance they have left the realm of reason, they have left the domain of science. They have turned to pulling rabbits out of hats. They have turned to fantasy. Insert the idea of chance, and all scientific investigation ultimately becomes chaotic and absurd. That is precisely why evolution does not deserve to be deemed true science; it is nothing more than an irrational religion—the religion of those who want to sin without guilt.

Someone once estimated that the number of random genetic factors involved in the evolution of a tapeworm from an amoeba would be comparable to placing a monkey in a room with a typewriter and allowing him to strike the keys at random until he accidentally produced a perfectly-spelled and perfectly-punctuated typescript of Hamlet’s soliloquy. And the odds of getting all the mutations necessary to evolve a starfish from a one-celled creature are comparable to asking a hundred blind people to make ten random moves each with five Rubik’s cubes, and finding all five cubes perfectly solved at the end of the process. The odds against all earth’s life forms evolving from a single cell are in a word, impossible.

Nonetheless, the absurdity of naturalism goes largely unchallenged today in universities and colleges. Turn on the Discovery Channel or pick up an issue of National Geographic and you are likely to be exposed to the assumption that chance exists as a force—as if mere chance spontaneously generated everything in the universe.

One Nobel laureate, Harvard professor George Wald, acknowledged the utter absurdity of this. Pondering the vast array of factors both real and hypothetical that would have to arise spontaneously all at once in order for inanimate matter to “evolve” into even the most primitive one-celled form of life, he wrote, “One has only to contemplate the magnitude of this task to concede that the spontaneous generation of a living organism is impossible.” Then he added, “Yet here we are—as a result, I believe, of spontaneous generation.”

How did Wald believe this “impossibility” came about? He answered: “Time is in fact the hero of the plot. The time with which we have to deal is of the order of two billion years. What we regard as impossible on the basis of human experience is meaningless here. Given so much time, the ‘impossible’ becomes possible, the possible probable, and the probable virtually certain. One has only to wait: time itself performs the miracles.” Given enough time, that which is impossible becomes “virtually certain.” That is sheer double-talk. And it perfectly illustrates the blind faith that underlies naturalistic religion.

There is no viable explanation of the universe without God. So many immense and intricate wonders could not exist without a designer. There’s only one

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24 Ibid., 48.
The possible explanation for it all, and that is the creative power of an all-wise God. He created and sustains the universe, and He gives meaning to it. And without Him, there is ultimately no meaning in anything. Without Him, we are left with only the absurd notion that everything emerged from nothing without a cause and without any reason. Without Him we are stuck with that absurd formula of the evolutionist: nothing times nobody equals everything.

**Evolution Is Antithetical to the Truth God Has Revealed**

By contrast, the actual record of creation is found in Genesis 1:1: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” It would be hard to state an answer to the great cosmic question any more simply or directly than that.

The words of Genesis 1:1 are precise and concise beyond mere human composition. They account for everything evolution cannot explain. Evolutionary philosopher Herbert Spencer, one of Darwin’s earliest and most enthusiastic advocates, outlined five “ultimate scientific ideas”: time, force, action, space, and matter. These are categories that (according to Spencer) comprise everything that is susceptible to scientific examination. That simple taxonomy, Spencer believed, encompasses all that truly exists in the universe. Everything that can be known or observed by science fits into one of those categories, Spencer claimed, and nothing can be truly said to “exist” outside of them.

Spencer’s materialistic worldview is immediately evident in the fact that his categories leave room for nothing spiritual. But set aside for a moment the rather obvious fact that something as obvious as human intellect and emotion do not quite fit into any of Spencer’s categories. A moment’s reflection will reveal that evolutionary principles still cannot account for the actual origin of any of Spencer’s categories. The evolutionist must practically assume the eternity of time, force, action, space, and matter (or at least one of these)—and then he or she proceeds from there to hypothesize about how things have developed out of an originally chaotic state.

But Gen 1:1 accounts for all of Spencer’s categories. “In the beginning”—that’s time. “God”—that’s force. “Created”—that’s action. “The heavens”—that’s space. “And the earth”—that’s matter. In the first verse of the Bible God laid out plainly what no scientist or philosopher ever cataloged until the nineteenth century. Moreover, what evolution still cannot possibly explain—the actual origin of everything that science can observe—the Bible explains in a few

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26 Spencer maintained that human consciousness is a manifestation of an infinite and eternal cosmic energy; hence even consciousness is ultimately a material, rather than a spiritual, reality. Many modern evolutionists still hold such a view.

27 Spencer’s “solution” to this dilemma was to regard Force as eternal.

28 Interestingly, Spencer spoke of Force as “the ultimate of ultimates” (*First Principles*, paragraph 50).
succinct words in the very first verse of Genesis.

About the uniqueness of the Bible’s approach to creation, Henry Morris writes,

Genesis 1:1 is unique in all literature, science, and philosophy. Every other system of cosmogony, whether in ancient religious myths or modern scientific models, starts with eternal matter or energy in some form, from which other entities were supposedly gradually derived by some process. Only the Book of Genesis even attempts to account for the ultimate origin of matter, space, and time; and it does so uniquely in terms of special creation.\(^{29}\)

And thus in that very first verse of Scripture, each reader is faced with a simple choice: Either you believe God did create the heavens and the earth, or you believe He did not. If He did not, He does not exist at all; nothing has any purpose; and nothing makes any sense. If on the other hand there is a creative intelligence—if there is a God—then creation is understandable. It is possible. It is plausible. It is rational.

Ultimately, those are the options every reader of Genesis is faced with. Either the vast array of complex organisms and intelligence we observe reflect the wisdom and power of a personal Creator (and specifically, the God who has revealed Himself in Scripture), or all these marvels somehow evolved spontaneously from inanimate matter, and no real sense can be made of anything.

Even among the best scientists who have left their mark on the scientific world, those who think honestly and make honest confessions about origins will admit that there must be a creative intelligence. (Einstein himself firmly believed that a “Cosmic Intelligence” must have designed the universe, though like many others today who accept the notion of “intelligent design,” he avoided the obvious conclusion that if there’s a “Cosmic Intelligence” powerful enough to design and create the universe, that “Intelligence” is by definition Lord and God over all.) And although the scientific and academic communities often mercilessly attempt to silence such opinions, there are nonetheless many men of integrity in the scientific community who embrace the God of Scripture and the biblical creation account.\(^{30}\)

God did create the heavens and the earth. And there is only one document that credibly claims to be a divinely-revealed record of that creation: the book of Genesis. Unless we have a creator who left us with no information about where we came from or what our purpose is, the text of Genesis 1–2 stands for all practical purposes unchallenged as the only divinely-revealed description of creation. In other words, if there is a God who created the heavens and the earth, and if He revealed to humanity any record of that creation, Genesis is that record. If the God of

\(^{29}\)The Genesis Record (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976) 18.

\(^{30}\)Ankerberg and Weldon include a long section documenting evolutionists’ attempts to silence and marginalize their colleagues who do not toe the naturalist line. See Chapter 6, “Professional Objectivity and the Politics of Prejudice,” in Darwin’s Leap of Faith 93-111.
Scripture did not create the heavens and the earth, then we have no real answers to anything that is truly important. Everything boils down to those two simple options.

So whether we believe the Genesis record or not makes all the difference in the world. Douglas Kelly, professor of systematic theology at Reformed Theological Seminary, has written on this subject with great insight. He says, “Essentially, mankind has only two choices. Either we have evolved out of the slime and can be explained only in a materialistic sense, meaning that we are made of nothing but the material, or we have been made on a heavenly pattern.”

He is right. Those are ultimately the only two options. We can either believe what Genesis says, or not. If Gen 1:1 is true, then the universe and everything in it was created by a loving and personal God, and His purposes are clearly revealed to us in Scripture. Further, if the Genesis account is true, then we bear the stamp of God and are loved by Him—and because we are made in His image, human beings have a dignity, value, and obligation that transcends that of all other creatures. Moreover, if Genesis is true, then we not only have God’s own answers to the questions of what we are here for and how we got where we are, but we also have the promise of salvation from our sin.

If Genesis is not true, however, we have no reliable answer to anything. Throw out Genesis and the authority of all Scripture is fatally compromised. That would ultimately mean that the God of the Bible simply does not exist. And if some other kind of creator-god does exist, he evidently does not care enough about his creation to provide any revelation about himself, his plan for creation, or his will for his creatures.

There are, of course, several extrabiblical accounts of creation from pagan sacred writings. But they are all mythical, fanciful, and frivolous accounts, featuring hideously ungodly gods. Those who imagine such deities exist would have to conclude that they have left us without any reason for hope, without any clear principles by which to live, without any accountability, without any answers to our most basic questions, and (most troubling of all) without any explanation or solution for the dilemma of evil.

Therefore if Genesis is untrue, we might as well assume that no God exists at all. That is precisely the assumption behind modern evolutionary theory. If true, it means that impersonal matter is the ultimate reality. Human personality and human intelligence are simply meaningless accidents produced at random by the natural processes of evolution. We have no moral accountability to any higher Being. All morality—indeed, all truth itself—is ultimately relative. In fact, truth, falsehood, goodness, and evil are all merely theoretical notions with no real meaning or significance. Nothing really matters in the vast immensity of an infinite, impersonal universe.

So if Genesis is false, nihilism is the next best option. Utter irrationality becomes the only “rational” choice.

Obviously, the ramifications of our views on these things are immense. Our
view of creation is the necessary starting point for our entire worldview. In fact, so vital is the issue that Francis Schaeffer once remarked that if he had only an hour to spend with an unbeliever, he would spend the first fifty-five minutes talking about creation and what it means for humanity to bear the image of God—and then he would use the last five minutes to explain the way of salvation.32

The starting point for Christianity is not Matthew 1:1 but Genesis 1:1. Tamper with the book of Genesis and you undermine the very foundation of Christianity. You cannot treat Genesis 1 as a fable or a mere poetic saga without severe implications to the rest of Scripture. The creation account is where God starts His account of history. It is impossible to alter the beginning without impacting the rest of the story—not to mention the ending. If Genesis 1 is not accurate, then there is no way to be certain that the rest of Scripture tells the truth. If the starting point is wrong, the Bible itself is built on a foundation of falsehood.

In other words, if you reject the creation account in Genesis, you have no basis for believing the Bible at all. If you doubt or explain away the Bible's account of the six days of creation, where do you put the reins on your skepticism? Do you start with Genesis 3, which explains the origin of sin, and believe everything from chapter 3 on? Or maybe you do not sign on until sometime after chapter 6, because the Flood is invariably questioned by scientists, too. Or perhaps you find the Tower of Babel too hard to reconcile with the linguists' theories about how languages originated and evolved. So maybe you start taking the Bible as literal history beginning with the life of Abraham. But when you get to Moses' plagues against Egypt, will you deny those, too? What about the miracles of the NT? Is there any reason to regard any of the supernatural elements of biblical history as anything but poetic symbolism?

After all, the notion that the universe is billions of years old is based on naturalistic presuppositions that (if held consistently) would rule out all miracles. If we are worried about appearing "unscientific" in the eyes of naturalists, we're going to have to reject a lot more than Genesis 1–3.

Once rationalism sets in and you start adapting the Word of God to fit scientific theories based on naturalistic beliefs, the process has no end. If you have qualms about the historicity of the creation account, you are on the road to utter Sadduceeism—skepticism and outright unbelief about all the supernatural elements of Scripture. Why should we doubt the literal sense of Genesis 1–3 unless we are also prepared to deny that Elisha made an axe-head float, or that Peter walked on water, or that Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead? And what about the greatest miracle of all—the resurrection of Christ? If we are going to shape Scripture to fit the beliefs of naturalistic scientists, why stop at all? Why is one miracle any more difficult to accept than another?

And what are we going to believe about the end of history as it is foretold in Scripture? All of redemptive history ends, according to 2 Pet 3:10-12, when the Lord uncreates the universe. The elements melt with fervent heat, and everything that

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32Cited in Kelly, Creation and Change 17.
exists in the material realm will be dissolved at the atomic level, in some sort of unprecedented and unimaginable nuclear meltdown. Moreover, according to Rev 21:1-5, God will immediately create a new heaven and a new earth (cf. Isa 65:17). Do we really believe He can do that, or will it take another umpteen billion years of evolutionary processes to get the new heaven and the new earth in working order? If we really believe He can destroy this universe in a split second and immediately create a whole new one, what is the problem with believing the Genesis account of a six-day creation in the first place? If He can do it at the end of the age, why is it so hard to believe the biblical account of what happened in the beginning?

So the question of whether we interpret the Creation account as fact or fiction has huge implications for every aspect of our faith. These implications become even more clear as the Bible recounts Adam’s fall and subsequent events of human history. The place to hold the line firmly is at Gen 1:1.

And that is no over-simplification. Frankly, believing in a supernatural creative God who made everything is the only possible rational explanation for the universe and for life itself. It is also the only basis for believing we have any purpose or destiny.
HOW VIEWS OF INSPIRATION HAVE IMPACTED SYNOPTIC PROBLEM DISCUSSIONS

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Second Corinthians 10:5 and Colossians 2:8 warn believers to examine their thought life carefully to guard against being taken prisoner by philosophical presuppositions that are hostile to the Bible. One can either take thoughts captive or have their thought life taken captive to the detriment of their spiritual lives. One place in particular where conservative evangelicals have been taken captive is in the historical-critical discipline of source criticism. The predominant view of the early church was that the Gospels were four independent witnesses to the life of Christ. Starting around the A. D. 1600-1700s, there occurred a philosophical and ideological shift in thinking about the origin of the Gospels, particularly in relationship to Synoptic Gospels. Due to the rise of Rationalism, Deism, Skepticism, the Enlightenment, and Romanticism (to name a few), the Independence approach was rejected and two qualitatively different approaches in explaining the Gospels resulted: the Two-Gospel hypothesis and Two-Source hypothesis. A careful investigation reveals that both approaches stemmed from the same errancy roots as modern unorthodox views of inspiration. Because of the history and philosophy behind source criticism, when evangelicals adopt either approach in their interpretation of the Gospels, they automatically tap into these errancy roots that inevitably lead to deprecating the historicity of the Gospels.

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INTRODUCTION

Philosophical and Historical Bases of Literary Dependence

For the first 1,700 years of the church, the Independence view regarding
synoptic origins prevailed. That is, each Gospel writer worked independently of the others, i.e., without relying on another canonical Gospel as a source of information. Consequently, the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John constitute four independent accounts of the life of Jesus. More specifically, no direct literary dependence exists among the Gospels, i.e., no Gospel writer directly used the work of another to compose his Gospel, as assumed by modern, source-dependence hypotheses. The four are separate, independent, eyewitness testimonies to the life of Jesus. Since the eighteenth century, however, the concept of literary dependence has arisen, with many evangelicals today espousing either the Two-Source or the Two-Gospel (also called neo-Griesbach or Owen-Griesbach) hypothesis. The crucial question in Gospel discussion for evangelicals, therefore, must center on what factors changed this overwhelming consensus from literary independence to one of literary dependence. What caused this paradigmatic shift regarding synoptic origins? A careful examination of church history reveals that shifts about the nature of inspiration were decisive in the radical change, specifically shifts in historical-critical discussions of the Synoptic Problem related to the Two-Gospel and Two-Document hypotheses. Such significant departures from the orthodox view of inspiration were in turn influenced and/or motivated by philosophical assumptions stemming from Rationalism, Deism, and the Enlightenment, to name few.  

**Qualitatively Different Ideological Approaches**

As orthodox approaches to Scripture—especially regarding its inspiration (cf. 2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:20-21)—disappeared, a qualitatively different approach to explaining the origin and nature of the Synoptic Gospels, developed over time. Not only was the Bible reduced to a “handbook of morality” divorced from its claims of inspiration, but an inverse development between orthodox concepts of inspiration and literary-dependence hypotheses occurred. Specifically stated, as orthodox views of inspiration of the Gospels diminished, literary dependence hypotheses increased.

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2Even opponents of Independence admit the validity of this evidence from church history. For example, evangelical Grant Osborne, an ardent proponent of the Two-Source hypothesis, has written, “It is true that the independence view predominated for 1700 years.” (Grant R. Osborne, “Historical Criticism: A Brief Response to Robert Thomas’s ‘Other View,’” *JETS* 43 (March 2000):113.

to a point of dominance in synoptic discussion. David Laird Dungan, an ardent supporter of the Two-Gospel hypothesis, identifies three significant factors that brought literary-dependence hypotheses into prominence in current NT studies. All three stemmed from philosophical ideologies and historical-critical developments that increased skepticism toward orthodox explanations of inspiration and Gospel origins. First, a skepticism toward, and rejection of, the historical and chronological value of the Gospel accounts arose—i.e., the Gospels could not be harmonized. Second, a “cult of objectivity” emerged, which sought a reductionist agenda of a purely mechanistic, rationalistic, naturalistic explanation based on philosophically motivated premises of scientific or mathematical proof (i.e., a “new breed of natural philosophers”). This factor caused “the demise of the Gospel harmony and led directly to the invention of the Gospel synopsis, an instrument intended to facilitate the objective investigation of the differences among the Gospels.” Third, the philosophy known as Romanticism developed, which posited dynamic historical development in terms of flux and change. Although Romanticism remained rationalistic and non-supernatural in its view of history as well as Scripture, it reacted against the mechanical metaphor of Rationalism, positing instead a dynamic continuum dominated by change. Its developmental view of nature and history produced a developmental approach to the differences among the Gospels which sought to explain them in terms of sources used in their writing. Dungan, who probably would not place himself within the conservative evangelical camp, frankly concludes that modern historical-critical approaches differ from previous Gospel study, since they “arose within an attitude of extreme hostility toward the Bible and traditional Christian beliefs and values.”

This means that a philosophically motivated skepticism regarding the trustworthiness of the Gospels as historical documents lies at the very heart of literary-dependence hypotheses. The skepticism is traceable to Baruch Spinoza, the father of modern historical-criticism of the Bible. Spinoza was a rationalist and pantheist, who for personal reasons disdained the plain meaning of the biblical text because of the effect it had upon him and on society as a whole. Spinoza set in motion modern biblical criticism “as a weapon to destroy or at least discredit the

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5Ibid., 308.
6Ibid.
7Ibid.
8Ibid., 345.
traditiona l metaphysics of Christianity and Judaism.” It purposed to remove all influence of the Bible not only in the religious sphere but also in the economic and political areas of society. Commenting on the antecedent developments of historical-critical ideology, Dungan relates,

Spinoza and his followers multiplied questions about the physical history of the text to the point that the traditional theological task could never get off the ground. That, however, was precisely the intended effect of the first step: to create an endless “nominalist barrage” if you will, an infinitely extendable list of questions directed at the physical history of the text, to the point where the clergy and the political officials allied with them could never bring to bear their own theological interpretations of the Bible. In other words, Spinoza switched the focus from the referent of the biblical text (e.g., God’s activity, Jesus Christ) to the history of the text. In doing so, he effectively eviscerated the Bible of all traditional theological meaning and moral teaching.

Dungan continues, “In short, the net effect of what historical critics have accomplished during the past three hundred years—apart from accumulating an enormous heap of data about the physical history of the text—has been to eviscerate the Bible’s core religious beliefs and moral values, preventing the Bible from questioning the political and economic beliefs of the new bourgeois class [that arose in the modern historical-critical era].”

This essay, therefore, will focus on reductionist—or more accurately unorthodox or aberrant—views of inspiration that resulted from historical antecedents and philosophical premises that had a role in the development of literary-dependence hypotheses. Space limitations will limit the focus to the Two-Gospel hypothesis as paradigmatic of this philosophical shift since it arose from the same roots before the Two-Source hypothesis. Specifically, J. J. Griesbach had an aberrant view of inspiration that directly contributed to his viewpoint for the priority of Matthew and the inferiority of Mark. He also disregarded the evidence from church history as to synoptic developments. Since this view is also known as the Owen-Griesbach hypothesis, the theory being that Griesbach received ideas regarding literary-dependence from Owen, the essay will also review Owen’s literary approach to the Gospels.

UNORTHODOX ROO TS OF THE TWO-GO SPEL HYPOTHESIS

Griesbach’s concept of inspiration and hermeneutics was a decisive factor in the development of his synoptic hypothesis. Concerning Griesbach’s work, A Demonstration That the Whole of the Gospel of Mark Was Extracted from the

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10Dungan, History of the Synoptic Problem 199 [emphasis original].
11Ibid., 172 [emphasis original].
12Ibid., 174, cf. 171. Dungan says that “modern biblical hermeneutics [i.e., historical criticism] was an essential part of the main attack on the traditional institutions of Throne and Altar.”
How Views of Inspiration Have Impacted Synoptic Problem Discussions

Commentaries of Matthew and Luke, in which he defended the priority of Matthew and Mark’s use of Matthew as a primary source, Dungan comments, “It is striking to see the underlying modern historicist assumption just taken for granted—that these [Gospel] authors all wrote in an entirely human fashion. There is no mention of divine inspiration anywhere.”

The critical question surrounding Griesbach’s synoptic approach, therefore, is, What historical and presuppositional factors influenced Griesbach in the development of his hypothesis?

Three main influences are important in explaining Griesbach’s approach to the “synoptic”—a term he apparently coined—Gospels and to theological thinking as a whole: Pietism, the Rationalism of Enlightenment, and the philosophy of Romanticism.

Griesbach’s Educational Background

Johann Jacob Griesbach (1745-1812) was the only son of a Lutheran Pietist minister, Konrad Kaspar Griesbach. He was further educated in Lutheran Pietistic orthodoxy during his five semesters at the University of Tübingen, although he would disassociate himself eventually from Pietism. He transferred to the University of Halle in 1764 where he came under the influence of two great rationalistic theologians, NT scholar Johann David Michaelis (1717-1791)—the inaugurator of the field of NT introduction—and the renowned Professor of Theology, Johann Salamo Semler (1725-1791)—“founder of the historical study of

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14 Dungan, History of the Synoptic Problem 322.

15 The term appears in Griesbach’s Libri historici Novi Testamenti graece (1774-1775) where the first part has the title Synopsis evangeliorum Matthaei, Marci et Lucae. A reprint of this first part of the edition appeared separately in 1776 under the title Synopsis evangeliorum Matthaei, Marci et Lucae. Textum graecum ad fidem . . . (Halle, 1776). For further information, see Bo Reicke, “Introduction to Commentatio” 68-69; William Baird, History of New Testament Research, vol. 1, From Deism to Tübingen (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1992) 143; Dungan, History of the Synoptic Problem 7, 176, 310.

16 These factors are identified as the major influences on Griesbach’s thinking in such works as Gerhard Delling, “Johann Jakob Griesbach: His Life, Work and Times,” in J. J. Griesbach: Synoptic and Text-critical Studies 5-15; Dungan, History of the Synoptic Problem 308-26; Baird, History of New Testament Research 138-48.


the New Testament” and in whose house Griesbach lived as a student.19 Michaelis and Semler originated modern “scientific study” of the NT, having been strongly influenced by English Deists in their conclusions regarding the NT, as Kümmel relates, “Both were directly dependent for the questions they asked, as well as for many of the answers they gave, on the writings of the English Deists.”20 Baird labels Michaelis and Semler each as a “wunderkind” of the German Aufklärung [i.e., Enlightenment].21 Colin Brown has described the religion of the Enlightenment as “none other than Deism in slightly different dress.”22

Another who strongly influenced Griesbach’s hermeneutical approach was Johann August Ernesti, with whom Griesbach studied from 1766 to 1767.23 Thus, Griesbach received the best education in Pietist, Rationalist, Modernist, Enlightenment, biblical studies that Germany and other countries of his day had to offer.24 Important also is the fact that through family contacts and his professorship at Jena in the neighborhood of the Weimar region, Griesbach met with leaders of Romanticism, such as Goethe and Schiller, who often stayed at Griesbach’s house.25

Dungan summarizes,

Given his family background and academic training, Johann Griesbach’s approach toward the Bible and theology was complexed and nuanced. On one side, throughout his life he remained in close contact with Germany’s Romantic thinkers—Goethe and Schiller. . . . From his student days with Semler and Michaelis, Griesbach had been exposed to Europe’s skeptical, historicist interpretation of the New Testament and Church history. At the same time, he remained a true son of his religious heritage, never relinquishing in his lectures, publications, and ecclesiastical activities a marked Lutheran Pietism.26

Griesbach as a Neologian

Griesbach (along with Michaelis, Semler, Eichhorn and Herder—to

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19Kümmel, The New Testament 68. Not only did Griesbach live with Semler during his days as a student at Halle, but also lived with him after he returned from his extensive European tour which he undertook to acquaint himself with the methods of different professors and to examine the New Testament manuscripts in the great libraries of London, Oxford, Cambridge and other centers of learning. Griesbach was 23 years old at the time he set off in 1768 and returned home in 1770. See Colin Brown, Jesus in Protestant European Thought 1778-1960 (Durham, N.C.: Labyrinth, 1985) 175-76; Dungan, History of the Synoptic Problem 310; Delling, “Johann Jakob Griesbach” 7.


22Colin Brown, Christianity and Western Thought, vol. 1, From the Ancient World to the Age of Enlightenment (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1990) 214.

23For further information on Ernesti, see Kümmel, The New Testament 60-61, 473.

24Dungan, History of the Synoptic Problem 310.


26Dungan, History of the Synoptic Problem 311-12.
mention few) belonged to the Neologie, a movement that reached its zenith between 1740 and 1790.27 Kümmel and Bray identify Semler as “the father” or “the founder of the movement,” but others dispute this identification.28 The term “neology” has the meaning of “Teachers of the New.”29 They were named thus because people believed that the way they read the Bible was fundamentally new. It consisted of combining the thinking of Rationalism, Pietism, and Romanticism into a new system of approach to Scripture.30 Though the neologians did not deny the validity of divine revelation per se, they assigned priority to reason and natural theology. “While faith in God, morality, and immortality were affirmed, older dogmas such as the Trinity, predestination and the inspiration of Scripture were seriously compromised.”31 Their historical-critical method was virtually identical with Rationalism, but they remained perhaps nominally more receptive to the idea of miracles.32 Brown comments,

In general, the Neologians sought to transcend both orthodoxy and Pietism by restating the Christian faith in the light of modern thought. To them [the Neologians], revelation was a confirmation of the truths of reason. They drew a distinction between religion and theology, and between dogmas and the Bible. In a sense they were pioneers of moderate biblical criticism, maintaining that Jesus deliberately accommodated his teaching to the beliefs and understandings of his hearers.33

Griesbach admits this tendency in his own work, and also notes the dissatisfaction among some people caused by this melding of conflicting thoughts. In the Preface to the second addition (1786) of his Anleitung zum Studium der populären Dogmatik, besonders für künftige Religionslehrer [Magistri verbi divini], he refers to “the precious ‘enlightenment’ of many dogmas” provided by modern scholars, so that certainly some of his readers “will shake their heads suspiciously at supposed heterodoxies—known now as neologies,” while others “will shrug their shoulders

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27 Aner identifies both Griesbach and Eichhorn as “neologians,” but not Michaelis and Semler. See Karl Aner, Die Theologie der Lessingzeit (Hildesheim, Germany: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1964) 98-99.
28 Kümmel, The New Testament 490; Gerald Bray, Biblical Interpretation, Past & Present (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1996) 257. Aner notes that Semler as well as Michaelis are sometimes classified as neologians, but feels that they were independent historically, not belonging to any party. Instead, Aner argues that the neologians appropriated the historical-critical work of these two figures. However, Aner does classify Griesbach and Eichhorn as neologians (Aner, Die Theologie der Lessingzeit 98-99, 138-39).
30 Bray, Biblical Interpretation 257.
32 Bray, Biblical Interpretation 257.
33 Brown, Jesus in European Protestant Thought 8.
indulgently at the author’s attachment to old-fashioned orthodoxy.” Dungan relates, “Griesbach was a perfect example of such a hybrid or mediating position . . . Judging from his more popular writings, Griesbach’s Bible became—in good Enlightenment, i.e., Spinozist, fashion—a handbook of morality whose doctrines were acceptable to any reasonable person.”

Thus, neology was an unsuccessful attempt at synthesizing contemporary thought. Affirming Rationalism’s critical spirit, it refused to recognize the Bible as divinely inspired, but modified Rationalism’s ideology that interpreted Scripture entirely based on natural science. From the Romantics, it interpreted the Bible in literary categories as developing and changing; from the tradition of textual criticism, it sought a detailed analysis of the text. Neology’s attempted synthesis failed and lasted only a generation. A renewed, rigorous rationalism on one hand and a renewed supernaturalism on the other replaced it. Bray comments on neology’s demise:

The accusation that neology was little more than rationalism with a human face may be somewhat harsh, but it is true that the neologists were unable, and probably unwilling, to move away from rationalistic presuppositions in any decisive way. In the end, they could not separate critical methods from the ideology that lay behind them, and their attempts to do so made them appear inconsistent with their own principles. . . . Perhaps the best judgment on neology is to say that it was not so much a failure at synthesis as a first attempt . . . but [a system] which established basic principles that still play their part in biblical interpretation today.

Reflecting the mentoring of his teachers Semler and Michaelis, Greisbach attempted to accommodate traditional Christianity to the mind of the Enlightenment, and thus he was plagued by the same tension between faith and criticism that troubled his predecessors.

**Mentoring for Greisbach**

Theologically, Michaelis and Semler had a profound impact on their student Greisbach while he studied at Halle. Baird notes, “Their two most famous students, J. J. Griesbach and J. G. Eichhorn, carried on the tradition of their teachers.” In his student days with Semler and Michaelis, Greisbach had been exposed to Europe’s skeptical historicist (rationalistic) interpretation of the NT and

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34Cited by Delling, “Johann Jakob Griesbach” 9, 17.
37Ibid., 258-59.
39Ibid., 1:117.
How Views of Inspiration Have Impacted Synoptic Problem Discussions

Church history. Hurst relates, "Griesbach pursued his [Semler’s] skeptical investigations for the establishment of natural religion and others aided him in his undertaking." Semler was reared in the atmosphere of Pietism, but eventually his theological assertions rejected his Pietistic heritage. Under his leadership, Halle became the leading and dominant center of liberal, critical theology in the eighteenth century. Hurst uses little diplomacy in noting, "[T]here have been few men who have shown greater boldness in assaulting the Christian faith than Semler, the father of the destructive school of Rationalism." His further description is even more biting:

His work, though destructive, was in conflict with the pure beauty of his private life. And here we look at him as one of the enigmas of human biography. True to his tenet that a man’s public teachings need not influence his personal living, he was at once a teacher of skepticism and an example of piety.

It was astonishing that a man could live as purely and devotedly as Semler, and yet make the gulf so wide between private faith and public instruction. We attribute no evil intention to him in his theological labors; these were the results of his own mental defects.

As a true child of the Enlightenment, he demonstrated contempt for the history and doctrinal authority of the church. Hurst again noting that his [Semler’s] chief triumph was—against the history and doctrinal authority of the church. His mind had been thoroughly imbued with a disgust of what was ancient and revered. He appeared to despise the antiquities of the church simply because they were antiquities. What was new and fresh, was, with him, worthy of unbounded admiration and speedy adoption.

Semler opposed the biblicism of the orthodox, rejecting the traditional doctrine of inspiration. Semler was a chief catalyst in the hermeneutical revolution

40 Dungan, History of the Synoptic Problem 311-12.
42 Brown, Jesus in European Protestant Thought 10.
43 Hurst, History of Rationalism 128. Baird notes, “Semler, with considerable despair, was never able to experience the new birth which Pietists thought essential to authentic faith, a point of increasing tension with his father” (Baird, History of New Testament Research 1:117).
44 Hurst, History of Rationalism 133, 136.
46 Hurst, History of Rationalism 132.
47 Gerhard Hasel, Basic Issues in the Current Debate (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 20 n. 36.
that was occurring. His four-volume *Treatise on the Free Investigation of the Canon* (1771-75) [Abhandlung von freier Untersuchung des Canon] fought the orthodox doctrine of inspiration, and claimed that the Word of God and Holy Scriptures are not identical, thus implying that not all parts of the Bible are inspired. He also claimed that the question of whether a book belongs to the canon is purely a historical one. That is, the Bible is purely a historical document and to be investigated like any other document through historical-critical methodology. In light of historical development of Scripture, Semler maintained that one could no longer appeal to the doctrine of inspiration as a guarantee of the text of Scripture as the Word of God and that the Gospels themselves were not universally valid, definitive histories, but each grew out of a particular historical context. Semler prepared the way for a “free investigation” of the Scripture unencumbered by dogmatic or theological restraints. He also asserted that the Scriptures are to be interpreted by the same method whereby any other book would be interpreted, i.e., historically (i.e., rationalistically). Gerhard Maier strikes at the heart of the matter: “The general acceptance of Semler’s basic concept that the Bible must be treated like any other book has plunged theology into an endless chain of perplexities and inner contradictions.”

Another significant feature of Semler’s exegesis was his use of the theory of accommodation. According to Semler, the truths of revelation were accommodated to people’s ability to appropriate them. In discussing the relation of Jesus to demons, he asserted that Jesus Himself did not believe in the existence of demons but trimmed his teaching to fit the unenlightened minds of His hearers. Semler argued, “That teachers, after the undeniable example of Jesus and the apostles, condescended to their listeners’ mode of thought, or accommodated themselves to their own circumstances, is historically certain and was done at that time as the matter required.”

Semler, however, reacted strongly against the Wolfenbüttel Fragments

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published by Lessing. Semler's approach upheld a generally reverent and judicious acceptance of new, historical-critical approaches while Lessing's approach, though essentially supporting Semler, appeared to Semler to be malicious and sarcastic in tone. Thus, the difference between Lessing and Semler was in part a matter of temperament and tone rather than in substance. Nonetheless, the aggregate results of Semler's approach was the destruction of biblical authority as well as its inspiration. Such views earned for Semler the title of "father of historical-critical theology."

Michaelis, another mentor of Griesbach who also influenced him, was relatively more conservative than Semler, although strong Deistic influences alienated him from Pietism. Michaelis expressed his ideas in his Einleitung in die göttlichen Schriften des Neuen Bundes, of which the fourth edition of 1788 carried Semler's historical approach to the New Testament. He also advanced some ideas that influenced Griesbach, some of which deserve special mention. First, only books written by apostles should be accepted as inspired. Michaelis argued regarding the Gospels of Mark and Luke (as well as the book of Acts), "I must confess, that I am unable to find a satisfactory proof of their inspiration, and the more I investigate the subject, and the oftener I compare their writings with those of St. Matthew and St. John, the greater are my doubts."

Second, a book could be genuine (i.e. authentically written by the individuals who are purported to have written them) but not necessarily inspired: "The question, whether the books of the New Testament are inspired, is not so important, as the question whether they are genuine. The truth of our religion

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56 Brown notes, "What Semler urged—and in no small measure achieved—was a general, reverent and judicious acceptance of the new critical approach to Scripture" (Brown, Jesus in European Protestant Thought, 11; cf. Baird, History of New Testament Research 1:175).
depends on the latter, not absolutely on the former.”

Michaelis’s distinction between inspiration and reliability called into question the belief that the whole Bible was equally inspired and infallible. Baird remarks, “Although Michaelis had written impressive works on dogmatics and reflected profoundly about the meaning of language, his weakness was a failure to think theologically about his historical criticism.”

Third, Michaelis raised the possibility of contradictions in the Gospels so that the harmonization was questioned, although, admittedly, he did not take this to mean that the main substance of their accounts were false for the evangelists were on the whole good historians. Neill and Wright comment,

[The orthodoxy of the time [Michaelis’ day] took it for granted that, because the NT is divinely inspired in every part, it is a priori impossible that there should be any contradictions between the Gospels; any apparent contradiction must be due only to the imperfection of our understanding, and must be susceptible of resolution into harmony. Michaelis was prepared to face the possibility that there really might be contradictions.]

Thus, for Michaelis, as well as for his student, Griesbach, the Gospels of Matthew and John are inspired; the other two, Mark and Luke, are not. Baird notes that “Michaelis intended to use the new historical-critical method to support authenticity... Michaelis... was concerned to defend the apostolic authorship and canonicity of most of the NT books.” Others during Michaelis’s time, however, recognized the real effect of Michaelis’s work in depreciating the inspiration of the New Testament books. Unlike his student Griesbach, Michaelis rejected the idea of literary dependence, instead presenting for the first time the hypothesis of an Urevangelium or “original lost gospel” whereby he traced their similar characteristics to common use of several apocryphal gospels.

[Michaelis, Introduction to the New Testament 1:72.]


[Michaelis argued, “If the word inspiration therefore be taken in such a sense as to include infallibility, we can scarcely believe, that St. Mark and St. Luke were inspired. The violent methods which have been used to reconcile their accounts with those of the other Evangelists, and the insuperable difficulty, which has hitherto attended the harmony of the Gospels, have cast a dark shade on our religion, and the truth and simplicity of its history have been almost buried under the weight of explanations” (Michaelis, Introduction to the New Testament 1:96).]


**German Pietism and Griesbach’s Rationalism**

Pietism, whose central figure was Philipp Jacob Spener (1635-1705), was essentially a reaction against the development of Scholastic Lutheranism that developed in Germany after the Reformation. Though Scholastic Lutheranism was based on the Scriptures, it assumed the form of a fixed dogmatic interpretation, rigid, exact, and demanding intellectual conformity. Emphasis was on pure doctrine and the sacraments. A faith that consisted in the acceptance of a dogmatic whole very largely replaced the vital relationship between the believer and God that Luther had taught. Although some evidences of deeper piety existed, the general tendency was external and dogmatic.68

Spener reacted against such externals, asserting the primacy of feeling in Christian experience.69 Although at first Pietists adhered to the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture in the same manner as did the Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Anabaptist, Lutheran, Evangelical Reformed, and Westminster traditions, they stressed subjective, personal experience rather than biblical doctrines or catechism.70 August Hermann Francke (1663-1727), Spener’s close associate, argued, “We may safely assure those who read the word with devotion and simplicity, that they will derive more light and profit from such a practice, and from connecting meditation with it... than can ever be acquired from drudging through an infinite variety of unimportant minutiae.”71 In 1694 Spener founded the University of Halle, which quickly became the main eighteenth-century center of the Pietistic Movement, with Francke dominating the theological methods and instruction.72

Francke took Spener’s emphasis on personal experience further, even to the point where, although he emphasized the importance of reading Scripture, at times he appeared to oppose the need for intellectual and doctrinal pursuits. This led to attacks on Pietism by orthodox Lutherans. Gonzalez notes, “The emphasis here [by Francke] falls entirely on individual believers and their relationship with God, and the church seems to be entirely bypassed.”73 This acute subjectivism actually

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70Tappert notes, “He [Spener] did not deny the scholastic doctrine of the inspiration of the Scriptures, but he was more interested in their content than in their form and in their effect than in their origin.” Spener’s emphasis was on the more subjective impact of the doctrine of inspiration on the individual’s life (Tappert, “Introduction,” in *Pia Desideria* 25).


prepared the way for the rise of rationalism among later Pietists, like Semler, Michaelis, and Griesbach.  

Nix summarizes well:

Although Pietists adhered to the inspiration of the Bible, they advocated individual feeling as being of primary importance. That may have been an adequate method for avoiding cold orthodoxy of “Protestant scholasticism,” it opened the door for the equally dangerous enemy of “subjective experientialism.” The first generation of Pietists could recall and reflect on its grounding in Scripture while validly advocating the need for individual experience. A second generation would stress the need for individual experience, but often without a proper Biblical or catechetical basis. This would leave a third generation that would question individual experience with no Biblical or doctrinal “standard” to serve as an objective criterion. In turn, their unanswered questions would tend to demand an authority. When the Scriptures were neglected, human reason or subjective experience would fill the need as the required “standard.” Thus while not causing other movements Pietism gave impetus to three other movements in the post-Reformation church: deism, skepticism and rationalism. Although these movements were not limited to any particular country prior to the revolutions in America and France, deism was most dominant in England and America, skepticism in France, and rationalism in Germany.  

As a consequence, rationalism had strongly influenced the Pietism of Griesbach’s day.

Griesbach’s Historical and Presuppositional Context

Griesbach’s approach to the New Testament, especially his synoptic approach, strongly attests these background influences of his mentoring, his pietistic religious background, as well as the Enlightenment’s rationalistic methods of historical criticism expressed in his day. Only by placing Griesbach into this historical and presuppositional context can he properly evaluate his literary-dependence hypothesis.

Historical-Critical Presuppositional Influence. Reflecting Semler’s and Michaelis’s approach, Griesbach asserted that although the Bible is a unique book, “The NT must be explained as every other ancient book is explained.” Moreover, Griesbach believed, along with them, that “The accuracy, especially in the case of

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74Hurst writes, “[T]he evils of Rationalism were partially anticipated by the practical teachings of the Pietists” (Hurst, History of Rationalism 102).


the NT writers, often err.” Reflecting Semler’s accommodation hypothesis, Griesbach believed that the people of the ancient Near East were limited in their worldview and ascribed to divine intervention what was the result of natural causes.

As a result, Griesbach asserted, “The truth of the Christian religion . . . rests not on miracles, but partly on its excellence, partly on its history.” Reflecting Semler’s concept that the Word of God and the Scriptures are not identical, Griesbach asserted that much of the NT (e.g., the temporally conditioned data, the limited perspective of the original readers) belongs simply to the garment which clothes the universal truth. Hence, Griesbach held that the Bible is not to be identified as the Word of God, but “it is merely the history of revelation, the presentation of the revealed truth.”

Griesbach’s unorthodox view of the canon as erring and limited in inspiration helped foster the concept of valuing some Gospels as more reliable or “inspired” (Matthew, John) while others were not (Mark, Luke), and hence, the more reliable ones could serve as possible “sources” for the others. Since the Scriptures were to be approached like any other book, such an idea also disposed him toward a totally naturalistic, mechanistic explanation for the Gospel phenomena. That agreed with the rationalism of Enlightenment thinking, with no guidance of the Holy Spirit for the writers, especially since his synoptic approach never referred to inspiration.

Rationalistic, Pietistic Presuppositional Influence. Griesbach’s unorthodox presuppositions regarding inspiration reflected the rationalism that imbued the Pietism of his day. He believed that the NT writers were not inspired by the Holy Spirit in the act of writing. That is, Griesbach opposed the orthodox idea that the NT Scriptures were plenary, verbally inspired by God. Instead, he maintained that the apostles received a onetime gift of the Spirit at Pentecost which made it possible for them later both to understand and transmit doctrine. Such a

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78Griesbach, Vorlesungen 139-44; Dungan, History of the Synoptic Problem 312; Baird, History of New Testament Research 1:140.
79The German reads, “Die Wahrheit der christlichen Religion behurd ja nicht auf den Wndern; sondern theils auf ihrer Vortrefflichkeit, theils auf ihrer Geschichte” (Griesbach, Vorlesungen 144).
81Dungan, History of the Synoptic Problem 322.
82Ibid., 313; Baird, History of New Testament Research 1:139.
83See Delling, “Johann Jakob Griesbach” 11.
84Cited in Delling, “Johann Jakob Griesbach” 11.
stance automatically deprecated and left out the Gospels of Mark and Luke, as well as some other NT books, because they were not written by apostles themselves but by associates. Reflecting Michaelis’ concept that only books written by apostles are inspired, Griesbach argued, “Those who argue that Mark wrote under the influence of divine inspiration must surely regard it as being a pretty meagre one!” According to Griesbach, the Holy Spirit worked through two apostles, Matthew and John, who were of preeminent importance in giving reliable testimony to the historical facts of Jesus’ ministry. This became key for his acceptance of Matthew as the Gospel that would have literary primacy in his synoptic hypothesis.

Combined with his unorthodox view of inspiration also was Griesbach’s skepticism regarding the general historical reliability of the Gospels, a belief that the synoptics could not be harmonized or offer a reliable chronological account of Jesus’ life. Brown perceptively comments, “Griesbach’s separation of the first three Gospels from the fourth [i.e., John’s Gospel] gave rise to the classification of the former as the Synoptic Gospels.” This historical skepticism led him to develop a synopsis rather than pursue a traditional harmony, which he rejected. Moreover, Griesbach was very skeptical of the Gospel of John’s chronological reliability, omitting it from his synopsis. He also maintained that Mark in particular was not interested in chronological order of events, commenting, “I have serious doubts that a harmonious narrative can be put together from the books of the evangelists, one that adequately agrees with the truth in respect of chronological arrangement of the pericopes and which stands on a solid basis. . . . I confess to this heresy!” He hypothesized that through critically observing synopsis presentation of the Gospels, the “correct” original order of composition could be discovered by comparing the Gospels to one another, thus also determining the most reliable historical facts in the Gospels.

In sum, Griesbach’s aberrant position on inspiration combined with rationalistic skepticism regarding the historical and chronological reliability of the Gospels caused him to view one Gospel, Matthew, as superior to the othersynoptics. This led him to prefer Matthew, while Mark and Luke were a priori placed in a posterior position of deriving information from their “source,” i.e., Matthew. Dungan, a staunch supporter of the Two-Gospel hypothesis, admits that both Griesbach’s rejection of the possibility of harmonizing the Gospels and Griesbach’s view of inspiration influenced his synoptic approach:

As long as the Gospels were viewed as a divinely inspired, inerrant, timeless block,

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85Griesbach, A Demonstration 135.

86Brown, Jesus in Protestant European Thought 177.

87See Dungan, History of the Synoptic Problem 318-19.

88For this quote from the preface to Griesbach’s 1797 second edition of his Synopsis Evangeliorum Matthaei, Marci et Lucae, see Heinrich Greeven, “Gospel Synopsis from 1776 to the Present Day,” in J. J. Griesbach: Synoptic and Text-critical Studies 1776-1976 27, 190-91.
or, more precisely, as four accurate but incomplete chronologies of the original events, the obvious gaps and apparent chronological inconsistencies among the Gospels had to be explained. . . .

As soon as the Gospels were seen to be human books written at different times for different audiences, their differences and inconsistencies took on a wholly new significance; the were important clues to the shifts and changes in the vital development of the early Christian church.

One immediate result of this approach was to open the door to the possibility that not all of the Gospels were equally reliable. The big question then became how to distinguish the more reliable from the less reliable Gospels. . . .

Griesbach resolved this riddle by pointing to the Gospel of Matthew and John as the most reliable historical accounts, since they had been written by the Apostles who had received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. 89

Influence of Historical Skepticism on Griesbach’s Synopsis. Because Griesbach’s view of inspiration, as well as his negative attitude toward harmonization, differed qualitatively from the position of the church from its beginning through the time of the Reformation, he developed a different approach, the synopsis, that placed the Gospels into parallel columns, not with a view to harmonizing them, but so that minute differences and alleged contradictions could be magnified. In its historical development, therefore, the synopsis developed from historical skepticism regarding the Gospels. Dungan is right when he notes that at heart of all modern discussion of modern synoptic dependence hypotheses is a “skepticism regarding the chronological value of the gospels.” 91 Important also is the fact that Gospel synopses played a decisive role in the development of modern synoptic dependence hypotheses that arose from modern skepticism regarding the Gospels. This vehicle greatly facilitated the rise of both the Two-Source and the Two Gospel hypotheses. 92 More significantly, neutrality of synopses in dealing with the synoptic question comes under strong suspicion, since they are circular at core, being constructed to prove dependence hypotheses already chosen on an a priori basis. Dungan comments that most modern synopses are highly biased toward the Two-/Four-Source hypothesis:

89Dungan, History of the Synoptic Problem 321.
90Dungan comments, “[T]raditional Gospel harmonists proceeded on the basis of Augustine’s assumption that all four Gospels were uniformly true and without admixture of the slightest degree of error. . . . The Augustinian approach remained the model for more than a thousand years” (Dungan, History of the Synoptic Problem 304; cf. also 123-41, 171-90). Through the time of the Reformation until the modern philosophical presuppositions (Rationalism, Deism, Romanticism, etc.) created the historical-critical ideology, the orthodox position of the church was that the Gospels were without error and could be harmonized into a unified whole. For harmonization during the time of the Reformation, cf. Harvey K. McArthur, “Sixteenth-Century Gospel Harmonies,” in The Quest Through the Centuries: The Search for the Historical Jesus (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966) 85-101.
91Dungan, History of the Synoptic Problem 307.
92Ibid., 332-41.
The same circular process of argument emerged in Germany that later appeared in England. A source theory was invented and a synopsis created to illustrate it. Charts were then created based on that synopsis which were held to “prove” the theory. This *circulus in probando* was camouflaged in Germany by Huck’s claim that his synoptic arrangement was “neutral” with respect to all source theories.93

**Romanticism’s Influence.** The Romanticism and its concept of development influenced Griesbach’s synoptic approach.94 Dungan observes, “Griesbach was unable to adopt the traditional harmony since he felt drawn toward the modern Romantic notion of a development view of the Gospels’ history, a conception that was intrinsic to the epistemological rationale of the synopsis, as distinguished from the harmony.”95 He lived at the rise of Romanticism’s influence in Germany, which greatly affected his approach to the Gospels.96 Its concepts of change caused him to move toward developmental ideas in how the Gospels were created. At heart, however, Romanticism was rationalistic, seeking naturalistic, mechanistic ways of explaining Scripture rather than recognizing an orthodox viewpoint of inspiration. Brown comments,

> The Romantic movement created great interest in the Bible as literature and consequently reduced it to one among many documents to be studied by scholars in comparative literature and religion. . . . If the Bible could be damaged by placing it alongside other supposedly early documents, some genuine, some less so, and suggesting that it has no more authority than they do, it could also be reduced in influence by placing other documents alongside the Bible and implying that they have an authority similar to the Bible’s.97

**Griesbach’s Enlightenment Prejudice Against Ancient Traditions.** In 1771 Griesbach prepared a treatise on the importance of the church fathers (especially Origen) for the original text of the NT. Yet, in regard to his synoptic hypothesis, like his mentor, Semler, he exhibited the characteristic Enlightenment disrespect for them and their writings. Linnemann aptly notes,

> What about the traditions from the early church that give information about the

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93Ibid., 336.
94Ibid., 302-26.
95Ibid., 320.
How Views of Inspiration Have Impacted Synoptic Problem Discussions

origins of the Gospels? Griesbach focused only on those in which he found supporting evidence for his hypothesis. The rest he arbitrarily declared to be “sheer fabrication” and “worthless fables.”

How scientific “scientific” theology is becomes obvious as we consider what Griesbach was really saying: Historical church tradition—which possessed incontrovertible validity for friend and foe alike in the second century, when some were still alive who could declare what was bogus—was branded a lie by a “scientist” at the end of the eighteenth century. Yet this view so thoroughly discredited the tradition that its claim to truth no longer was taken seriously by historical-critical theology.98

Orchard and Riley concur: “Griesbach . . . accepted the authenticity of the Gospels but at the same time denied the value of the historical evidence.”99 For further information on Enlightenment dismissal of patristic evidence, see how Griesbach depreciated Papias: “The things that Papias (Eusebius H.E. III. 39) records about the Gospel of Mark are figments very far from the truth, although he produces the Presbyter John as a witness.”100 Griesbach would need to deprecate Papias since Papias relates that Mark was dependent on Peter, not Matthew, as the “source” for his Gospel. Griesbach summarily dismissed other evidence by arguing, “The most ancient Fathers, who recorded that Mark wrote the life of the Lord under the auspices of Peter, either narrated their own conjectures (not history drawn from trustworthy documents), or were deceived by false rumours.”101 Regarding the evidence of the Petrine source behind Mark, he states that Tertullian (Against Marcion IV.5) relied on “vague rumors and arguments with little foundation”; that the authority of Justin (Dialogue with Trypho §106) in historical matters “amounts to nothing”;102 that Clement of Alexandria is “not quite consistent with himself” and trumps up artificial differences in statements capable of more viable alternatives.103

His dismissal of Clement as a source is evidence of Griesbach’s Enlightenment prejudice against ancient tradition, especially since a closer examination of Clement reveals that he received information on the Gospels through personal contacts from a wide network of church elders from different parts of the Mediterra-

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100Griesbach, A Demonstration 134.
101Ibid.
102Ibid., 116.
103Ibid., 135.
nean world.\textsuperscript{104} Eusebius quotes him as citing “a tradition of the primitive elders with regard to the order of the Gospels as follows. He said that those Gospels were first written which include the genealogies.”\textsuperscript{105} Here Clement, based on widespread information, related that Matthew or Luke was first composed, then Mark and John. While part of the evidence from Clement supports Matthean priority in terms of time of composition, Griesbach summarily dismissed any evidence than ran contrary to his hypothesis, especially the early fathers’ assertions that Mark depended on Peter, not Matthew, as his source.\textsuperscript{106}

Interesting also is the tone of Griesbach’s handling of evidence that contradicted his hypothesis. It closely resembles Streeter’s high-handed and cavalier dismissal of the “minor agreements” as “irrelevant” and “deceptive” of Matthew and Luke against Mark.\textsuperscript{107} Yet sound reasoning dictates that those closest to the composition of the Gospels should be taken more seriously than advocates of late-developing synoptic hypotheses. Influenced by the contemptuous attitude of Enlightenment scholars, current German and British scholars have continued to ignore or dismiss such evidence.\textsuperscript{108}

**HENRY OWEN AND THE TWO-GOSPEL HYPOTHESIS**\textsuperscript{109}

Some evangelicals who adopt literary-dependence have attempted to point out the influence of Henry Owen (1716-1795) on Griesbach’s literary-dependence approach. Owen was a practicing physician by profession (M.D. degree earned in 1753 at the age of 37; in practice for three years), who later took clerical vows in the Church of England. He became rector of St. Olave, Hart Street, in 1760, and vicar

\textsuperscript{104}Eusebius Ecclesiastical History 5.11.3-4; cf. also F. David Farnell, “The Synoptic Gospels in the Ancient Church,” TMSJ 10 (Spring 1999):53-86.

\textsuperscript{105}Eusebius Ecclesiastical History 6.14.5-7.


\textsuperscript{108}Orchard and Riley, “The State of the Question” 112-13; Dungan, History of the Synoptic Problem 380-81.

\textsuperscript{109}The Two-Gospel hypothesis is sometimes called the Owen-Griesbach hypothesis. Agnew argues, “The contemporary scholars who work with the gospel order Matthew-Luke-Mark, first propounded by Owen (1764) and later (1789) expounded by Johann Jacob Griesbach, have brought up to date Griesbach’s arguments; thus, the hypotheses has grown beyond its origins and is best characterized by a descriptive, rather than proper name,” i.e., the Two-Gospel hypothesis (Peter W. Agnew, “The Two-Gospel Hypothesis and a Biographical Genre for the Gospels,” New Synoptic Studies, ed., William R. Farmer (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University, 1983) 487 n. 22.
of Edmonton in Middlesex in 1775. Some evangelicals assert that Owen, not Griesbach, originated the first defense of literary dependence. Owen wrote 19 years before Griesbach (1764 and 1783) and reflected a view very similar to Griesbach’s. The assumption is that Owen may have influenced Griesbach’s later thinking. As the thinking goes, some evangelicals consider Owen to be a defender of biblical accuracy and literary-dependence in his work and draw the conclusion that evangelicals who support literary-dependence in emulating Owen’s approach may hold a high view of Scripture. Therefore, a review of Henry Owen and his treatise, *Observations on the Four Gospels*, is in order to determine the validity of that position.

### Circumstantial Evidence of Owen’s Influence on Griesbach

Theories of Owen’s influence on Griesbach are not new. Herbert Marsh (1758-1839), Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Cambridge (1807), who translated Michaelis’s *Introduction to the New Testament* (1801-1802), appended an essay entitled “Dissertation on the Origin and Composition of the Three First Canonical Gospels.” In it he proposed that Griesbach had been influenced by Owen as well as Büsching and Stroth in the development of his hypothesis. Also in 1897, Weiss, in his *Einleitung*, calls it the “Owen-Griesbach’sche Hypothese” (1897). On the basis of this assumption, Neirynck argues, “Griesbach’s personal contribution is not in suggesting Mark as a combination of Matthew and Luke, but in arguing with new “gravissimae rationes, especially the relative order of episodes.”

The idea that Owen influenced Griesbach in the development of his approach is purely circumstantial, being based on inference and speculation. No evidence exists that Griesbach ever met Owen. Griesbach never mentioned Owen (or Büsching) by name. Griesbach, however, did obtain Owen’s work at some point.

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110 In 1783 Griesbach published a lecture entitled *Paschatos solemnia pie celebranda* (“That Easter may be celebrated with solemn piety”), in which he set forth the basics of his approach (cited by Dungan, *History of the Synoptic Problem* 317).

111 For a defense of this evangelical position, see Matthew C. Williams, “The Owen Hypothesis: An essay showing that it was Henry Owen who first formulated the so-called ‘Griesbach Hypothesis,’” *Journal of Higher Criticism* 7 (2000):109-25.

112 See Henry Owen, *Observations on the Four Gospels: tending chiefly to ascertain the Times of their Publications; to illustrate the Form and Manner of their Composition* (London: T. Payne, 1764).


the catalogue of his library prepared for sale after his 1813 death lists it.116 Because Owen published his work before Griesbach (1764) and Griesbach visited England prior to the publication of his source hypothesis (1776), the assumption is that he may have met Owen or purchased this work while visiting Oxford and London (1769-1770) and gathering materials for his text-critical research. The precise time he obtained Owen’s work, however, is unknown. Moreover, Griesbach made a veiled reference in his Demonstration that “more recently some have shrewdly observed that the conformity of Mark with Luke is also so great that he [Mark] would seem to have had his [Luke’s] Gospel at hand.”117 Oddly, Griesbach does not mention whom he had in mind here, but he does mention others such as Lardner, Koppe, Michaelis, and Storr, who opposed the idea. This statement regarding shrewd observers can be interpreted in different ways: perhaps Griesbach did not want his readers to know who influenced him or whose ideas he borrowed so he made only a veiled reference to them; perhaps he merely wanted to suggest to his readership that his conclusions are not unusual since other shrewd observers have come to the same conclusion. This latter possibility finds support in the immediate context, whose purpose focuses on listing and refuting those who oppose the idea of Mark as the abbreviator of Matthew or who dissent from his own synoptic approach and pointing out “such extensive disagreement of these scholars” rather than mustering a list of names who support his approach.118

Still, the case for Owen’s influence on Griesbach must remain inferential at best. Though others may have influenced Griesbach and his major mentors (Michaelis, Semler, Ernesti, and Le Clerc) did not espouse this synoptic hypothesis, in terms of his philosophical background and theological approach all the essential elements were present in Griesbach’s thinking to develop such a literary hypothesis apart from Owen.119 For the sake of argument, however, this essay will assume that Owen may have influenced Griesbach’s approach. The next step is to look at influences on Owen to see if he was free of philosophical and theological aberrations in developing his own synoptic approach.

**Owen’s Literary Approach to the Synoptics**

In sum, Owen’s synoptic approach was one of literary dependence. Specifically, that the Gospel of Mark is a compilation of Matthew and Luke. He wrote,

> In compiling this narrative, he [Mark] had but little more to do, it seems, than to abridge the Gospels which lay before him—varying some expressions, and inserting some

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118Ibid., 106.
119Dungan feels that since nothing in the doctrines of these four resemble Griesbach’s source approach, Griesbach must have been influenced by Owen (Dungan, *History of the Synoptic Problem* 484).
additions, as occasion required. That St. Mark followed this plan, no one can doubt, who compares his Gospels with those of the two former Evangelists. He copies largely from both: and takes either the one or the other almost perpetually for his guide. The order indeed is his own, and is very close and well connected.\footnote{Owen, \textit{Observations on the Four Gospels} 51-52.}

To Owen, the literary (and chronological) order is Matthew, Luke, Mark, with Mark reduced merely to a slavish abridgement of Matthew and Luke.\footnote{Hans-Herbert Stoldt, \textit{History and Criticism of the Marcan Hypothesis}, trans. and ed., Donald L. Niewyk (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University, 1977) 6.} Hence, Owen's view closely reflects Griesbach's approach. Stoldt suggests, "They [Owen and Griesbach] were of the opinion that, in view of the texts, the Gospel of Mark had to be considered an abbreviated compilation of the kerygmatic work of Jesus drawn from Matthew and Luke, in which the prehistory (the nativity legends, \textit{Evangelium infantiae}, and genealogy) was deliberately foregone."\footnote{Ibid., 7; cf. Owen, \textit{Observations on the Four Gospels} 50, where he argues that "some of its [Christianity’s] most faithful and serious Professors might wish to see the Gospel exhibited in a more simple form” and “delivered in a manner suitable to the condition of the world at large.”} Owen argued that Mark wrote so that "his Gospel should stand clear of all objections."\footnote{Owen, \textit{Observations on the Four Gospels} 52.}

An examination of Owen’s treatise reveals that, based on an acutely selective as well as arbitrary treatment of internal evidence, corroborated by selective and arbitrary citation of external evidence designed to support his \textit{a priori} internal conclusions, he asserted that Matthew was written in A.D. 38 (from Jerusalem), Luke in A.D. 53 (from Corinth), Mark in A.D. 63 (from Rome), and John (from Ephesus) in A.D. 69.\footnote{Ibid., 16-114; note "Appendix" 115 for summary.}

\textbf{Owen’s Profession of a High View of Scripture}

Evangelicals who practice literary dependence find solace in Owen’s profession of a high view of Scripture. Owen thought that his newly developed literary dependence would function as an apologetic answer to growing skepticism regarding the Gospels during his day: "[H]ow, then, came they not to avoid the many contradictions observable among them? These are only \textit{seeming} contradictions; and vanish most of them, on a close comparison of the several passages."\footnote{Ibid., 83 [emphasis original].} He argued, "[T]hese Gospels are by no means to be looked upon as so many detached pieces, composed by persons totally ignorant of each other’s Intentions; but rather as one complete system of Divinity, supported by the strongest proofs that the subject is capable of, and defended against all the objections [its critics] . . . could make to the truth and certainty of it."\footnote{Ibid., 108.} Owen also maintained traditional authorship
of the four Gospels.\footnote{Ibid., 9.}

If these statements are taken in isolation without a careful examination of his entire treatise, one might use them as evidence that Owen’s literary-dependence hypothesis was compatible with a high view of Scripture, uncontaminated by any negatives. Such a conclusion, however, is hasty for two important reasons. First, to present Owen as a pre-Griesbachian literary-dependence advocate free from modern philosophical or theologically unorthodox practices is tenuous. As will be demonstrated, evidence from his treatise shows that Owen contradicted his own profession of a high view of Scripture in his practice of a literary approach.

Second, complicating the issue for evangelicals who present Owen as a paradigm for their literary-dependence practice is Owen’s own admission that he did not thoroughly work out the practical implications of his hypothesis. He states that he has merely formulated his approach, and admits that he never completely thought it through. This practical outworking he leaves to others:

If the plan here exhibited be just in the main. . . . Some few specimens . . . the Reader will find inserted in the Notes. More could not conveniently be added, though they spring up thick in the Author’s way. This superstructure he leaves to others and to future time: his present concern is for the goodness of the foundation, which he entreats the public to examine with care; and to judge of with candour and impartiality. Whatever is defective in it, he heartily wishes to see supplied, and whatever is exceptional, corrected. The whole aim of his research is the acquisition of truth, to which he is ready to sacrifice any of the fore-mentioned opinions, whenever they are proved to be false.\footnote{Owen, “Preface,” Observations on the Four Gospels vi-vii.}

Clearly from the above, Owen had not thoroughly analyzed the long-term implications of his literary-dependence approach. Using him as a paradigm is thus precarious. The practical implications of the theory he formulated argue against his being a valid early example of literary dependence co-existing with a high view of Scripture. His theory displays certain characteristics that demonstrate his method and practice directly contradicted his statements of a high view of Scripture.

**Owen’s Literary-Dependence Versus His High View of Scripture**

Several indications in Owen’s writings show that profession did not match practice. First, they indicate that he realized his approach differed qualitatively from the orthodox approach in vogue in his own time. He wrote, “If the plan here exhibited be just in the main . . . then there is a new field of Criticism opened, where the learned may usefully employ their abilities, in comparing the several gospels together, and raising observations from that comparative View.”\footnote{Owen, Observations on the Four Gospels vi [emphasis added].} Notice the word “new.” It was a qualitatively different approach that had not previously been displayed among the orthodox that surrounded Owen. Owen goes on:
By these words, Owen admits that the orthodox or standard view (i.e., “commonly urged”) in defense of the Gospels was that each Gospel writer was an independent eyewitness and writer of his account. Instead, he called this thinking a “common mistake” and admitted his approach differed (qualitatively) from current practice. He goes on to note, “True indeed it is, that they neither forged their accounts, nor wrote in concert; for they wrote at different times, in different places, and with different views; yet, so far is it from being true, that the later Evangelists never consulted what the former had written before them. . . . They pursed, recommended, and copied each other.”

Owen admitted that he had departed from prevailing orthodox opinion that was commonly held, and adopted a qualitatively new approach.

Second, Owen’s writings reveal that though he was aware of the dangers of ancient philosophy—he mentioned the heresy of the “Nicolaitans” labeling it “heretical” and “founded on Philosophy and vain learning” in reference to John’s Gospel—he does not show an awareness of the philosophies of his own times that controlled his thinking on the Synoptic Gospels. His synoptic approach reflects Spinoza’s influence in searching behind the text for sources rather than starting with the text of the Gospels themselves. In other words, he changed the referent from the text to sources behind the text. If indeed Griesbach traveled to Great Britain for research and somehow met Owen, his travels to England were motivated by the fact that its institutions were famous cutting-edge, learning centers, well aware of philosophical speculations and Zeitgeist of the time.

Like Griesbach, Owen was a child of rationalistic Enlightenment philosophy, and his treatise came at the height of Enlightenment influence on learning. Owen’s synoptic approach—typical of Enlightenment philosophical approaches—depreciated, dismissed, and capriciously rejected tradition, especially early church tradition. The following typify his arguments regarding the church fathers: “But as these Writers [church fathers] differ widely in their accounts . . . even the testimonies alleged are generally to be looked upon as no more than collateral proofs of what had been deduced before them from the internal structure

130Ibid., 82 [emphasis added].
131Ibid., 82.
132Ibid., 85.
133This can be verified by showing Owen’s awareness of Michaelis’s NT Introduction (Owen, Observations on the Four Gospels 100).
134Dungan, History of the Synoptic Problem 315.
of the Gospels”; the accounts they [all the ecclesiastical writers of antiquity] have left us on this head are evidently too vague, confused, and discordant, to lead us to any solid or certain determination; the only inference we can draw with certainty is,—that, of all the Evangelists, St. Matthew, in their opinion wrote first; St. Mark, next; then St. Luke; and last of all St. John: though perhaps the Gospels themselves, carefully examined, may afford us reason to doubt the exactness of this order; “the ancient Fathers . . . ‘tis to be feared took it upon trust. The oldest of them collected reports of their own times, and set them down for certain truths; and those who followed, adopted those accounts, with implicit reverence. Thus, traditions of every sort, true or false, passed on from hand to hand without examination, until it was almost too late to examine them to any purpose”; “their strangely various and contradictory Accounts.” He argued that the early fathers’ accounts regarding the date of the Gospels “are evidently too vague, confused, and discordant, to lead us to any solid or certain determination. Discordant, however, as these accounts are, it may not be improper to collect them, and present them to the Reader’s view.” Owen goes on to conclude, “There being, then, but little dependence to be laid on these external proofs, let us now see whether anything can be inferred from the internal construction of the Gospels themselves, either for or against the preceding articles.” For Owen, the early church fathers were unhinging or inept, and had little critical skill in evaluating historical evidence. Having set aside early church traditions that contradicted his hypothesis, Owen like Griesbach “arrived at their result on the basis of an internal analysis of the synoptic gospels.”

Owen then subjectively analyzed internal evidence as a buttressing support for his a priori assumption of literary dependence, using selective evidence from the church fathers to support his assumption. His assumption is evident at the outset of his discussion:

When the first Evangelist had penned his Gospel, it is natural to conclude that it was soon published and dispersed abroad. . . .

Hence then we may further conclude, that the second evangelist was perfectly acquainted with the writings of the first: and that the third, when he wrote, perused the Gospels of the other two. . . . This we offer at present only by way of supposition: hereafter it may appear to have been real fact.

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135 Owen, “Preface” iv.
136 This term inserted, “all the ecclesiastical writers of antiquity,” is Owen’s own term used in the prior context (Owen, *Observations on the Four Gospels* 1).
137 Ibid., 7-8.
138 Ibid., 8.
139 Ibid., 102 [emphasis original].
140 Ibid., 2.
141 Ibid., 8-9 [emphasis original].
But to clear our way to the proof of this fact, it will be necessary to determine, among other things, which of these sacred Historians is in reality to be accounted the first; which the second; and which the third: for much depends on this question.\textsuperscript{143}

Owen accepted external evidence selectively only when it agreed with his already chosen position of literary-dependence. After dismissing the fathers as valueless and accepting from them only what would support his assumption in rationalistic overtones,\textsuperscript{144} Owen boldly asserted that he conducted his research “with the utmost impartiality. For the Author [Owen], having no hypothesis to serve, nor any other end in view but the investigation of truth, suffered himself to be carried along as the tide of evidence bore him.”\textsuperscript{145} Owen, however, consistently based the order, circumstances, and dates on a subjective analysis of internal evidence with an acceptance of external evidence only when it confirmed his preconceptions. Thus, he wrote, “If he [Owen] displaced the common order of the Gospels [i.e. Matthew-Mark-Luke as he thought church tradition maintained], it was because he found that the order incompatible with their internal character, and contrary to the sentiment of primitive antiquity.”\textsuperscript{146} Instead, based on internal evidence, Owen adopted the order Matthew-Luke-Mark. He concluded his preface by asserting, “The whole aim of his [Owen’s] research is the acquisition of Truth.”\textsuperscript{147} One is left wondering how “truth” can be discovered through suppression of adverse evidence and subjective selection of favorable evidence in confirming what someone has already assumed.

Like Griesbach, Owen fell under strong influence of the philosophy of Romanticism. As Dungan observes about both Owen and Griesbach, “we can see that they share the same new Romantic conception of a developmental history of early Christianity, in terms of which to justify the differences among the Gospels.”\textsuperscript{148} Owen described his approach in Romanticism’s developmental terms, for example, “comparing the several Gospels together, and raising observations from that comparative View”\textsuperscript{149} and “[c]ould we truly discover at what time, for whose use, and on what occasion, the Gospels were respectively written, we should doubtless be able, not only to understand them more perfectly, but also to read them with more profit, than we have the happiness at present to pretend to.”\textsuperscript{150} Owen asserted regarding his Romantic idea of development of one Gospel from another, “That St.
Mark makes quick and frequent transitions from one Evangelist to the other; and blends their accounts, I mean their words, in such a manner is utterly inexplicable upon any other footing, than by supposing he had both these [Matthew and Luke] before him.  

Owen’s synoptic approach also evidences the radical results of historical criticism. Several assertions demonstrate this fact. Long before the development of redactional hermeneutics in the twentieth century, Owen’s work anticipated the concept of esoteric messages conveyed by the evangelist through the historical situation of the readers (i.e., manifesting a concept of *Sitz im Leben* before its time):

In penning their Gospels, the sacred Historians had a constant regard, as well to the circumstances of the persons, for whose use they wrote; as to the several particulars of Christ’s life, which they were then writing. It was this that regulated the conduct of their narration—that frequently determined them in their choice of materials—and, when they had chosen, induced them either to contract or enlarge, as they judged expedient. In short, it was this that modified their Histories and gave them their different colourings.

He continues, 

[I]f the Gospels were thus modeled, as I apprehend they were, to the state, temper, and disposition of the times, in which they were written; then are we furnished with certain Criteria, by which we may judge of their respective dates. For those times, whose transactions accord with the turn of the discourses related in the Gospel-Histories, are, in all probability, the very times when the Gospels were written.

Ignoring any external evidence that contradicted his synoptic hypothesis, Owen established the date of the Gospel based on an assumption of literary-dependence and modification of one Gospel by another. This subjective analysis of internal evidence, in turn, helped establish the circumstances of the readership and constituted a vehicle for esoteric messages to the particular Gospel’s readership. External evidence is used in a selective fashion merely to corroborate his assumptions centered in internal evidence. Thus, Matthew wrote to a Jewish audience. It was “ penned at a time, when the Church was labouring under heavy persecution.”

Through the vehicle of references to persecution, Matthew tells his Jewish-Christian readership “to expect” and “to bear” persecution and that “the Church must be supposed to labour under such a state when the Evangelist advanced and urged them.” He continues, “This example . . . and these promises, St. Matthew laid before them, for their imitation and encouragement. For now—toward the close of

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151 Owen, *Observations on the Four Gospels* 74 [emphasis original].
152 Ibid., 15-16 [emphasis original].
153 Ibid., 16 [emphasis original].
154 Ibid., 17.
this dangerous period—it is most likely that he wrote his Gospel, and delivered it to them, as the anchor of their hope, and to keep them steadfast in this violent tempest.”

To Owen, since Matthew’s gospel was written “for the sake of the Jews, and consequently adapted to their peculiar circumstances, must necessarily be defective in several particulars, which nearly concerned the Gentiles.” Notice the word “defective” that he applies to the inspired Gospel text. This word is hardly appropriate for someone maintaining a high view of the Scriptures.

Because of these Matthean deficiencies in writing to Jewish interests only, Luke was written to “satisfy the enquiries, and supply the wants of these Heathen Converts.” Luke, utilizing Matthew, “adjust[s] the points of His [Matthew’s] History, as his Brother-Evangelist had done before, to the circumstances of the persons to whom he wrote; and so modify his general instructions as to make them applicable to those particular times.”

The Gospel of Mark resulted because Matthew’s and Luke’s “Histories became, in the detail, more complex and various than we have reason to think they would otherwise have been.” To Owen, Matthew and Luke were too complicated than they should have been for a general readership. This is another aberrant assumption for someone with a high view of Scripture, believing in plenary verbal inspiration as well as the sufficiency of the Spirit-inspired text. Finally, in Owen’s thinking, Mark wrote his Gospel “exhibited in a more simple form . . . without any particular consideration to Jew or Gentile, delivered in a manner suitable to the condition of the world at large.” Owen describes Mark as “divested of almost all peculiarities, and accommodated to general use” and that “he had but little more to do, it seems, than to abridge the Gospels which lay before him. . . . That St. Mark followed this plan, no one can doubt, who compares his Gospel with those of the two former Evangelists. He copies largely from both: and takes either one or the other almost perpetually for his guide.” For Owen, each Gospel writer wrote utilizing the other “improving upon one another.” That a Spirit-inspired text would need to be improved is not a position of orthodoxy but an aberration from the view of the early church maintained from the very beginnings of Christianity.

Although Owen stated that he left to others the outworking of the superstructure of his hypothesis, indications in his writings show the inevitable results of a hypothesis that makes one gospel the “source” of the others. Specifically,

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155 Ibid., 17, 20, 21
156 Ibid., 24 [emphasis original].
157 Ibid. [emphasis original].
158 Ibid., 27.
159 Ibid., 50.
160 Ibid. [emphasis original].
161 Ibid., 51.
he dehistorized the Gospels and exhibited the same type of radical creativity that modern historical criticism exhibits. For instance, Owen asserted a Gospel writer, in utilizing another Gospel as a source, put words on Jesus lips that He did not speak. In recounting the rooster crowing in Matthew 26:30-50, which Owen assumed was Mark’s source in Mark 14:26-46, Owen asserted,

As the Jews, in the enumeration of the times of the night, took notice only of one cock-crowing, which comprehended the third watch; so St. Matthew, to give them a clear information that Peter would deny his Master thrice before Three in the morning, needed only to say, that he would do it “before the cock crew.” But the Romans, reckoning by a double crowing of the cock—the first of which was about Midnight, the second at Three—stood in need of a more particular designation. And therefore, St. Mark, to denote the same hour to them, was obliged to say—“before the cock ‘crow twice.”

Thus, from Owen’s perspective, Mark added to Jesus’ words something that He did not say. Jesus did not say “twice” but Mark added it to Jesus’s lips to clarify the passage for his Roman audience.

Owen allowed for the possibility the Gospel writer could creatively modify the historical situation of Jesus’ teachings and circumstances in adopting it for use in his Gospel. For example, he asserted that “the Parable of the Seed, [Mark] iv. 26-29 seems to be taken from Matt. xiii.24 & c. but varied a little in the circumstances.” An examination of these two passages reveals that such a variation would mean more than a “little” variation, for Matthew 13:24-30 and Mark 4:26-29 are entirely different in content and wording. Matthew 13:24-30 deals with an enemy sowing wheat and tares in a man’s field with both elements growing together until separation at the harvest, but Mark 4:26-29 deals with the gradual growth from seeds to mature crops in a man’s garden that leads to harvest. The orthodox approach would recognize these as two distinct parables spoken by Jesus rather than one creatively revised by Mark.

In summary, though Owen professed a high view of Scripture, his treatise exhibits startling contradictions of such a profession. Like Griesbach, Owen’s work exhibited the same kind of negative influence regarding presuppositions. Owen’s work reveals a Griesbach-like philosophy that affected his theology, leading to a qualitative departure from an orthodox view of inspiration and a qualitatively different approach to Gospels origins. His approach led naturally to dehistorizing the text as well as to historical-critical concepts of creativity and fabrication. Though Owen may not have been as radical as Griesbach, he nonetheless exhibited the same negative influences that led Griesbach to the same literary-dependence conclusions.

CONCLUSIONS
Several conclusions stem from this discussion. First, the roots of literary-dependence were the same as roots of modern errancy views. One cannot overstress that the same radical skepticism regarding historical reliability and harmonization of the Gospels that produced modern errancy hypotheses regarding Scripture also produced modern literary dependence hypotheses. Second, an examination of the historical evidence surrounding Griesbach’s and Owen’s hypotheses reveals that the primary impetuses for the development of their synoptic approach were errant and unorthodox views of inspiration derived from philosophical concepts—e.g., the Rationalism, Deism and Romanticism (to name a few)—rather than from an objective, “scientific” investigation of the Gospels. Aberrant philosophical ideologies led not only to a departure from the orthodox view of inspiration (i.e., plenary, verbal), but to an approach qualitatively different from the first 1,700 years of church tradition—i.e., from literary independence to literary-dependence.

Some evangelicals counter, however, that by sanitizing the roots of dependence hypotheses, one can practice literary-dependence methodology in isolation from antecedents that gave the methodology impetus. Such an assertion deserves two responses. (1) Logically, the tried and true saying that “a text without a context is a pretext” applies here. Such historical-critical ideologies are no more valid than the concepts upon which they are based. Etienne Gilson, in his *Unity of Philosophical Experience*, has demonstrated, no hypothesis or theory is better than the concepts upon which it is based, arguing, “However correct my combinations of concepts may be, my conclusions cannot be more valid than my concepts. . . . [I]f it is necessary for a true reasoning that it be logical, it is not enough for it to be logical in order to be true.” If a method is based in a false ideology, no matter how logical it may be, such a method will lead to wrong conclusions. Thus, if historical-critical ideologies, including source-critical dependence hypotheses, derive from aberrant thinking, their conclusions cannot be true—even though they may appear to some to be “logical.” More crassly, if the roots of the tree are rotten, so will be the fruit.

(2) Due to their aberrant roots, both philosophically and historically, literary-dependence hypotheses will automatically produce significant denigration of the historical accuracy of the Gospel accounts. Church history stands as a
monumental testimony to orthodox positions that have stood the test of time and
diligent scrutiny, but more recent theories have often been proven to be heterodox
in origin. Have evangelicals forgotten that church history also stands as a monument-
tal witness that once someone comes under the influence historical-critical ideology,
disastrous consequences ensue (cf. Acts 20:28-31)? As the Apostle Paul admon-
ished, “See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty
deception, according to the traditions of men, according to the elementary principles
of the world, rather than according to Christ” (Col 2:8 cf. 2 Cor 10:3-5).
INSPIRED SUBJECTIVITY AND HERMENEUTICAL OBJECTIVITY

John H. Walton

Objectivity is the goal of hermeneutics so that the text of Scripture may speak for itself. For an interpreter to bring his subjective views to the text jeopardizes the authority of the Word. Two forces at work among evangelicals today tend to increase the subjective element in interpretation. The first is the principle of the analogy of faith or the harmonizing of different texts with one another. Harmonizing is desirable, but if taken too far, it can distort a text by inserting theological motifs into places where they do not belong. Doctrinal considerations should be introduced only to solve complexities of certain passages. The second force is the practices of NT authors. Sometimes the interpreter must choose between using objective methods and following the example of NT authors in their use of the OT. He must maintain objectivity rather than pattern his exegesis after the NT in matters of typology, symbolism, role models, and fulfillments. The difference between contemporary exegetes and NT writers is that the former must abide by principles of hermeneutical objectivity while the former were led to follow the pattern of inspired subjectivity. Inspired subjectivity is not an option in this day and time.

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Ever since the Reformation we have prided ourselves in our commitment to the historical-grammatical method. The science of hermeneutics has developed to give shape to that method and to affirm our commitment to the authority of the Scriptures and the importance of objectivity in interpretation. Yet pockets of

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2By “objectivity” we do not refer to absolute objectivity that allows the interpreter to repress or subordinate culture and perspective totally. We only refer to the procedures that assume that the author is a competent communicator and capable of being understood. In recent terminology we might refer to
subjectivity have not only been retained, but have thrived. Subjective methods are healthy and prosperous in the pews of our churches, firmly entrenched in our pulpits, and are not strangers to the halls of our seminaries. We are eager to display and celebrate the bankruptcy of the disreputable allegorical method, yet continue to promote the same sort of subjectivism in our use of typology, our interpretation of symbols in prophetic literature, the identification of fulfillment, and the pervasive presence of role model interpretation of the OT, to name a few of the more prominent examples. Most of these concern the use of the OT, either by the New Testament authors or by the church. In this essay I will address the relative merits of objective and subjective approaches and the role of hermeneutics with regard to each. I will then consider the areas where subjectivism is prevalent and discuss how those areas ought to be approached. In conclusion, I will be able to respond to often asked questions such as, “Can we reproduce the hermeneutics of the NT authors?” and “Did the prophets understand what they were talking about?” The objective of this essay is that we might see clearly how the OT can be handled consistently according the principles of the historical-grammatical method.

It has long been recognized that no one is capable of being entirely objective, but that does not mean that objective methods are impractical. We can be committed to objectivity, yet at the same time realize that absolute objectivity is only an ideal that can never be fully achieved. This commitment to objectivity is built into our hermeneutics. As a science, hermeneutics espouses the value and necessity of objectivity. Such an element is theologically mandated because in the interpretation of Scripture we realize that the most important aspects of the text come with the text, rather than being brought to the table by the interpreter. The objective nature of hermeneutics is designed to allow the text to speak for itself. The extent to which we, as fallen beings, bring our own subjective views to the text is proportional to the degree in which the authority of the inspired message of the Word of God is jeopardized. We must not have the means at our disposal to make the text say what we want it to say. It must be allowed to speak for itself, address its own agenda, and establish its own set of presuppositions. We value objective methods because they offer greater assurance that the text is operating independently of the prejudices of the interpreter.

On the other hand, we must be quick to admit that an observation or interpretation is not necessarily wrong if it is subjective. In interpretation of the text, however, we always need to approach a proposed theory with the question, “Why should I believe that?” Our beliefs about the text and its purpose suggest to us that the message of the text is accessible to anyone and not subject to being given private personal interpretations that will differ from one individual to the next and from one minute to the next. For a text to have independent authority it must be shown to have some autonomy, a source independent from the reader. The extent to which the message originates with the reader is the extent to which the divine authority is

author orientation (objective) or reader orientation (subjective) with a text orientation able to go in either direction.
compromised. If the reader brings the message and meaning to the text, that message and meaning carry only the reader’s authority. The importance of objectivity concerns not truth, but authority. Again, this is the result of our current theological convictions about the Bible. If our hermeneutics and theological convictions both lead in this direction, what forces perpetuate the inclination to subjectivity? Historically, two issues emerge: (1) the principle of “analogy of faith” and (2) the practices of the NT authors.

**Analogy of Faith**

We are well aware that the church has not always been committed to objectivity. The allegorical method dominated the church for many centuries. One of the results of the Enlightenment was the decline of the characteristic subjectivism of interpretation and the development of the science of hermeneutics. Such major changes in thinking, however, do not occur overnight, and it often takes some time before all of the ramifications are identified and all the adjustments made. Such is still the case as we seek to apply the historical-grammatical method to every aspect of our interpretation. The Reformers allowed for departures from a grammatical-historical interpretation on the principle called “analogy of faith.” This concept was incorporated into the Scots Confession, the Second Helvetic Confession, and the Westminster Confession.¹

For the Westminster Divines, the Bible was a book that told one unified story—the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ. They referred to that theme sometimes as the covenant. The proper interpretation of Scripture did not take the verses individually and plug them in as proof texts of a systematic theology. The right interpretation of Scripture allowed the analogy of faith to operate. It interpreted the individual verses as parts of the overall message. This was the interpretative model that informed the statement: “The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself.” The Scripture could be “searched and known” by understanding all the verses as parts of a whole unified biblical story.²

While harmonization of texts is desirable and necessary, the concept of analogy of faith can be taken too far such that it becomes a tool of theological anachronizing by inserting important theological motifs into places where they do not belong. Concerns for unity and coherence cannot be used to homogenize all texts. Those concerns lead us to expect harmony, but not homogeneity.³

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²Ibid., 215-16.
Analogy of faith was to be invoked where reconciliation or harmonization was necessary. No part of Scripture was to be interpreted in such a way that it would be in contradiction with another part of Scripture. But the determination of when harmonization was necessary is entirely dependent on the exegetical skills of the interpreter and the presuppositions that he holds. So, for instance, Luther believed that James’ view of justification needed to be subordinated to Paul’s by analogy of faith because he did not see how they could co-exist. Subsequent interpreters, however, were able to approach the two and not find their views at all mutually exclusive. Thus a sensitivity to what Paul and James were each actually saying eliminated the need to invoke analogy of faith. As a result, Luther’s application of analogy of faith in this instance proved only to demonstrate exegetical weakness and ended up compromising the authority of Scripture by opening the door of subjectivity.

On the surface, the statement that “scripture interprets itself” seems to be another pillar upholding the principle of sola scriptura. But Luther’s additional statement “passages . . . can only be understood by a rule of faith” raises the question of how anyone acquires the authority for knowing just what that rule is. As we consider how Luther and Calvin elaborated on this principle of the analogy of faith, it becomes clear that, in the final analysis, the subjective preference of the theologian himself is the only basis upon which this all-important norm for interpreting the rest of scripture is established. Consequently, the analogy-of-faith principle does not undergird but undermines the sola scriptura principle.

There is another important distinction to be made: that is the difference between reconciling an apparent contradiction in the teachings of two biblical authors (the true function of analogy of faith) and glossing a theological concept into a context where it has no ostensible role. So, for instance, the analogy of faith concerning the doctrine of the Trinity may need to be invoked to help untangle some of the complexities of Jesus’ subordination of Himself to the Father’s will in Gethsemane. A Trinitarian issue is resident in the text, and we expect to depend on other Scriptures to give guidance in interpreting this one. It is an entirely different matter when the Trinity is brought into the question of why plural pronouns are used in Gen 1:26. The nature of the problem does not commend itself contextually as a Trinitarian issue and no threat to the doctrine of the Trinity is posed by the passage. Analogy of faith would not, therefore, be a legitimate basis for importing Trinitarian theology into this text. There is no contradiction, apparent or real, that needs resolution. There is no reason to expect that this passage will require harmonization to Trinitarian doctrine.

In recognition of the problems with how “analogy of faith” has been applied, recent studies in hermeneutics have preferred the alternative called “analogy

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of Scripture” whereby isolated or unusual texts would not be used to compromise or call into question the more extensive, clearer teachings on the subject.5

New Testament Authors

Prominent among the causes of our neglect in applying the objective principles of the historical-grammatical method to every area of interpretation is the fact that there are a number of situations where it appears that the biblical authors themselves are not restricting themselves to objective criteria and are not being particularly historical-grammatical in their own approach to the Scriptures.6 We then find ourselves torn between following the objective methods that we espouse in theory, or following the lead of the authors of Scripture and utilizing the methods they model. How can such a dilemma be resolved?

There are four areas of tension, four major areas, that I have identified where I believe that evangelicals continue to engage in subjective methods with impunity. We will now survey each of those areas in order to seek a solution: either explaining why they should be handled differently from other hermeneutical issues, or arriving at guidelines that will help us achieve hermeneutical consistency.

Types

Typology is closest to allegory and perhaps should be treated first. Typology is the identification of a relationship of correspondence between New and Old Testament events or people, based on a conviction that there is a pattern being worked out in the plan of God. Since this correlation is not identifiable until both type andantitype exist, typology is always a function of hindsight. One thing is never identified as a type of something to come. Only after the latter has come can the correspondence be proclaimed. As a result, one will never find confirmation of the typological value of the type in its initial context. This creates a real problem for hermeneutics which maintains that achieving the results of typology depends on an analysis of the context.

How should the interpreter come to a conclusion that one thing is a type of another? Since typology involves the identification of a relationship, the interpreter must detect some similarity between the proposed type or antitype. But if we are going to accept a typological relationship as coming with the inspired authority of God’s Word, we want to have more than someone’s imagination as a basis. Before we dismiss the whole area as hopelessly subjective, however, we must admit that the

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5E.g., Grant Osborne. The Hermeneutical Spiral (Downers Grove: IVP, 1991) 11, 273-74.

6All treatments of the use of the OT by the NT grapple with this issue; one example will suffice: “Does the method of interpreting Scripture that Jesus and the apostles taught us differ from the principles that contemporary interpreters regard as sound exegesis? Or, are the methods of Jesus and the apostles of the NT closer to the practices of rabbinic midrash and Qumranian peshar? And, if they are, should we also follow that Christological and apostolic lead and reproduce their kind of exegesis when we read or study the Bible?” (W.C. Kaiser, The Uses of the Old Testament in the New [Chicago: Moody, 1985] 17).
NT authors at times utilized typology. How did they proceed and what can be observed about their results?

The first observation we must make is a very significant one. The NT typologists did not get their typological correspondence from their exegetical analysis of the context of the OT. Hermeneutics is incapable of extracting a typological meaning from the OT context because hermeneutics operates objectively while the typological identification can only be made subjectively. A second observation that needs to be made is that the NT authors never claim to have engaged in a hermeneutical process, nor do they claim that they can support their findings from the text; instead, they claim inspiration.

Remember that our standard question concerning an interpreter’s findings is “Why should I believe that?” For most of us as interpreters, we would like to be able to reply with an arsenal of objective pieces of evidence that would convince our audience that our interpretation is indeed correct in that it finds its support in the text itself rather than in a hyper-active imagination. For the NT authors, the response to the question “Why should I believe that” is that they got the information for their interpretation from God. Most of us cannot make such a claim (though some try), and it must frankly be admitted that the ability to make such a claim makes historical-grammatical hermeneutics and even objectivity moot.

We are faced then with the fact that we possess two separate and distinct methods of interpretation. One is defined by hermeneutical guidelines and is objective in nature. The other is subjective in nature but finds its authority not in the science that drives it, but in its source—inspiration from God. If you have inspiration, you do not need historical-grammatical hermeneutics. If you do not have inspiration, you must proceed by the acknowledged guidelines of hermeneutics. The credibility of any interpretation is based on the verifiability of either one’s inspiration or one’s hermeneutics.

Coming back to typology then, the issue is very clear. We cannot speak of reproducing the methods of the NT authors, for the subjectivity of their methods is not allowed to those of us whose interpretation does not enjoy the affirmation of inspiration. We can therefore claim a typological interpretation for an OT text only when the NT has done so. No other typology can be granted the authority of God, for that authority can be substantiated only from context (hermeneutics) or through inspiration. We do not therefore begrudge, condemn, or deny the typological interpretations of the NT authors. We merely recognize that our interpretations cannot meet that criterion (i.e., inspiration) that commends their interpretations to us.

In the history of interpretation, as mentioned earlier, the evidence that has been given to support typological interpretations has often been premised on the concept of analogy of faith. Accepting that all of Scripture is a unity (under divine authorship) and that it is Christocentric (Luke 24:44), the claim has been made that there is therefore an objective basis for reading OT passages in light of their
Christocentricity. A recent hermeneutics textbook phrases it this way:

So the “analogy of faith” for Christians dictates both that obscure texts are understandable in the light of the clear and that the NT gives the correct understanding of the OT.

But it also serves to indicate that the meaning of any part of the Bible must be understood in the context of the Bible as a whole. This principle is sometimes called “canonical” interpretation. Texts that might have been understood in one way if they occurred in isolation from Scripture are shown by their inclusion in Scripture to have a somewhat different meaning.

Assuming some degree of Christocentricity, we must still investigate how invasive it is and what range it must be granted in interpretation. How far must we advocate cohesiveness in order to maintain a sense of unity? D. A. Carson suggests that a systematic theology requires “that the biblical books be close enough in subject matter to cohere.” He illustrates with the following analogy:

I am not saying that the Bible is like a jigsaw puzzle of five thousand pieces and that all five thousand pieces are provided, so that with time and thought the entire picture may be completed. Rather, I am suggesting that the Bible is like a jigsaw puzzle that provides five thousand pieces along with the assurance that these pieces all belong to the same puzzle, even though ninety-five thousand pieces are missing. Most of the pieces that are provided, the instructions insist, fit together rather nicely; but there are a lot of gaping holes, a lot of edges that cry out to be completed, and some clusters of pieces that seem to be on their own. Nevertheless, the assurance that all the pieces do belong to one puzzle is helpful, for that makes it possible to develop the systematic theology, even though the systematic theology is not going to be completed until we receive more pieces from the One who made it. And meanwhile, even some systematists who believe that all the pieces belong to the same puzzle are not very adept puzzle players but sometimes force pieces into slots where they don’t really belong. The picture gets distorted somewhat, but it remains basically recognizable.

Even given the acceptance of the concept of Christocentricity, however, we face several alternatives concerning the nature of that Christocentricity. This was evident as early as the controversies between the Alexandrians and the Antiochenes. For some it bespeaks a comprehensive and intrinsic soteriology,

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7 For a brief summary of these concepts throughout Church history see G. W. Bromiley, “The Church Fathers and Holy Scripture,” in Scripture and Truth 212-17.

8 Dan McCartney and Charles Clayton, Let the Reader Understand (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor, 1994) 161 [emphasis original]. The authors proceed to offer the example of Song of Songs which they interpret as referring to Christ and the Church based on the fact that the NT sees “the relationship of man and woman is patterned after the relationship of God to His People.”


10 Bromiley, “The Church Fathers and Holy Scripture” 214.
resulting in “salvation history.” For others it may be messianic in nature, focusing on prophecy and fulfillment. Still a third option would be a revelatory approach where Christ is seen as the ultimate goal of God’s revelatory program throughout. All of these represent Christocentrism, but they will lead to widely divergent readings of the text when applied to OT. An example of the impact this can have on interpretation can be seen in McCartney and Clayton’s recent guide to hermeneutics.

We should ask of every passage, “How does it point to Jesus Christ?” . . . This is not an expectation that every passage will speak directly about Him, but it does mean that every passage in some way relates to his person or work. And this question is just as relevant to NT passages as to OT.11

This aggressive degree of Christocentrism is not required by the text of Scripture, but it is carried in on the coattails of analogy of faith by these authors and becomes the agenda that impacts all of their interpretation. They see this relation to Christ as the most important part of any passage, yet that part has to be supplied, for the text says nothing of it. The primary authority of the passage is then connected to something entirely of the interpreter’s own design. The dangers of this approach are well addressed by Grant Osborne.

Nearly all practitioners allegorize and spiritualize Old Testament texts to fit preconceived “types of Christ” or some such. The Old Testament as the history and record of God’s salvific dealings with his covenant people Israel is lost. Subjective speculation and a reductionism reduce it to a series of prophetic acts. The intention of the text, the Old Testament as canon in its own right, and the validity of the religious experiences of the Hebrews as the chosen people of Yahweh are all sacrificed on the altar of “relevance.” There must be a better way to demonstrate the continuity between the covenants.12

The point is, then, that analogy of faith can also open the door to subjective imposition of merely human agendas. The principle of analogy of faith retains its importance, but must be hermeneutically regulated if its results are to be accorded the authority of God’s Word.

Symbols

Prophetic literature, especially of the apocalyptic variety, is replete with symbols. Here the problem is somewhat different from that which we just addressed. We do not have to deal with NT authors interpreting the meaning of symbols that occur in OT apocalyptic. Nevertheless, many interpreters of prophetic literature assume that it is their task and indeed, their mandate, to identify what each symbol in the text stands for. Again we must notice immediately that hermeneutics is of little use in this endeavor. If the text identifies what a symbol stands for (e.g.,

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12Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral* 280.
horns = kings) then no interpretation along those lines is called for. If the text does not identify what a symbol stands for, then hermeneutics provides no basis for arriving at a conclusion unless it can be demonstrated that the symbolic reference was transparent or self-evident in the culture or literature.

The speculation that often characterizes interpretation of symbols has no place within the historical-grammatical method. Rather than assuming that interpretation requires us to identify the meaning of symbols we need to be content to focus our attention on the message of the text, itself identifiable by means of hermeneutical principles and guidelines. Some would find it unthinkable that God would include these symbols in His revelation if He did not wish us to interpret them. An alternative is to understand that the revelation God intended to convey is in the message of the prophecy rather than one found in the symbols. If the text does not reveal the meaning of the symbols, I would assume that the message can be understood without unearthing what the symbols stand for. Perhaps God is using the symbols to conceal those aspects that would distract us from the central truth. Whatever God’s reasons, we would again conclude that no warrant or excuse exists for our dabbling in the subjective; and certainly God’s Word furnishes no authority for such speculations.

Role Models

The OT has become a stranger to many pulpits throughout the country, but when it is entered, it is often treated as a repository of role models. The call to imitate the faith of Abraham, the zeal of Josiah, the love of God exhibited by David, the humility of Moses, or the leadership of Nehemiah reverberate through sermons and literature. After all, what else can one do with the OT? Obscure history, prophecies of other people who do not even exist anymore, endless genealogies, laws from the dark ages—in the eyes of many, trivial irrelevance! So we look to the OT for examples of godliness as a token gesture in the absence of any other redeeming value. Interpreters appeal to Hebrews 11 as offering a sound precedent for such an approach and quote 1 Cor 10:11: “These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come” as proof that their approach is legitimate.

A moment’s consideration, however, before we accept such a view. Is there ever any indication as we read through the literature of the OT that the text’s intention is to offer models for imitation? Though the text is not shy to commend individuals for their righteous behavior, it is not inclined to urge the reader to “go and do likewise.” In fact the literature often passes over commendable behavior without a pause or skips past conduct that is morally bankrupt without disapproval. To put it briefly, the text rarely moralizes. This would be an inexcusable oversight if its intention was to teach lessons concerning good and bad behavior and characteristics. Certainly one could claim that the appropriateness or inappropriateness of certain behaviors is clear enough without necessitating explicit comment from the author. At the same time there are many situations where the behavior is not clearly right or wrong. Was Jonathan right to eat the honey? Was Elijah right
to mock the prophets of Baal? Was David justified in working for the Philistines? Was Mordecai acting appropriately when he refused to bow to Haman? (Did he also refuse to bow to Ahasueras?) The questions could go on and on.

I would contend that a historical-grammatical hermeneutical approach to the OT offers no support for role models from the text. By this I mean to say that objective criteria fail to sustain the claim that the text’s intention is to teach its audience by means of the good and bad models of the characters in its narratives. The fact that Hebrews 11 uses the OT accounts as a source for its examples of faith only shows that such examples can be gleaned from the literature. The interpretations of the author of Hebrews were not a result of the application of historical-grammatical hermeneutics to the text, they rather represent his subjective judgments. Again we are quite willing to accept his subjective judgments for they are affirmed through the inspiration he enjoys. Hermeneutical principles of contextual exegesis would not always lead us to his conclusions.13

Fulfillments

The Gospel writers, particularly Matthew, revel in the opportunities to point out to their readers all the prophecies that find their fulfillment in Jesus. Jesus Himself spoke of the way in which the Scriptures pointed to Him (Luke 24:27). It is therefore not unexpected that the church has long valued these connections between Old and New and added considerably to the list throughout the ages. Indeed, Christ’s fulfillment of prophecy has become a centerpiece of apologetics. Yet, at the same time books and articles continue to be written addressing the means by which these fulfillments have been identified. One does not have to be an experienced exegete to notice that Hosea 11:1 in its context appears to have little connection to the use Matthew puts it to when he identifies Jesus as fulfilling it. Yet many have concluded that if we fail to find Matthew’s meaning in Hosea, we undermine the authority of the text. If Matthew says that is what Hosea meant, then that must be what Hosea meant.

The question we must ask, however, is whether Matthew is intending to interpret the message of Hosea. As I have written elsewhere,14 I believe that it is essential for us to see clearly the distinction between the message and the fulfillment. The message of the prophet was understood by the prophet and his audience and is accessible through the objective principles of historical-grammatical hermeneutics. Fulfillment is not the message, but is the working out of God’s plan in history. There are no hermeneutical principles within the grammatical-historical model that enable one to identify a fulfillment by reading and analyzing the prophecy. Like types, symbols and role models, fulfillment is often a matter of making a subjective


association. As a result, we need not be concerned with adjusting our concept of Hosea’s message so that it can accommodate Matthew’s idea of fulfillment. Biblical authority is not jeopardized when the message and fulfillment are not the same. They are different issues and are arrived at through different means. One can gladly accept Jesus as the fulfillment of Hosea 11:1 without seeing any more in the message of Hosea than Hosea and his audience saw. Hosea is proclaiming a message, not revealing a fulfillment. Matthew is not interpreting the message, he is identifying fulfillment. If he were interpreting message we would have just cause to question the validity of his hermeneutics; but since he is identifying fulfillment we can neither inquire of his hermeneutics nor seek to imitate them, for there are none that apply.

As with types, our reason for affirming and accepting Matthew’s identification of fulfillments is not because he can offer objective data that give evidence from the text of Hosea. Rather we accept his subjective assessment because we believe him to be inspired. Hosea was concerned to proclaim the message that was revealed to him. He did so and that message was comprehensible to him and his audience and that same message can be identified today through accepted hermeneutical principles. Hosea, however, could not anticipate how, when, or in what ways his words would find fulfillment in the outworking of God’s plan. His message did not include any information about fulfillment. That was to be unveiled in later revelation.

The authority of God’s Word is found in the message. Fulfillments have no authority until they become part of a biblical author’s message. When anyone else offers an explanation of how some prophecy was fulfilled, we have every reason to ask, “Why should I believe that?” The subjective nature of someone’s identification of fulfillment does not make the fulfillment untrue, it only means that they cannot claim God’s authority for it.

Conclusions

The authors of the Bible had a message to proclaim. That message constitutes God’s revelation of Himself and comes with the authority of God. We must be about the task of identifying that message and submitting ourselves to God’s authoritative Word. The authors of Scripture understood their message and it has not changed. There may be value in types, symbols, role models, and fulfillments, but, being subjective methods, they do not carry the authority of God’s Word unless they become incorporated in the inspired message of a biblical author. When the authority of an author comes by means of inspiration, he does not need to validate his statements by appealing to hermeneutical principles. We do not

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wish to reproduce the hermeneutics of NT authors because they, by virtue of inspiration, accrued authority to themselves by means unavailable to us. We seek only to proclaim what the text, in its authority, has already revealed.

The fact that God has made use of certain methods in the past with beneficial results does not justify the continuing practice of those methods. If a person is converted through the improper interpretation of a verse, we must credit God’s sovereignty, but should not retain our poor hermeneutics just because God did something through them. That God revealed himself at times through what we might identify as subjective procedures should not surprise us, but likewise it should not thereby serve as commendation of the subjective procedure. God’s use of allegory to inspire Paul or His use of role model by inference to inspire the author of Hebrews does not suggest we should use those methods any more than the star of the magi suggests we should practice astrology.

We have been lax in expunging these subjective approaches, because often they are being used to teach valuable, scriptural truths. Therefore we view them as innocent. Subjective interpretation is not a danger because it is the enemy of truth. It is a danger because it masquerades as having the authority of God. As evangelicals, we take the authority of God’s Word very seriously—it is what defines us. Yet we sit idly by, tolerating and even propounding for expedience’s sake the same tired old staples of interpretation, vestiges of the bygone days of allegory and mysticism.

It is no wonder then that the cults find ripe harvest in our pews. Our people have been so encouraged in subjective methods that the errors of the cults are no longer transparent. It is no wonder that existential interpretation and new-age-style popular deconstructionism thrive in lay Bible studies. If we cannot consistently execute our hermeneutical theories and articulate clearly how the authority of God’s Word is to be recognized and appropriated, we should not be surprised when our churches fester with biblical ignorance, hermeneutical impropriety, and the resulting miserably misinformed doctrine and practice that allows the liberty of jumping on every bandwagon that passes by, for we have paved the way.

Have we eliminated the role of the Holy Spirit by being so restricted to objective data? Not at all. Certainly one of the basic hermeneutical principles of the fathers was “that only as people read the Bible in the enlightening power of the Holy Spirit, with faith and a spiritual understanding, can they come to a true appreciation of its meaning.” But we must differentiate between determining what the text is saying and what its impact should be in our lives. The authority of the text is linked to what it is saying. The truth of the text can only be appropriated to our lives through the work of the Holy Spirit and can only be spiritually discerned. Just as the Holy Spirit does not convey to us the semantic range of Greek or Hebrew words and does not inform us concerning the events of history, so we do not expect the Holy Spirit to inform us of the meaning and nature of Sheol in the OT or of the

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16Bromiley, “The Church Fathers and Holy Scripture” 214.

17For discussion see Klein, Blomberg and Hubbard, Introduction to Biblical Interpretation 82-85.
identity of the Angel of the Lord. These are matters of exegesis. Theological
discussion, like lexical and historical discussion, must be submissive to its guiding
hermeneutical principles. The Reformers were not ignorant of this.

The Reformers also distinguished between internal and external perspicuity. This
distinction calls attention to objective interpretation of the words of Scripture and
subjective appropriation of them to the heart of the reader. There is an external,
objective meaning to Scripture that can be understood by any interpreter, pagan or
Christian. There is the internal significance of personal application and love that is not
discovered apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. This is the “spiritual discernment”
about which the text itself speaks.

The external-internal distinction protects two flanks. On the one hand it recognizes
that there is some revelation that is not fully grasped apart from the Spirit’s work of
illumination. On the other hand it speaks against the idea that the Bible can be
interpreted only by mystics. What the Bible says can be interpreted accurately without
the Holy Ghost. The devil himself is capable of doing sound exegesis. However, the
saving power of God’s Word will never penetrate the heart without the work of the
Spirit. 18

We must push on in our quest to preserve the objectivity of our hermeneutics, for it provides the foundation for our commitment to biblical authority. John Calvin’s words are still true: “It is the first business of an interpreter to let his author say what he does, instead of attributing to him what we think he ought to say.” 19 For an interpretation of the text to claim credibly that it represents the authoritative teaching of the text, it must depend on either hermeneutical objectivity or inspired subjectivity.

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19“Preface” to the Commentary of Romans.
THE NEW TESTAMENT USE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

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When interpreting the OT and NT, each in light of the single, grammatical-historical meaning of a passage, two kinds of NT uses of the OT surface, one in which the NT writer observes the grammatical-historical sense of the OT passage and the other in which the NT writer goes beyond the grammatical-historical sense in his use of an OT passage. Inspired sensus plenior application (ISPA) designates the latter usage. Numerous passages illustrate each type of NT use of the OT. The ISPA type of usage does not grant contemporary interpreters the right to copy the methodology of NT writers, nor does it violate the principle of single meaning. The ISPA meaning of the OT passage did not exist for man until the time of the NT citation, being occasioned by Israel’s rejection of her Messiah at His first advent. The ISPA approach approximates that advocated by Walton more closely than other explanations of the NT use of the OT. “Fulfillment” terminology in the NT is appropriate only for events that literally fulfill events predicted in the OT.

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An earlier article, “The Principle of Single Meaning,” elaborated on an important hermeneutical maxim. That discussion raised the important issue of the NT use of the OT in instances where the NT writer went beyond the grammatical-historical meaning of an OT passage and assigned it an additional meaning in connection with his NT context. As a follow-up to that discussion, this essay will apply the principle of single meaning exactingly to a discussion of the NT use of the OT.

That important principle dictates that every OT passage must receive its own grammatical-historical interpretation, regardless of how a NT writer may use it. The OT must not receive multiple meanings by being read through the eyes of the

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NT. When this principle is applied—i.e., when each OT passage is limited to its single grammatical-historical meaning—the results are enlightening. When this is done, one finds two kinds of uses of the OT by NT writers: one in which the NT writer abides by and applies the grammatical-historical sense of the OT passage and another use in which the NT writer goes beyond the grammatical-historical sense of the OT passage to assign the passage an additional meaning in connection with its NT context. In the former instance, a NT writer uses the OT in its literal sense. The latter instance is a nonliteral use of the OT. We may call this an “inspired sensus plenior application” (hereafter usually ISPA) of the OT passage to a new situation. It is “inspired,” because along with all Scripture, the NT passage is inspired by God. It is “sensus plenior” in that it gives an additional or fuller sense than the passage had in its OT setting. It is an “application” because it does not eradicate the literal meaning of the OT passage, but simply applies the OT wording to a new setting.

In the following discussion, space will permit only an overview of a few examples of each of these two types of usage. Old Testament predictive prophecies of the first coming of Christ furnish some of the illustrations. Other examples come from non-prophetic portions of the OT.

TWO TYPES OF NT TREATMENTS OF OT PROPHECIES

Literal Use of the OT in the NT

A number of OT passages receive a literal treatment, that is, the NT records actual events or principles that satisfy the grammatical-historical sense of the OT passage. Several examples illustrate this.

Matt 1:23 with Isa 7:14. The Lord through Isaiah offered King Ahaz a sign in Isa 7:10-11, but Ahaz in feigned humility refused the offer in Isa 7:12. Since Ahaz refused that sign, the Lord chose another sign described in Isa 7:14, the miraculous birth of a son to a virgin. The Hebrew word translated “virgin” refers to an unmarried woman (Gen 24:43; Prov 30:19; Song 1:3; 6:8), indicating that the birth of Isaiah’s own son in Isa 8:3 could not have fulfilled this prophecy. Besides, birth of a son to Isaiah would hardly have satisfied the promise of a “sign” and the son’s name of “Immanuel” in 7:14. Matthew noted the fulfillment of this prophecy in the birth of Israel’s Messiah in Matt 1:23 and applied the name “Immanuel” (i.e., “God with us”) from Isa 7:14 to Him. That was a literal fulfillment of Isaiah’s OT prophecy.

Acts 13:23 with Isa 11:1. Isaiah 11:1 predicts the coming of a Rod from the stem of Jesse and a Branch growing from Jesse’s roots. The Babylonian captivity appears to have ended the Davidic dynasty in Israel, but life remained in the “stump” and “roots” of the Davidic line. Jesse was the father of David through whom the Messianic king was to come (Ruth 4:22; 1 Sam 16:1, 12, 13). Paul’s sermon in Acts 13:23 notes the literal fulfillment of that prophecy through David, the son of Jesse, from whose offspring God would bring to Israel a Savior whose
name was Jesus.

**Matt 21:42 with Isa 28:16 and Ps 118:22.** OT references to “the chief corner stone” and “the stone which the builders rejected” found their literal fulfillment in the incarnation and death of Jesus Christ, according to Matt 21:42 along with Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17; Acts 4:11; Rom 9:33; Eph 2:20; 1 Pet 2:6-8. He provided the only sure refuge for Israel who had made the mistake of relying on foreigners instead. At Jesus’ first coming, Israel rejected Him, thereby stumbling in literal fulfillment of this prophecy.

**Luke 3:4-6 with Isa 40:3-5.** All four Gospels record the fulfillment of this prophecy of a voice crying in the wilderness through the preaching of John the Baptist. His was a prophetic exhortation to Israel to prepare for the revelation of the Lord’s glory with the arrival of the Messiah. Luke 3:4-6 gives the fullest account of the fulfillment with Matt 3:3; Mark 1:3; John 1:23 furnishing briefer notices of the same. The remnant of Israel was to remove obstacles from the coming Messiah’s path by repenting of their sins. Both John the Baptist (Matt 3:2) and Jesus (Matt 4:17; Mark 1:15) reminded people of this necessity.

**Matt 3:16-17 and 17:5 with Isa 42:1a.** The personal Servant of the Lord spoken of in Isa 42:1a is Israel’s Messiah who was chosen (Luke 9:35) because the Lord delights in Him. In Matt 3:16-17 (see also Mark 1:10-11 and Luke 3:22) at Christ’s baptism and in Matt 17:5 at His transfiguration, Matthew records the literal fulfillment of God’s recognition of the Messiah as the one in whom He is pleased.

**Matt 26:67 and 27:26, 30 with Isa 50:6.** Isaiah foresaw the cruel treatment of Jesus by the soldiers during and after His trial. Matthew records His being struck, slapped, scourged, and spat upon, as do Mark, Luke, and John also (see Mark 14:67; 15:19; Luke 22:63; John 18:22). The OT anticipated that abusive treatment of the Messiah, and the NT recorded the prophecy’s literal fulfillment.

**John 12:37-38 with Isa 53:1.** When he wrote, “Who has believed our report?,” the prophet anticipated that Israel would not recognize her Messiah when He arrived. That expectation found literal fulfillment when Christ came. John 12:38 explicitly notes the fulfillment, while John 1:9-11 implicitly does so by speaking of His coming to His own people and His own people not welcoming Him.

**Acts 8:32-33 with Isa 53:7-8.** For the sake of the Ethiopian eunuch who was reading Isaiah 53, Philip identified Jesus as the one who fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah about “a sheep that is silent before its shearers.” Philip called the eunuch’s attention to how Jesus, by remaining silent, was like “a lamb before its shearers.” This fulfillment is literal again and serves as a good example to prove that Jesus fulfilled OT prophecy and thus was the promised Messiah of Israel.

John 1:29 with Isa 53:7. Isaiah refers to the Servant of the Lord as a lamb led to slaughter. The writer John quotes this recognition of Jesus as the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). Peter refers to Him as an unblemished and spotless lamb (1 Pet 1:19). The writer John refers to Him again in a similar way when in a vision he saw a lamb standing as though slain (Rev 5:6). Here is another NT recognition of literal fulfillment of OT prophecy.

First Pet 2:22 with Isa 53:9. Isaiah wrote of the Servant’s refraining from violence and from speaking deceitfully. In 1 Pet 2:22 Peter picks those details to show how Jesus fulfilled the predictions literally. He was innocent of all charges leveled against Him.

Luke 22:37 with Isa 53:12. Luke observes how Jesus was numbered with transgressors in literal fulfillment of the very same words recorded by Isaiah many centuries earlier.

Luke 4:18-19 with Isa 61:1-2a. Luke quotes Jesus when He announced His own literal fulfillment of the prophecy about bringing good news to the afflicted. He offered promised kingdom blessings to his home town of Nazareth in Israel, but that generation of Israelites rejected Him at His first coming, causing a postponement of the promised kingdom.

Matt 21:5 with Isa 62:11 and Zech 9:9. In describing Jesus’ triumphal entry, Matthew connects the occasion with the literal fulfillment of the words of Isaiah and Zechariah, both of which were spoken to the daughter of Zion concerning her King’s coming to her riding on a donkey.

The function of literal fulfillment. Fulfillments such as those listed above had great apologetic value in proving to Jewish readers of the OT and others that Jesus was the promised Messiah. What Isaiah and other OT prophets predicted would happen when the Messiah came actually happened in a letter-perfect manner. The way Jesus met all the criteria expected of Israel’s Messiah was phenomenal, so much so that any clear-thinking person was bound to acknowledge that this was the one whom the OT expected. The fulfillments were that precise.

Nonliteral Uses of the OT in the NT

In the second type of NT citations of the OT, we have inspired sensus plenior applications of the OT words. In such uses NT writers took words from the
OT and applied them to situations entirely different from what was envisioned in corresponding OT contexts. They disregarded the main thrust of the grammatical-historical meanings of the OT passages and applied those passages in different ways to suit the different points they were putting across. They usually maintained some connecting linkage in thought with the OT passages, but the literal OT meanings are absent from the NT usages in this kind of citation.

A number of passages in which differences in meaning of OT and corresponding NT usages illustrate this ISPA usage.

**Luke 20:17-18 with Isa 8:14-15.** Isaiah’s historical context refers the words to the stumbling of those who opposed Isaiah’s message and their consequent captivity in Babylon. Luke takes the same words and applies them to the stumbling of the generation of Israelites that rejected Jesus as the Messiah and their consequent judgment by God. Paul and Peter do the same with Isa 8:14-15 (Rom 9:32-33; 1 Pet 2:8). Note the change of reference. In the OT instance the words referred to the personal enemies of Isaiah and the temporal judgment inflicted on them; in the NT the generation of Israel that rejected Jesus at His first coming and the eternal judgment against them are in view.

**Heb 2:13a with Isa 8:17.** For Isaiah, the words of hope spoke of the prophet’s willingness to await the Lord’s deliverance and His promised national salvation for the faithful remnant of Israel. The writer of Hebrews uses the same words to apply to Christ’s trust and hope in God and His willingness to call them “brothers” who come from the same Father as He.

**Heb 2:13b with Isa 8:18.** The Isaiah passage speaks of Isaiah and his two sons. The writer of Hebrews applies the same words to Jesus, the Son of God, and His fellow human beings to show Jesus’ human nature and His full identification with the human race (Heb 2:13b). In the NT sense the reference is to Jesus instead of Isaiah and to humanity instead of Isaiah’s two sons.

**Matt 4:12-16 with Isa 9:1-2.** Isaiah’s words speak of the gloom caused at the northern border of northeast Galilee when the Assyrian king invaded Israel, because that area was the first to suffer from the invasion as the Assyrians entered the land. The verses then speak of the coming of a great light by way of the transformation of that gloom at the end of Israel’s captivity to foreign invaders, which will come at the second advent of Jesus Christ. In an ISPA of the words, Matt 4:12-16 applies the two Isaianic verses to the time of Christ’s first advent and the honor received by Galilee when He launched His Galilean ministry in that territory. That, of course, was not a literal fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy.

**John 4:10, 14 with Isa 12:3.** In Isaiah’s context, the words anticipate the time when the Messiah will come to satisfy the physical thirst of the future generation of Israelites at the Messiah’s second advent, at the time when He will
deliver Israel from her political opponents and the spiritual oppression of her sins. The nation will enjoy the same provision then as the generation under Moses who had their physical thirst satisfied in the wilderness (cf. Exod 17:1-7). According to John’s Gospel, Jesus took the words and applied them to the woman of Samaria and her opportunity to receive from Him “living water,” a figurative reference to eternal life (John 4:10, 14). This is another ISPA of the OT, this time by Jesus through the Gospel writer.

First Cor 15:54 with Isa 25:8. The Isaiah context of 25:8 speaks of the time of Christ’s future reign over the nations when God will “swallow up” death. He promises a time of prosperity for ethnic Israel. In Corinthians, Paul applies the words to the future resurrection of those in Christ, the church, because of the resurrection of Christ Himself (1 Cor 15:54). Here is another nonliteral application of OT prophecy.

First Cor 14:21-22 with Isa 28:11. Isaiah foresees the Lord’s prediction of subservience of the drunkards of Ephraim and Jerusalem to Assyrian taskmasters who would give them instructions in a foreign language. This is God’s punishment doled out to them for not listening to His prophets speaking their own language. In his application of the same words in 1 Corinthians, Paul refers to God’s use of the miraculous gift of tongues as a credential to identify those who conveyed new revelation immediately following the first coming of Christ (1 Cor 14:21-22). The meaning in Corinthians is quite different from Isaiah.

Matt 11:5 with Isa 29:18 and 35:5. Isaiah speaks of the day of the LORD when the spiritual deafness and blindness of Israel will be replaced with spiritual hearing and eyesight. These will come in conjunction with Israel’s repentance at the future advent of her Messiah. In Matt 11:5 Jesus applies the words in a nonliteral way to the physical healing of the deaf and blind that He accomplished during His earthly ministry at His first advent.

Heb 8:6, 10-12 with Isa 42:6. Isaiah promises that the Servant of the LORD will be a covenant to the people and a light to the Gentiles in the day when Israel enters the benefits of her new covenant (see Jer 31:31-34). That will happen when the Messiah returns and establishes Israel’s kingdom on earth. Hebrews 8:6, 10-12 show that because of Israel’s rejection of the Messiah at His first advent, the Servant extended the redemptive benefits of that new covenant to the church.

Matt 11:5 and Luke 4:18 with Isa 42:7. Isaiah promises that the servant of the LORD will open blind eyes and release Israel’s prisoners from prison by giving

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them freedom in the future day of the L ORD. Those will be days when spiritual eyes will be opened and spiritual freedom from physical captivity to their enemies will be achieved. Rather than referring the words to His second coming and to spiritual enlightenment and literal freedom, however, Jesus in Matt 11:5 and Luke 4:18 applied the words to acts of physical healing and the release of spiritual captives accomplished during His first advent.

Acts 13:47 with Isa 49:6. The Isaiah text contains God’s promise that His Servant, the Messiah, will be a light to the Gentiles in providing salvation to the ends of the earth. That, of course, will happen during the future kingdom after His return. But in Acts 13:47 Paul uses the words in an entirely different manner. He applies the words to his own ministry among the Gentiles during the present age, not to that of the L ORD’s Servant during the future age of the kingdom. Here again is clearly a nonliteral application of the prophet’s words.

Matt 8:16-17 with Isa 53:4. Isaiah promises that the Messiah Servant will bear Israel’s spiritual griefs and carry their spiritual sorrows when He suffers on behalf of the nation. That was fulfilled in Jesus’ death on the cross when He was wounded for their transgressions and bruised for their iniquities (Isa 53:5). Yet Matt 8:16-17 applies the words to Jesus’ healing of physical ailments during His incarnation.3 This is another example of the NT’s nonliteral application of the OT. This is another meaning that God intended for Isa 53:4, but not a meaning whose authority lies in the OT passage. The only way one knows this meaning is through the NT’s insight into that additional meaning.

John 6:45 with Isa 54:13. Isaiah promises that all Israel’s children will be taught by the L ORD during the future kingdom when Christ is personally present to rule the earth. An authoritative application of the words, according to John 6:45, is to those with enough spiritual insight to come to Him during His first advent. Jesus made this application during His great Discourse on the Bread of Life as He referred to those whom the Father draws to Him.

Rom 10:20 with Isa 65:1. Isaiah speaks of the unexpected turning of Gentiles to God during the time of Israel’s blessing in her future kingdom, but Paul applies the verse to the church during the present age. Since the existence of such a body as the church was a mystery throughout the OT, this must be an ISPA of the Isaiah passage. The principle of single meaning necessitates that the passage could

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not refer to both.4

**Matt 2:15 with Hos 11:1.** Sometimes the NT uses a non-prophetic OT passage such as Hos 11:1 and treats it as though it predicted a NT occurrence. Hosea wrote about the historical exodus of the people of Israel from Egypt, but Matthew applies the same words to Jesus’ departure from Egypt with His family after their flight there to escape the murderous intentions of Herod the Great.5 This furnishes another instance of ISPA.

**Rom 3:10b-18 with Ps 5:9; 10:7; 14:1-3; 36:1; 53:1-3; 140:3; Prov 1:16; Eccl 7:20; Isa 59:7-8.** Another example of a NT use of non-prophetic OT passages comes by way of proof of the universal sinfulness of mankind in Rom 3:10b-18. This too is a nonliteral use of OT passages which particularizes the sinfulness of the wicked only, but Paul uses the same passages to show that all mankind is guilty of sin.6

The function of ISPA. From these examples it is quite clear that the NT sometimes applies OT passages in a way that gives an additional dimension beyond their grammatical-historical meaning. This does not cancel the grammatical-historical meaning of the OT; it is simply an application of the OT passage beyond what it originally meant in its OT context, the authority for which application is the NT passage, not the OT passage in itself. This application is an ISPA.

QUESTIONS RAISED BY ISPA-TYPE CITATIONS

The ISPA of OT passages by NT writers raises several questions. The first one is, Can the present-day interpreter assign additional and different meanings to OT passages in imitation of the applications made by the NT writers? The answer is no because of the principle of single meaning. To assign additional meanings would violate that inviolable rule of grammatical-historical interpretation. Current interpreters and preachers may apply the OT passages to different situations, but their applications are not inspired as are those of NT writers.

But someone will say, “The NT writers did it; why can’t we? Don’t we

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5 See John H. Walton, “Inspired Subjectivity and Hermeneutical Objectivity,” The Master’s Seminary Journal 13/1 (Spring 2002): 74-75, for further discussion of the relationship between these passages.

learn our hermeneutics from them?” The answer lies in a difference of qualifications. NT writers possessed the gift of apostleship and/or the gift of prophecy that enabled them to receive and transmit to others direct revelation from God. No contemporary interpreter possesses either of those gifts. Those gifts enabled the gifted ones to practice what is called “charismatic exegesis” in their use of OT texts. That practice entailed finding hidden or symbolic meanings that could be revealed through an interpreter possessing divine insight. It was similar to the technique called midrash pesher that members of the Qumran community utilized, but neither did members of that community possess such gifts as apostleship and prophecy.

Another way of expressing the differences in qualifications is to point out that NT writers were directly inspired by God. Current interpreters of Scripture are not. That allowed the NT authors certain prerogatives that readers of Scripture do not presently enjoy. Through direct revelation from God biblical writers could assign applications based on additional meanings assigned to OT passages. That rules out ISPA of OT texts to new situations other than those applications that appear in the NT.

A second question relates to the principle of single meaning. Does not the NT’s assigning of an application based on a second meaning to an OT passage violate that principle? That the passage has two meanings is obvious, but only one of those meanings derives from a grammatical-historical interpretation of the OT itself. The other comes from a grammatical-historical analysis of the NT passage that cites it. The authority for the second meaning of the OT passage is not the NT; it is the NT. The OT produces only the literal meaning. The sensus plenior meaning emerges only after an ISPA of the OT wording to a new situation. The NT writers could assign such new meanings authoritatively because of the inspiration of what they wrote.

A third question one might ask is, “Did God know from the beginning that the OT passage had two meanings?” The answer is obviously yes. But until the NT citation of that passage, the second or sensus plenior meaning did not exist as far as humans were concerned. Since hermeneutics is a human discipline, glean that second sense is an impossibility in an examination of the OT source of the citation. The additional meaning is therefore not a grammatical-historical interpretation of the OT passage. The additional meaning is the fruit of grammatical-historical interpretation of the companion NT passage. The OT passage has only a single meaning.

A fourth question might be, “Why did the NT writers attach these sensus plenior meanings to OT passages?” In almost if not every instance, the new
meaning given an OT passage related to Israel’s rejection of her Messiah at His first advent and the consequent opening of the door to a new people, the Gentiles, for God to bless (see Romans 9–11). The new people consisted of both Jews and Gentiles as fellow members of the body of Christ. That such a new union would exist was unrevealed in the OT, as Paul points out in Eph 3:1-7. New meanings through special divine revelation were necessary to give this new program a connection with what God had been doing throughout the OT period.

COMPARISONS WITH OTHER APPROACHES TO NON-LITERAL CITATIONS

Comparing the above method of handling the NT use of OT passages—where the NT assigns inspired *sensus plenior* applications—with other methods of handling companion passages will clarify what the explanation entails.

S. Lewis Johnson and J. I. Packer

J. I. Packer classifies the divine intent behind such OT prophetic passages as “an extrapolation on the grammatico-historical plane, not a new projection onto the plane of allegory.” S. Lewis Johnson agrees. ISPA agrees with them when they conclude that the NT finds a *sensus plenior* meaning in addition to the literal meaning of the OT, but ISPA would emphasize that if that meaning is an extrapolation on that plane of the literal meaning, it exceeds the limits of grammatical-historical interpretation of the OT. Though their method may not be classed as allegory, its handling OT passages is not through grammatical-historical means.

Johnson goes a step further and advocates that modern interpreters reproduce the exegetical methodology of the NT writers in their handling of the OT. That means going beyond the literal meaning of the OT to discover *sensus plenior* meanings of OT passages in addition to the ones divulged in the NT. That is another distinction between his approach and the ISPA approach which would emphasize the unique prerogative of NT writers to employ charismatic exegesis, and would insist that no one today possesses that same prophetic gift.

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12Ibid., 93-94.
13James DeYoung and Sarah Hurty disagree with the cessation of the gift of prophecy in the early church and advocate that the gift, like all the other NT gifts, is available to all Christians today, enabling them to find meanings in Scripture that are deeper than the grammatical-historical meaning (*Beyond the Obvious* [Gresham, Ore.: Vision House, 1995] 136-38). Like S. L. Johnson, they believe that we should practice the hermeneutical methodology of the NT writers (ibid., 68-80).
Elliott E. Johnson

Elliott E. Johnson resembles S. L. Johnson and J. I. Packer in finding two meanings, the divine author’s meaning and the human author’s meaning. He writes,

The words of the text are both the words of God and the words of the human author. In some sense, then, the meaning of God and the human author is the same. In another sense, the meaning intended by God may well be richer than the meaning of which the human author was aware (1 Peter 1:10-11). The shared meaning must be based on the words of the text. This meaning expressed may be conceived as a comprehensive or generic message.¹⁴

ISPA would differ with E. E. Johnson in his view that both divine and human meanings are discoverable in the OT text and that it therefore has a generic message. That does not do justice to the principle of single meaning. It agrees with him that the text has a stable meaning and is not changing with the passage of time, under the influence of human reflection, as complementary hermeneutics insists. But that stable meaning is single and not generic or many-faceted.

Bruce K. Waltke

Bruce Waltke in his canonical approach gives priority to NT revelation by asserting that the OT is always to be read in light of the NT. He focuses on the divine intent of the OT passage even though the human author may not have comprehended the scope of what he was writing about. He agrees that “the text’s intention became deeper and clearer as the parameters of the canon were expanded” and that “older texts in the canon underwent a correlative progressive perception of meaning as they became part of a growing canonical literature.”¹⁵ He rules out sensus plenior as a possible explanation, stating that the OT writers wrote in ideal language. The unity between that ideal language and God’s intention excludes the need to conclude that the NT writers through inspiration discovered a fuller sense in the OT text. That fuller sense was always there, says Waltke.

Waltke’s approach violates grammatical-historical principles which state that the meaning of a text is discoverable on the basis of the facts of the original historical setting and the principles of grammar. Literal interpretation does not postulate that the original readers were shut out from a text’s meaning that could come to light only after centuries of waiting. Waltke by implication also violates the principle of single meaning when he implies that the author and original readers received one meaning and later recipients of the NT received another. For him, the multiple meanings included a literal fulfillment of OT promises in the spiritual form


of the kingdom in the NT.\textsuperscript{16} In reference to the psalms, he explicitly rejects “the Antiochian principle of allowing but one historical meaning that may carry with it typical significance.”\textsuperscript{17}

**Walter C. Kaiser, Jr.**

Walter Kaiser’s strong point is his insistence on authorial intent as determinative of a text’s meaning. He rejects sensus plenior, also a commendable feature that limits unbridled attempts to find new meanings in a text,\textsuperscript{18} but he fails to allow for the NT furnishing additional meanings for an OT text. Rather he opts for attributing more to the OT writers than is justifiable under grammatical-historical rules and for allowing that their promises were generic and had a series of fulfillments.\textsuperscript{19} Though Kaiser claims that the series constitutes one idea, it is still a series. This idea of a series of meanings violates the principle of single meaning.

He also contends that the human author was aware of all the stages of fulfillment, but did not know the time of their fulfillment.\textsuperscript{20} This assumption goes beyond what literal interpretive principles will justify. Some of Kaiser’s exegetical practices in arriving at such a conclusion are severely strained. For example, he cites seven isolated words that David used in composing Psalm 40 to indicate David’s awareness that his office and function served “as the current representative in a long series of fulfillments of the coming man of promise.”\textsuperscript{21} The seven words prove no such thing, but serve only as an excuse for Kaiser to read into the passage a preconceived meaning. This borders closely on use of the analogy of faith in the exegetical process that Kaiser himself so strongly opposes.\textsuperscript{22}

**Richard N. Longenecker and Douglas J. Moo**

Richard Longenecker understands that when the NT writers cited the OT, they used methods of Jewish exegesis prevalent around NT times. He sees the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls as opening a new area of possibility for explaining how NT writers interpreted the OT.\textsuperscript{23} He classifies Jewish exegetical procedures


\textsuperscript{17}Waltke, “Canonical Process Approach to the Psalms,” 7.


\textsuperscript{20}E.g., ibid., 131-32.

\textsuperscript{21}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{22}Cf. ibid., 69.

under four headings: literalist, midrashic, pesher, and allegorical. He asks the question, “Is there a sensus plenior in the New Testament’s use of the Old?” and answers it affirmatively. He cites with approval a statement of Douglas Moo: “The question should rather be: Could God have intended a sense related to but more than that which the human author intended? I cannot see that the doctrine of inspiration demands that the answer to that question be negative.” Moo later adds,

It may be that some citations are best explained according to the traditional sensus plenior model: by direct, inspired apprehension, the New Testament authors perceive the meaning in a text put there by God but unknown to the human author. Even in this case, however, it is important to insist that this “deeper meaning” is based on and compatible with the meaning intended by the human author.

Longenecker then asks another question: “Can we reproduce the exegesis of the New Testament?” He then rephrases the question: “Are the exegetical methods that the New Testament writers used to arrive at their interpretations also either normative or exemplary for the interpretive practices of Christians today?” To this question he responds basically in the negative when he writes, “I do not think it my business to try to reproduce the exegetical procedures and practices of the New Testament writers, particularly when they engage in what I define as ‘midrash,’ ‘pesher,’ or ‘allegorical’ exegesis. Those practices often represent a culturally specific method or reflect a revelational stance or both—neither of which I can claim for myself.”

ISPA would concur with Longenecker and Moo regarding the presence of sensus plenior meanings attached to OT passages by NT writers, and would agree with Longenecker in denying the prerogative to exercise the methodology of NT writer in today’s exegesis, but ISPA would disagree with both of them when it strongly emphasizes the difference between the methods of Jewish hermeneutical practices such as at Qumran and those of the NT writers. The latter had the added guidance of the Holy Spirit in what they wrote, being in possession of revelational gifts of the Spirit that were unavailable to Jewish interpreters. In this regard, the methodology of the NT writers was absolutely unique and therefore unrepeatably by present-day interpreters.

**Darrell L. Bock**

Darrell Bock formulates his methodology based on an eclectic approach

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24Ibid., xxv.


26Ibid., 210.

27Longenecker, Biblical Exegesis xxxviii.
that draws on elements of each of the methods described above. Eclecticism in hermeneutics generally entails inconsistency because of following several conflicting approaches. He describes his view under four headings: dual authorship, language-referent, progress of revelation, and differing texts. Regarding dual authorship, he opts for a limited identification of the divine intent with the human author’s intent. In other words, he states, “God could intend more than the human author did but never at the expense of the thrust of his wording.”

Bock’s second heading, the language-referent, deals with where meaning resides. Is it at the level of sense—by which he refers to the definitions of words within a passage—or at the level of referents—by which he refers to the larger context of a passage’s biblical theological context? To this question Bock would answer “both . . . and,” not “either . . . or.” Next he deals with the progress of revelation. Under this third heading he discusses the impact of the history of Jesus’ life and ministry on apostolic understanding of Scripture. This approach has the events of the NT “refracting” or changing the church’s understanding of the OT by way of a deepened understanding.

Bock’s fourth heading is differing texts by which he refers to places where NT writers altered the Hebrew text when they cited OT passages. Here he suggests three possible explanations: distinguishing between the textual (i.e., what OT text was used) and conceptual (i.e., what point the text is making) forms of citations, changes in wording that are legitimate in light of an altered NT perspective, and changes because of a larger literary context.

In his eclectic approach to the NT use of the OT, Bock has inevitably violated grammatical-historical principles, since these principles were not his main concern in his survey of current methodologies. He has forsaken the quest for objectivity and inserted the interpreter’s preunderstanding as a major factor in interpretation. He has substituted his “complementary” or multilayered reading of an OT text that views a text’s meaning from the standpoint of later events rather than limiting that meaning to the historical setting of the text’s origin. In the name of progress of revelation, he has refrained from limiting a passage to a single meaning

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30 Ibid., 309.
31 Ibid., 311-14.
in order to allow for later complementary additions in meaning, which of necessity alter the original sense conveyed by the passage. He has advocated assigning a text meanings beyond what its grammatical-historical analysis will bear. These deviations illustrate what an eclectic approach to hermeneutics will yield.

John H. Walton

John Walton has made several important observations regarding the NT use of the OT. One of his valid points is that objectivity in interpretation is an important goal, because a lack of objectivity is not so much a sacrifice of truth as it is a challenge to divine authority. He laments the intrusion of the analogy of faith and its subjectivity when it glosses “a theological concept into a context where it has no ostensible role.” To allow such an intrusion is to lapse into subjectivity in interpretation.

In his discussion of typology, Walton distinguishes two separate methods of interpretation, one of them using hermeneutical guidelines that are objective in nature and the other relying on inspiration from God that is subjective in nature. He continues, “If you have inspiration, you do not need historical-grammatical hermeneutics. If you do not have inspiration, you must proceed by the acknowledged guidelines of hermeneutics. The credibility of any interpretation is based on the verifiability of either one’s inspiration or one’s hermeneutics.” Because no contemporary interpreter can claim inspiration, he concludes, “We cannot speak of reproducing the methods of the NT authors, for the subjectivity of their methods is not allowed to those of us whose interpretation does not enjoy the affirmation of inspiration.”

In commenting on the citation of Hos 11:1 in Matt 2:15, Walton notes that the verse in the context of Hosea’s prophecy has little connection with the use Matthew makes of it. He observes that Matthew is not interpreting the message of Hosea which was understood by Hosea and his audience through objective principles of historical-grammatical hermeneutics. Even though Matthew associates fulfillment—using the verb πληροῦ— with Jesus’ being brought by His parents from

35Cf. ibid., 420-21.


38Ibid., 68. In this regard his opinion resembles that of Kaiser (Kaiser, Uses of the Old Testament 69).

39Walton, “Inspired Subjectivity” 70.


41Walton, “Inspired Subjectivity” 75.
Egypt, Walton emphasizes that one cannot glean that from Hosea. That conclusion can come only from subjective association exercised through inspiration by the writer Matthew. Matthew does not interpret the message of Hosea; he identifies the fulfillment.42

Walton’s comments underline a very important principle. On the basis of grammatical-historical interpretation, an OT passage may have only one meaning, the meaning based on objective principles of literal interpretation. But on the basis of inspired subjectivity of a NT writer, it may also have an additional meaning, a meaning resting not on the authority of the OT text itself but rather on the authority of the NT citation of that text.

ISPA agrees with Walton closely, the only difference being in the choice of terminology. It would use a different way of identifying the meaning of πληροῦ in such places as Matt 2:15, as will be explained below.

**Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard**

Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard offer several options related to the NT use of the OT:

- Biblical authors intended only one sense (meaning), and this historical sense—what the text would have meant at the time written to its original readers—remains the only legitimate object of exegesis. Whatever NT writers may have done with the OT, we must limit our exegesis to the original historical sense of the text.
- Biblical writers intended to convey multiple meanings or levels of meanings in at least some of their writings. These texts have several meanings that readers may subsequently discover.
- Biblical authors intended only one sense, but that sense need not limit how later readers understand a text since perception always involves a creative interaction between text and readers. Interpretation is a “reader-response” enterprise; so later readers—like the writers of the NT—may invent meaning never envisioned in the original context. Interpreters may do the same today.
- Biblical authors intended only one sense, but unknown to them the Holy Spirit encoded in the text additional and hidden meaning(s). When NT writers employed OT texts, in places they were drawing out this fuller sense, the sensus plenior. Such a process may or may not be repeatable for modern interpreters.
- Biblical authors intended only one sense, though later readers may employ creative exegetical techniques to discover additional valid senses not intended by the original authors. Such techniques include Jewish methods like midrash, pesher, or typology. There probably was some connection between original text and later sense, though the connection may appear arbitrary, if not undecipherable, to others. The process may or may not be repeatable today.43

Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard eventually choose the last two options, noting that

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42Ibid., 70.
a fresh meaning need not be limited to the original sense. As earlier discussion has consistently observed, however, only their first option abides by the guidelines of grammatical-historical interpretation. The principle of single meaning and the objectivity of sound hermeneutics requires the exclusion of additional meanings subjectively derived.

**APPROPRIATE TERMINOLOGY**

Some final considerations regarding “fulfillment” terminology seem to be in order. We repeat the words of Terry in this connection:

We have already seen that the Bible has its riddles, enigmas, and dark sayings, but whenever they are given the context clearly advises us of the fact. To assume, in the absence of any hint, that we have an enigma, and in the face of explicit statements to the contrary, that any specific prophecy has a double sense, a primary and a secondary meaning, a near and a remote fulfillment, must necessarily introduce an element of uncertainty and confusion into biblical interpretation.

Terry’s elimination of the possibility of a near and a remote fulfillment is relevant at this point. ISPA concurs with his opinion of avoiding any more than one fulfillment, but probably for different reasons.

Most if not all English translations frequently render the Greek verb προφητεύω by the English word “fulfill.” In some instances this is unfortunate because the two words do not cover the same semantic range. In English “fulfill,” when used in connection with OT citations, carries the connotation of a historical occurrence of something promised or predicted. The Greek προφητεύω, however, covers more linguistic territory than that. Moo speaks to this point:

> **προφητεύω** cannot be confined to so narrow a focus [as referring to fulfillment of an OT prophecy]. . . . What needs to be emphasized, then, is that the use of προφητεύω in an introductory formula need not mean that the author regards the Old Testament text he quotes as a direct prophecy; and accusations that a New Testament author misuses the Old Testament by using προφητεύω to introduce nonprophetic texts are unfounded.

The Greek verb carries other meanings in various contexts. One of those meanings is “complete.” In the Matt 2:15 citation of Hos 11:1, Matthew uses it to indicate the completion of a *sensus plenior* meaning he finds in Hos 11:1. The Hosea passage is not a prophecy, and translating the word “fulfil” in this instance is

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44Ibid., 145.


46Moo, “Problem of *Sensus Plenior*” 191.
misleading. Matthew’s meaning is that in some sense the transport of Jesus by his parents from Egypt completed the deliverance of Israel from Egypt that had begun during the time of Moses (cf. Exod 4:22-23).

In Mark 1:15 Jesus uses the same Greek verb to speak of the completion of a period of time prior to the drawing near of the kingdom of God. The English word “fulfill” would hardly communicate the correct idea in a case like that.

Such observations lead to the conclusion that it is unwise to use fulfillment terminology in connection with the OT passages to which the NT assigns inspired sensus plenior applications. Frequently, expositors and commentators have used such expressions as “initial fulfillment,” “partial fulfillment,” “near fulfillment,” or something comparable to speak of Peter’s use of Joel 2:28-32 in his Acts 2 sermon. That language gives the wrong impression because the OT passage did not predict what was to happen on the day of Pentecost. What happened on that day was an ISPA of Joel 2, an application whose authority was the Acts passage, not the Joel passage. The phenomena on the day of Pentecost were in no sense a fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy, a prophecy that pertained to the people of Israel, not to the church. The relevance of the happenings on that day were an ISPA of the Joel passage to an entirely different situation by Peter who spoke and Luke who recorded the words. It is misleading to call them in any sense a fulfillment of Joel.

“Fulfillment” language is perfectly in order for prophecies that literally fulfil what the OT writers referred to, however. Such an instance is Matthew’s reference to the virgin birth of Christ (Matt 1:23) in fulfillment of Isa 7:14.

THE WRAP-UP

Sometimes the NT interprets OT prophecies in their literal sense, but other times it assigns an ISPA sense to them. That does not give license to the contemporary interpreter to imitate the hermeneutics of NT writers, because such a procedure would violate the grammatical-historical principle of single meaning. The NT writers could do it because of their status as writers of inspired Scripture.

When the NT writers made such applications, it did not violate that principle of single meaning, because the authority for the additional meaning was not the OT source, but the NT citation of that source. The OT passage in itself continued to have only one meaning.

Of course, God from the beginning knew the OT passage would eventually have that additional meaning, but a literal interpretation of that passage did not yield that meaning. The grammatical-historical interpretation of the NT citation of that passage is what yields the additional meaning.

A suggested reason for the inspired sensus plenior applications of OT passages in the NT is Israel’s rejection of her Messiah at His first advent. One of the ramifications of that rejection was new revelation regarding OT passages related to a body called the church, revelation that was not foreseen in or a part of the OT.

Comparisons of this analysis of the NT’s use of the OT with other explanations revealed that none exactly coincides with the proposal here. The
closest is that of John Walton in his article on “Inspired Subjectivity and Hermeneutical Objectivity.” An observation resulting from the current proposal is that expositors and exegetes should refrain from using “fulfilment” terminology in cases where NT writers have made inspired sensus plenior applications of OT passages to new situations.

SUMMARY OF “THE NEW TESTAMENT USE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT”

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Principles:

“Fulfilment” terminology appropriate only for NT passages that literally fulfil the single meanings of OT prophecies

Principles:

“Fulfilment” terminology appropriate only for NT passages that literally fulfil the single meanings of OT prophecies

Principles: Limited to those with revelatory gifts

sensus plenior based on NT authority

sensus plenior unknowable until the NT

sensus plenior caused by Israel’s rejection

NT Use of OT Advocates | Principles Advocated | ISPA Response |
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<td>John H. Walton</td>
<td>• objectivity in interpretation an important goal&lt;br&gt; • intrusion of the analogy of faith not allowed&lt;br&gt; • subjectivity allowable only with inspiration&lt;br&gt; • contemporary interpreter cannot claim inspiration&lt;br&gt; • <strong>Matt 2:15 a fulfillment of Hos 11:1</strong>&lt;br&gt; • objective interpretation determines only one meaning for OT passages</td>
<td>• agrees&lt;br&gt; • agrees&lt;br&gt; • agrees&lt;br&gt; • agrees&lt;br&gt; • dis-agrees&lt;br&gt; • agrees</td>
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<td>Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard</td>
<td>• biblical authors intended only one meaning, but the Spirit encoded additional meanings for modern interpreters&lt;br&gt; • biblical authors intended only one meaning, but modern interpreters may uncover additional senses</td>
<td>• dis-agrees&lt;br&gt; • dis-agrees</td>
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BOOK REVIEWS

International Critical Commentary, edited by J. A. Emerton, C. E. B. Cranfield,
II]. xxv, cxvii + 1272 pp. $69.95 & $69.95 (cloth). Reviewed by Keith Essex,
Assistant Professor of Bible Exposition.

C. K. (Charles Kingsley) Barrett, Emeritus Professor of Divinity in Durham
University, England, is a well-known NT scholar. Among his voluminous writings
are commentaries on the Gospel of John, Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians,
and the Pastoral Epistles. He is also the compiler of the very helpful collection of
background documents *The New Testament Background: Selected Documents*
(Harper, 1961, 1989). From this wealth of background, Barrett has written this
extensive commentary on Acts in the prestigious ICC series. These volumes at once
take their place as the standard English commentary on Acts written from the
historical-critical perspective.

Like Luke/Acts, this work has been issued in two volumes. Volume one
begins with an introduction that includes material germane to both volumes (i-xxv).
Page numbers in the commentary proper are continuous (vol. I, 1-694; vol. II, 695-
1272). Before commenting on the biblical text, Barrett provides a preliminary
introduction to his volume(s) (1-58). This “introduces Acts to the reader by setting
out the tradition by which the book has reached us” (1-2), namely, a discussion of
the textual history and testimony of the early church concerning Acts (1-48). The
preliminary introduction concludes with a presentation of the author’s conclusions
concerning the sources, plan, and contents of Acts 1–14, the chapters discussed in
volume one (49-58). According to Barrett, the four sources Luke used were Philip
the Evangelist, Caesarean Christians, the Antioch church, and Paul (50-52).
However, this is pure speculation on the commentator’s part since Luke nowhere in
Acts specifies the written or oral sources he used. Volume two begins with an
introduction that includes added bibliographic references and material on the text of
Acts not included in the first volume (i-xxiii). Further, a discussion of the supposed
sources and contents of Acts 15–28, the focus of the commentary in the second
volume, is included (xxiv-xxxii, cxix-cxx). The major part of the introduction of
volume two is given over to Barrett’s views concerning the historicity, authorship,
dating, purpose, and theology of Acts (xxxiii-cxiii). These conclusions should
logically be read, according to the author’s design, after working through the
commentary proper.
In the author’s preface, Barrett states that this commentary is not aimed at the beginning student of Acts (I, ix). The reader needs to work through the Greek text of Acts and become familiar with the secondary literature on the book before wading through these volumes. Also, because the author has sought to produce a readable product, the commentary proper is not footnoted and foreign quotes are given in the original languages (Greek, Hebrew, Latin, German, or French) without English translation. This puts an additional barrier before the beginning student.

For the commentary on Acts, Barrett has broken the book into sixty-five units that he discusses consecutively (59-1253). There is no outline of the book of Acts given because the commentator does not see an overall literary or historical plan to the book (49-58). For Barrett, the great theme of Acts is “the spread of the Gospel into the Gentile world” (II, cix), ultimately bound up closely with the work of Paul. To this end, the biblical author “made it his business to collect stories of early contacts with Gentiles wherever he could find them” (50-51). Barrett concludes, “It was not Luke’s intention to create a narrative in which every section should be in due proportion with the rest, delighting the reader’s eye by its skilful arrangement and his mind by its chronological precision” (57). Rather, since Luke knew of the expansion of the gospel in terms of places [Jerusalem, Samaria, Caesarea, Antioch, and beyond] and outstanding men [Peter, Stephen, Philip, Paul], “he set down, one after another, the traditions he had collected on this basis” (57). This approach to Acts is in opposition to the current trend to see a literary unity/organization/plan in the book, especially when read against the background of Greco-Roman histories of the same period (see Bruce W. Winter and Andrew D. Clarke, eds., The Book of Acts in Its Ancient Literary Setting [Eerdmans, 1993]).

Each of the sixty-five units of commentary has the same kind of structure. A unit begins with Barrett’s translation of the biblical text. This is followed by a bibliography, citing works that discuss the section of Acts under consideration. The majority of a unit is then devoted to Barrett’s commentary on the passage. The commentary begins with a discussion of the whole. Here, the commentator seeks to demonstrate the parallels (and many times, the contradictions) with other biblical passages and sources the biblical author (supposedly) used. The bulk of the commentary section, the most valuable to the reader, then treats the Greek text of Acts with verse by verse, phrase by phrase, word by word annotations. As in all ICC volumes, Barrett’s work in the annotations is thorough and meticulous. However, the reader confronts, even in his annotations, the commentator’s skepticism. For example, in Acts 5:37, after showing possible harmonies between the biblical author and Josephus, Barrett concludes, “We may go for the simple solution that Luke, writing Gamaliel’s speech, . . . made a mistake, either unaware of the true date of Theudas or confusing him with some other rebel” (296).

Barrett’s skepticism is clearly articulated in his introduction to the book. He writes, “Read on the surface, as generations of Christians have read it, Acts presents the history of the Christian mission in its first three decades” (II, xxxiii). However, a more searching inquiry unearths problems that cannot be ignored, according to Barrett. The most telling problem, according to author, is the
difficulties that arise when Acts is compared with the Pauline letters concerning the Jerusalem Council (II, xxxvi-xl). Although he admits that most students of Acts throughout church history have sought to harmonize the accounts, his conclusion differs. He states his basic principle in these words: “[O]ur sources (alongside Acts must be placed the Pauline epistles) do not tell the same story, and the historian’s task is not to harmonize them but to set them over against one another” (II, lxxiii). Such a fundamental presupposition mars this commentary. Though Barrett usually does justice to what the text says (the commentary’s great strength), he then sits in judgment as to whether the text is historically and theologically reliable. Because of this, the reader needs to exercise great discernment in using these volumes.

Flowing from the supposed contradiction between Paul and Acts, the author concludes that the first generation of the church was contentious, reflected in Paul, while the second generation was a period of consensus, as seen in Acts. Luke, writing in the 80s (Barrett’s date), sought to read the history of the early church in the context of his own day, and so his record is historically and theologically suspect. However, “Luke did not write as he did with the intention of conveying a false impression of the church in its first age. He wrote as he did because his understanding was coloured by the period in which he lived” (II, xl). This conclusion also influences Barrett’s reading of the theology of Acts (II, lxxii-cx). Luke, as a second generation Christian, recognized the existence of an interval between the resurrection and the parousia. This understanding of Luke’s eschatology is reflected in his approach to the Holy Spirit, Christ, the church, baptism and the Christian meal, early catholicism, the Jews, Gentiles and the Gentile mission, and ethics.

This new ICC commentary on Acts cannot be ignored by the conservative exegete/expositor. Unfortunately, nothing from an evangelical perspective compares with the scope and depth of this work. However, it should be used in concert with other volumes on Acts. The evangelical should first use Richard N. Longenecker (“Acts of the Apostles,” The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, vol. 9) and F. F. Bruce (The Book of Acts [NICNT]) to gain a more reliable historical and theological perspective on Acts. With this perspective, better use can then be made of the insightful annotations in Barrett’s Acts.


Two questions are the driving force behind this collection of essays: “Did the influence of Isaiah 52:13–53:12 upon Christian faith begin with Jesus?” and “Did Jesus interpret God’s will for Israel, and therefore for himself and for his disciples, in terms of the suffering Servant of Isaiah 52:13–53:12?” (1). The essays are the

In scanning the index of modern authors in the back of the book, this reviewer was struck by the fact that 16 essays by 14 scholars could discuss Isaiah 53 without a single reference to any of the works of David Baron, Robert D. Culver, Charles Feinberg, Edward J. Young, John Oswalt, and Walter Kaiser. Why is it that such a gathering could ignore the work of so many evangelical scholars on this significant text? Rikki Watts (Regent College) mentions Douglas Moo’s The Old Testament in the Gospel Passion (Almond, 1983) in footnotes (133, 135, 139). J. Ross Wagner (Duke University Divinity School) refers to J. A. Motyer’s The Prophecy of Isaiah (InterVarsity, 1993) in regard to the structure of Isaiah 40–55 (212).

In this reviewer’s opinion, the essay by Sapp (170-92) is worth the price of the whole volume. He points out that the Septuagint is but a translation and that it does exhibit theological bias. By means of a detailed comparison of the texts of Isaiah 53 in the Masoretic Text, the Septuagint, and the Qumran readings, he develops a side-by-side charting of the Septuagint and Hebrew texts in English translation (183) to let every reader see the results. He concludes that the ‘‘punch line’’ for the Christian gospel—the description of the Servant’s divinely intended sacrificial death, his justification of the many, and allusions to his resurrection—occurs only in the Hebrew texts” (188-89). The absence of NT citations of Isaiah 53:10-11, for example, are due to the fact that the Septuagint was the accepted Bible of the early church and was employed for approximately three-quarters (or more) of all OT citations in the NT.

The essay by Betz (70-87) examines the Hebrew text as well as the
translations of the Septuagint and the Aramaic Targum of Isaiah 52:13–53:12 in a detailed and fascinating demonstration of the influence that passage had on the teachings of Jesus and the apostles. Focusing on Mark 10:45’s relationship to Isaiah 53, Watts (125-51) concludes that Jesus clearly identified His role in terms of Isaiah 53. As for the relative absence of the connection until First Peter, “the full implications of his characteristically enigmatic instruction were not appreciated by his uncomprehending disciples until after a period of subsequent reflection” (151). Farmer (260-80) develops the full progress of the influence of Isaiah 53 on the NT from Jesus to His disciples to Paul.

Hanson (9-22) attempts to identify the historical setting for Isaiah 52:13–53:12. He assumes post-exilic authorship by an anonymous Second Isaiah and concludes with a corporate interpretation referring to the ongoing witness of God’s people (21-22). Reventlow (23-38) emphasizes multiple authors and redactors for the Servant passages (a view held by not a few contributors to his volume), takes 52:13–53:12 as a commentary on 50:4-9 (26), and identifies the Servant as a persecuted individual known to those in the post-exilic period (33). Clements (39-54) maintains a unified authorship for Isaiah 40–55 (40) and suggests that Moses is the most likely candidate for the historical personage depicted in those chapters. In a different vein, Melugin (55-69) takes a reader-oriented approach, claiming that a “text from scripture cannot be confined to its ‘original meaning(s)’” (57) and that such an approach is more preachable for pastors and more understandable for parishioners. Paul’s missiological use of the Servant passages of Isaiah based on thematic coherence occupies Wagner’s contribution to this volume (193-222).

Overall, this collection of essays reveals the various avenues of research being applied to a study of the relationship of Isaiah 53 to what we read in the NT, as well as to the issues of Christian doctrine and practice (primarily Christology, soteriology, and missiology). It is a valuable window on current trends, debates, and interpretations—even touching upon recent studies and conflicts in Jesus studies.


The book alleges to explore two main areas: (1) “the problematic literary relationship among the Synoptic Gospels” that “has given rise to numerous theories of authorship and priority,” and (2) it “familiarizes readers with the main positions held by NT scholars and updates evangelical understanding of this much-debated area of research” (back cover). The book is based on a NT symposium, organized by the editors and held at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary on April 6-7, 2000 in Wake Forest, North Carolina. The title adopted was “Symposium on New Testament Studies: A Time for Reappraisal.” During this time, the presentations explored not only the Synoptic Problem but also the authorship of Hebrews and NT
textual criticism. The book treats the Synoptic area exclusively as its topic for consideration.

The book fails significantly regarding the two areas that it attempts to clarify and update. Specifically, it does not detail “numerous theories of authorship and priority” nor does it familiarize readers with main positions held by NT scholars regarding the Synoptics. Only two Synoptic hypotheses receive consideration: the Two-Source and Two-Gospel hypotheses. One hardly gets the impression that “rethinking” has been done when both the Independence approach and Farrer’s position on Markan priority dispensing with Q are ignored. Ignoring other views is no way to dialogue or discover truths regarding the relevant issues. It is a way of controlling information and supporting the status quo. It sends a not-so-subtle-message that the editors believe that no other alternatives deserve attention because no other alternatives matter. The book begs the question regarding Synoptic studies by assuming what it attempts to prove: the Two-Source and Two-Gospel literary-dependence hypotheses are held by most evangelical scholars today as the only viable alternatives, so by rethinking these same two hypotheses, one demonstrates that these two are still the only viable hypotheses. The conclusions are decided before any discussion/symposium has been conducted. This is not scholarship at its best. Moreover, other hypotheses (especially the Independence approach) are ignored or summarily dismissed with little or no consideration so as to guarantee the results that were assumed from the outset. Such tactics clearly attenuate any usefulness for the book.

Black and Beck note this fundamental weakness: “The editors are well aware that the essays that follow have at least two significant omissions, for there are neither separate chapters nor substantive discussions devoted to either the independence theory or the Farrer hypothesis. . . . Perhaps the organizers were remiss in not assigning separate contributions on these subjects, but when this symposium on the NT was being planned, it was decided to invite representatives of what were considered to be the leading alternate positions being proffered today, at least on this side of the Atlantic” (15). Notice that they regard their omission as “significant,” indicating that they deliberately chose to ignore important evidence in their “rethinking” of such issues. That is not good scholarship. Several replies to Black’s and Beck’s logic are necessary. First, the Two-Gospel (Owen-Griesbach) position can hardly be said to hold large support among Synoptic investigators even today. Only a significant few support it (e.g., Farmer, Dungan). It does not enjoy widespread support in comparison to the Two-Source hypothesis that overwhelmingly predominates Synoptic issues. Second, it has only been since 1964 (Farmer’s *The Synoptic Problem*) that the Owen-Griesbach hypotheses has come back to the forefront of discussion. Its proponents need to be reminded of their own recent attempts to get investigators to give attention to their Synoptic discussion. They faced open opposition and hostility. Now that their theory has gained some recognition, are they attempting to shut out other hypotheses? Do they now practice the same tactics that the Two-Source proponents used against them by ignoring other views? Third, So what if the majority support these two positions? Since when do
numbers dictate the scholarly viability of a position? Sadly, sometimes in Synoptic studies a follow-the-leader approach prevails without fresh re-thinking of issues and logic. Fourth, this ignoring of other alternatives evidences itself also in a blatant disregard for crucial evidence both historically and presuppositionally that control literary-dependence hermeneutics and that cast light on its tenuous bases. For instance, Osborne in his article argues, “Early in my education I was trained largely in the fundamentalist camp. I was taught that Q was accepted only by liberals and was dangerous. . . . It was not until I reached seminary that I discovered that it was a literary issue centering on the relationship of the Gospels to one another rather than a point of orthodoxy” (138). Osborne’s ignoring of both history and presuppositions is a fatal flaw in his position of defending literary-dependence and the Two-Source hypothesis, for the history as well as the presuppositions of literary-dependence affirms its hostility to orthodoxy, since it stems from skepticism regarding the historicity of the Gospels. To ignore or dismiss such factors is highly questionable.

The book treats the Independence approach with open hostility. Blomberg remarks, “I cannot conclude . . . without making some reference to a work that would have you believe that those of us who believe in some kind of literary dependence among the Synoptics are thereby unwittingly disabled by ‘satanic blindness.’ I speak . . . of The Jesus Crisis. . . . It is a book that made me alternately sad and angry as I read it, in that it is rife with inappropriately sharp polemic against virtually all evangelical Gospel scholars, regularly misrepresents them, contains numerous typographical and factual errors, and offers no detailed inductive or exegetical study of the Gospel parallels that would support the alternative of literary independence, which the editors view as the only position consistent with inerrancy” (39). Blomberg’s statement deserves a few replies. First, The Jesus Crisis does not offer sharp polemic against all evangelical scholarship. It praises a number of modern evangelicals (e.g., Linnemann, Geisler, Schaeffer). Only evangelical practitioners of historical criticism with their accompanying dehistoricization of the Gospels are cited negatively, not for their personal scholarship, but for their conclusions that denigrate the Gospel accounts. It questions these evangelicals regarding their hermeneutical conclusions—not personal issues. More is at stake in these issues than a scholarly, irenic discussion, for the historicity and factuality of the Christian faith is at stake. The Jesus Crisis centers on issues. Second, one wonders if he actually read The Jesus Crisis carefully, because he offers no instances of misrepresentation of the scholars cited by the work. Indeed, the editors of The Jesus Crisis await citation of a valid instance in which they have misrepresented anyone’s position. Misleading, non-sequitur arguments that misrepresent The Jesus Crisis are constantly proffered instead. Third, how does one “rethink” the issues of Synoptic discussion when such closed-mindedness characterizes the dialogue?

This book is redundant and unnecessary. Other books have contributed more dialogue to this subject and allow for more possibilities than just the Two-Source and Two-Gospel hypotheses. No rethinking of the issues regarding Synoptic interrelationships can occur when censorship of viable alternatives occurs.

The immeasurable value of visiting the land of Israel caused the great church historian, Philip Schaff, to remark, “I would advise every theological student who can afford it to complete his Biblical education by a visit to the Holy Land. It will be of more practical use to him in his pulpit labors than the lectures of the professors of Oxford or Cambridge, in Berlin or Leipzig, valuable as these may be. The best thing, of course, is to combine the most thorough theoretical study and personal experience on the spot” (Philip Schaff *Through Bible Lands: Notes of Travel in Egypt, The Desert, and Palestine* [London: James Nisbet & Co., n.d.] 15). With the practical realities of such a trip prohibitive to many, the advent of modern technologies opens new opportunities for those unable to make such a journey.

The emergence and rapid expansion of computer-based resources have dramatically altered both our perception of information and our ability to communicate effectively. The rush to digitalize the land of the Bible is no exception. Numerous commercial products exist that afford the viewer modern pictorial depictions of the ancient biblical lands. These products vary dramatically in digital quality, image availability, and fair usage agreements. To the market comes the *Pictorial Library of Bible Lands*.

*Pictorial Library of Bible Lands* is the work of Todd A. Bolen, assistant professor of Biblical Studies and a resident faculty member at The Master’s College Israel-Bible Extension (IBEX) Program in Israel. Bolen has lived and traveled extensively in the Middle East since 1990. His personal knowledge of the biblical sites through residential contact and direct field teaching experience contributes to the quality of this fine work. Previous digital archives tend to emphasize “traditional” locations majoring in tourist interests and not necessarily those of Bible teachers and students.

The *Pictorial Library of Bible Lands* consists of an eight volume CD-Rom set containing approximately 4,500 high resolution digital (jpg format) images of the biblical lands. They include Galilee & the North [Israel] (1), Samaria & the Center [Israel] (2), Jerusalem (3), Judah & the South [Israel] (4), Jordan (5), Egypt (6), Turkey (7) and Greece & Rome (8). The resolution of the images is high (approximately 1600 x 1200) making them ideal for projection purposes. Each CD, in addition to the digital images, contains pre-organized Powerpoint® files that are ready for immediate instructional usage; a screen-saver that may be edited for personal interest, a Vueslide feature that allows one-click access to view all images in a geographic region. CD’s may be purchased separately or as a set.

Four points in question were particularly relevant to this reviewer. First, the issue concerning ease of access and ability to locate the digital file: Could the image be easily located and retrieved? Second, Was resolution quality high enough to provide a clear image when submitted to data projection using presentation
software? Third, To what level did the publisher permit usage beyond that of personal benefit without drifting into grey areas of copyright limitations—i.e., public, non-commercial purposes? Finally, What was included in the archive? Were the images of churches and “traditional” tourist sites primarily, or was significant attention given to biblical locales, including those seldom visited by traditional tourists but of importance to teachers.

Concerning the issue of accessibility, *Pictorial Library of Bible Lands* images are organized logically by geographic site or region, using a named file, assisting the user in rapid identification of the desired image. Previous knowledge of the geography of the biblical lands is helpful in navigating the file-directory structure. For those less familiar with Bible cartography, a Bible atlas might be helpful. In contrast, the *Zondervan Image Archive* images need to be searched out through a less than intuitive process and individual images were cataloged numerically as opposed to textually. *Pictorial Library of Bible Lands* can be opened in Windows Explorer or a similar file directory navigational tool and quickly accessed.

Issues concerning resolution quality of the digital images deserves significant attention by any potential user. Again, by comparison, the thumbnail, low-resolution of the *Zondervan Image Archive* (approx. 320 x 280) proved aggravating when clear data projection was needed. Users were encouraged to “upgrade” to a high-resolution version at significant additional cost if such was desired. This reviewer was left with the distinct impression that a “bait-and-switch” had been performed. *Pictorial Library of Bible Lands* offers crisp and clear resolution that lends itself readily to data projection—ideal for pastors and teachers that desire something for use in their teaching. Web developers will find the images flexible and readily adaptable to professional quality Web sites. The images are of such quality as to be readily useable in promotional brochures or church bulletins. This reviewer has made extensive use of the images in course-note packets and has not been disappointed.

Third, Bolen has provided liberal permission to use his digital images in a capacity broader than traditional copyright allows. Many existing image archives are vague in their usage permission concerning copyright, thus plunging the user into the murky abyss of copyright fair use. Those individuals or institutions seeking to use images for non-personal purposes would be advised to consider such legal issues before purchasing other such image libraries. Public usage, such as an Internet website, brochures, or certain instructional settings, may place the user outside the fair-use boundaries of other such archives—to say nothing of digital images acquired directly from Internet websites or scanned photos of previously copyrighted works.

Finally, *Pictorial Library of Bible Lands* provides a good balance of biblical sites, geographic locations, traditional locales, and general subjects of interest. Some sites of modern interest are also included. Additional aerial photographs and expansion of biblical manners and customs illustrations would be helpful but their absence does not diminish this fine collection. In many cases, the *Pictorial Library of Bible Lands* offers the user multiple images of a site from a
variety of different vantage points. Unfortunately, the greatest handicap of the Pictorial Library of Bible Lands is limited market visibility. Those interested in the set will need to contact Bolen through his website. Such limited market availability has failed to dampen the enthusiasm expressed by previous reviewers and professors as evidenced on the website. Overall, the CD’s are comprehensive in scope and would satisfy the digital needs of most individuals. Users who have been to the geographic regions covered by the collection will be pleased with the thorough nature of image inclusion and selection. As a professor himself, Bolen understands what a teacher or pastor wants for his teaching—not what a tourist might want as a memory of a tour.

Pictorial Library of Bible Lands is a must for any professor or pastor who desires high quality digital images of the biblical lands. Though other digital libraries and archives exist, the general quality is inferior, accessibility and selection are limited, and issues of copyright fair usage are problematic. For those who desire to enhance their teaching or preaching through the visual medium, Pictorial Library of Bible Lands is clearly superior to what is commercially available elsewhere. Interested individuals should explore the Pictorial Library of Bible Lands website at http://www.bibleplaces.com.


Thomas V. Brisco was professor of Biblical Backgrounds at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary during the ten years the Holman Bible Atlas was in development. He presently teaches archaeology at Baylor University. Brisco produced this Atlas “for the interested lay person and beginning level student of the Bible in colleges and seminaries” (xiii). His goal is “to provide the geographical and historical data necessary to comprehend the Bible’s unfolding story” (xiii). The Atlas claims to be “a complete guide to the expansive geography of biblical history” (iii). The results in this volume are more modest than this claim.

The Atlas is divided into three parts. The first three chapters describe the geographical and social setting of the Bible. Brisco surveys the geography of the Ancient Near East in his first chapter (3-11). The writer concentrates on Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Levant, neglecting Anatolia, Greece, and Italy, which also play an important role in biblical history. The second chapter presents the geographical regions of Palestine (12-24). The author’s presentation is enhanced by four three-dimensional maps which enable the reader to visualize the geographical data. A short introduction to life in ancient Palestine is given in the third chapter (25-31). An overview of the climate, settlements, and agriculture of biblical Israel prefaces a short introduction to archaeological method. Brisco charts the archaeological periods of the Near East back to the Old Stone Age; he is certainly not an
advocate of a young earth. The second part of the *Atlas* is devoted to the OT period through the Hasmonean dynasty and covers eleven chapters (33-188). The third part concentrates on the OT era, concluding in A.D. 300, and consists of seven chapters (190-276).

The volume is enhanced with four very valuable appendices. A two-page glossary defines sixty-nine key terms used throughout the *Atlas* (277-78). This is followed by an extensive bibliography that lists resources available in English for further study in archaeology, geography, history, and related fields (279-84). The bibliography is current to 1997. Two indexes conclude the volume. The first lists all the people and places referred to in the written text (285-90); the second contains all the geographical names appearing in the maps (290-98).

The *Atlas* has a number of commendable features. First, the visual presentation is excellent. The 132 maps are colorful, easy to read, and well explained. Fourteen of the maps are three-dimensional, including eight from the Conquest and Settlement period that greatly enhance both the written text and the traditional two-dimensional maps that are also presented. Second, the historical charts are worth the price of the book. Brisco has done an excellent job of incorporating essential historical data for a beginning student in chart form. Particularly valuable are the charts on Ancient Near Eastern History (37, 41, 53, 56) and the major empires from the Neo-Assyrian to Roman (133, 154, 166, 179, 192, 195, 197). Third, 140 color pictures visualize the maps and written text. The brilliant photography allows the reader to watch, as it were, a “slide show” of biblical geography. Fourth, the author succinctly presents a wealth of background material in non-technical terminology. For example, his one-page summary of Canaanite religion is an excellent introduction for the beginning reader (91).

However, the *Atlas* does have some shortcomings. First, in a work that is so well presented visually, it is hard to read some of the sidebars (33, 36, 60, 62, 73, 127, 157, 172). This results from the publisher’s decision to print this material against a brown background. This reviewer found that he has to hold the book at a proper angle to the light to be able to read the material. A lighter background would be helpful. Second, and more important because the *Atlas* is aimed at the beginning student, the text is written from a moderately evangelical perspective. Although Brisco presents the data for both an early and late date for the Exodus (63-64), his text presupposes the late date. For example, he places Abraham’s migration to Canaan 2000-1900 B.C. (41, 45), he dates Joseph in the Hyksos period (41, 51), and refers to the destruction of Bethel in the context of the Conquest in the thirteenth century B.C. (78). Also, the author does not include Joel, Obadiah, or Jonah in his discussion of the early Israelite prophets (140-41). Finally, his presentation of Revelation 13 presupposes a preterist interpretation of the book (265). These are a few of the subtle points that could sway a beginning reader.

The *Holman Bible Atlas* is closest in design and presentation to Carl G. Rasmussen’s *The NIV Atlas of the Bible* (Zondervan, 1989). Although *Holman* is graphically superior, the text of the *NIV* is more reliable. Overall, the best atlas for the beginning student continues to be Barry J. Beitzel’s *The Moody Atlas of Bible
The Master’s Seminary Journal

Lands (Moody, 1985). Moody combines a more in-depth treatment of the physical geography of Israel with a reliable text on the historical geography of the biblical period. Nevertheless, when read with discernment, Holman Bible Atlas is a welcome addition to the field of Bible Atlases.


Solomon declared that the “writing of many books is endless” (Eccl 12:12), and in the genre of biblical commentaries, endless is perhaps too limited a term. An unscientific survey of book catalogues by this reviewer showed that several dozen commentary series are in process, several more in the planning stages, and several long-finished series have been or are being revised. The individual or stand-alone commentary titles currently in print number in the thousands. With the availability of all these works from every possible theological, denominational, and methodological perspective, it is a daunting task to attempt to keep up with the literature, much less make informed recommendations.

Several bibliographies specializing in biblical commentaries are in print. The one bibliographic series that has attempted to maintain a level of currency is the fifth edition of New Testament Commentary Survey. Continuing the work in the first two editions by Anthony C. Thiselton, D. A. Carson of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School has produced three editions of this eminently useful survey. The author has stated as his purpose to provide theological students and ministers with a handy survey of the resources, especially commentaries, that are available in English to facilitate an understanding of the NT (8).

The work has four sections (1) Introductory Notes; (2) Supplements to Commentaries; (3) Individual Commentaries; and (4) Best Buys. It also has an author index and a listing of abbreviations of commentary-set titles. In the introductory section the author briefly details the purpose of commentaries and the relative strengths and weaknesses of various types. He ably discusses the question often asked by students whether to buy a particular set of commentaries or works on individual Bible books. He covers both current and older sets, grouping them by multiple author and by single author. In the section he briefly lists works of NT introduction and NT theology. The author’s “Best Buy” section is a listing of two or three individual commentaries on each book of the NT.

The bulk of this work centers on the listing of individual commentaries on each NT book. Instead of a simple listing of each work with comments, the author has developed a running narrative approach which is refreshing and much more readable than the traditional bibliographic method. He lists title, publisher name, and the list price (per the information he had available). The strength of this work is the brief comments on each title. Carson readily admits that he is rightly accused
of being “trenchant” in his comments. “I have tried to be careful, but in a survey this condensed I prefer to be a shade too trenchant than too bland” (9). The comments are interesting, provocative, and occasionally acerbic. He has taken the same tactic as Charles Spurgeon did in his *Commenting and Commentaries* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1876) as far as the comments are concerned, and he upholds that tradition well.

The author does not take a middle road and makes his views quite evident. He has little use, bordering on disdain, for dispensationalism and commentaries of that position. He also has little use for “popular” commentaries. Works that are edited sermon series often come in for rather critical comments; which will certainly upset some readers whose favorites fall into that category. Occasionally there are *ad hominem* comments and his references to “poorly trained preachers,” “the mythical well-read layman,” and “unsophisticated Sunday School teacher” seem unnecessarily peevish.

That aside, this work is highly recommended for both its informative value and the unique accomplishment for a bibliography, it is interesting and entertaining to read.


This work summarizes a premillennial dispensational view of Revelation, key areas of doctrine, and a chapter by chapter account of many interpretive issues. Five chapters take up such topics as different overall viewpoints, then eleven chapters look at aspects of theology, and around a hundred pages form an interpretive guide for sections of the Book of Revelation. Much of the book is by Couch, president of Tyndale Theological Seminary and Biblical Institute in Fort Worth, Texas. Other writers include Larry Crutchfield, Harold Foos, Robert Lightner, Todd Virnoche, and Russell Penney. John Walvoord wrote the half-page Foreword.

Hundreds of notes cite relevant literature. The contributors seek to dispel the notion that the Book of Revelation is too mysterious to figure out. Various charts compare views, such as rapture positions—pre-wrath, pre-, mid-, and post-tribulationism. Couch’s Chapter 4 traces interpretation through successive periods of church history. The authors argue for literal interpretation, but understand figurative language where sane criteria support such (48). They argue for a difference between reading “spiritual” or mystical meanings into details such as Rev 11:8 and seeing a spiritual description (“Sodom and Egypt” as denoting an ungodly, sensual, idolatrous tenor of life) attached to a literal idea. In Revelation 11, they reason, the literal city of Jerusalem is in view because the context identifies it as the place “where also their Lord was crucified” (62).
The handbook often elaborates on reasons favoring views, as three arguments for referring “seven spirits” to the Holy Spirit (94-95, 115-16). Most discussions cover points fairly well from the writer’s viewpoint, but leave some matters untouched. For example, the book argues against the seven churches depicting blocks of church history, then cites an author who apparently approves a form of this view (126-27). Some details receive cursory, hazy comment, such as whether the sins needing repentance in Revelation 2–3 reflect the saved but carnal persons, or those professing to be saved but lacking real salvation (143-44). The view favored on mystery Babylon is that it depicts Romanism (149). Isaiah 14:12-21 and Ezek 28:11-19 are viewed as referring to Satan (154). Some dispensationalists would understand those as historical kings and explain details accordingly. The “overcomer” is every saved person (164-65). The “woman” of Revelation 12 is Israel which brought forth the Christ child in v. 5. In some passages, the authors refuse to follow certain dispensationalists who see the church’s rapture, for example, in 4:1. No view is evident on the 666 of 13:18 (267). On 7:3 the book sees the 144,000 as martyred despite the protective seal (269). In 21:1–22:5, the favored view is that the eternal state is meant, after the millennial phase of Revelation 20.

Endnotes for each chapter of the handbook appear after the survey. The work will be helpful to some teachers, and to pastors and lay readers wanting clarification about how dispensationalists explain various passages. The nature is that of a thumbnail sketch, but an attempt at a consistent hermeneutic; the main drawback is the brevity where more detail would lend better credence to views.


This unassuming little volume will prove to be a great help to students of the Greek NT and also to anyone engaged in serious NT study. “From ablative to zeugma, it defines the tangled terms that infest Greek textbooks, grammars and lexicons” (back cover). More specifically, the book provides concise definitions for over 1,700 terms that are used in the following areas of NT research—grammar, word study, textual criticism, exegetical method, and literary criticism. The breadth of the words defined actually demands that the title of the book should not give the impression that it is limited to the “study of New Testament Greek.” It really can serve as a miniature handbook for someone studying any aspect of the “later testament.”

DeMoss, book review editor and production manager of *Bibliotheca Sacra*, also includes definitions for a number of pesky Latin and German words and phrases that often cause heartache to those brought up in our post-classical educational system. He concludes with a list of definitions for the many abbreviations, expressions, and sigla we encounter, many of which are also derived from Latin.
Undoubtedly, such a work will omit some arcane word or phrase that we may occasionally encounter. Future editions may seek to add to its breadth. The volume, however, has yet to disappoint this reviewer in that regard.

Students, professors and pastors should have this little volume at hand on their desk. It will provide many an answer for that term—in Latin, German, or English—that causes us to “pause” in our study and ponder its meaning before we keep reading.


James DeYoung, a professor of New Testament at Western Seminary in Portland, Oregon, writes this book to address the notion accepted in a number of denominations that “[o]ne can be a practicing homosexual and an authentic Christian.” This mistaken notion is based on the belief that ancient cultures and the Bible did not condemn homosexuality as a condition or as a lifestyle.

After a powerful preface and introduction, DeYoung presents his material in three sections: “OT Literature and Its Setting,” “New Testament Literature and Its Setting,” and “Law, Morality, and Homosexual Behavior.” At the end of the volume, DeYoung provides a select bibliography that includes only the key authors on both sides of the issue. The value of the book is greatly enhanced by the presence of a thorough Scripture and Ancient Literature index and subject index.

The first seven chapters share a common structure. DeYoung begins the chapter with a fictional story based on archaeological and literary evidence. This story delineates one or more characters’ confrontation or encounter with homosexuality in the time period covered by that chapter. After a thorough presentation of the key issues and passages, the chapter concludes with a helpful summary. DeYoung provides a helpful and concise overview of his main points in that chapter. The chapter concludes with a section entitled “So What?” Building on the content of the chapter (and further summarizing its major assertions), DeYoung provides pointed observations (in list form) about homosexuality and the impact of evidence against its moral viability. Four excurses and three tables appear throughout the volume.

The ensuing overview of the book summarizes the chapters that have the clearest biblical significance and only refers to the other chapters. DeYoung begins the first section by examining the witness of the OT and ancient Judaism concerning homosexuality. He examines the input of Genesis 1–2 (Creation), Genesis 19 (Sodom), Judges 19–20 (Gibeah), Deuteronomy and Kings, Ezekiel 16, and Leviticus 18–20. In summary, he contends that homosexuality violates the creation order and pattern for male and female and for marriage (Genesis 1–2). Genesis 19
The next major section looks at NT literature and its setting. In Chapter 4, DeYoung considers homosexuality as “against nature” in Romans 1. He concludes that Paul is not distinguishing between acceptable “natural” homosexuality and unacceptable “unnatural” homosexuality. Rather, Paul condemns all kinds of homosexual conduct. In the next chapter DeYoung delineates the meaning and origin of the Greek term arsenokoitai in 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy. He argues that this term in both biblical books clearly serves as a reference to homosexuals in all of its manifestations. The final chapter of this section examines implicit references to homosexuality as found in the words of Jesus and the rest of the NT.

As part of the final section, Chapter 7 overviews various legislative precedents from the ancient world (from various cultures at different times). The last chapter provides answers to the twenty most important questions about homosexuality. After posing each question, DeYoung provides the “revisionist” answer and then the biblical answer.

Having read several sources that address the issue of homosexuality, this reviewer found DeYoung’s volume quite helpful. For anyone interested in discovering what the Bible has to say about current notions concerning homosexuality, DeYoung’s volume offers a great deal of help.


The themes of “future” and “change” are no strangers to the literature on Christian higher education. Alvin Toffler concluded, “I have suggested . . . more radically curative procedures for the society—new social services, a *future-facing education system,* new ways to regulate technology, and a strategy for capturing change. . . . [D]iagnosis precedes cure, and we cannot begin to help ourselves until we become sensitively conscious of the problem” (*Future Shock* [New York: Random House, 1970] 430 [emphasis added]). Toffler’s call to develop strategies concerning change and to diagnose the situation carefully prior to remedy has kept many college and university administrators up at night. Contemplating their institutions in the vortex of postmodernist culture, budget realities, expanding technologies, shifting economic trends, faculty dissonance, demographic undulations, and a host of other contemporary demons, administrators can lose institutional bearings like a mariner in a dense ocean fog. Arthur Levine once observed, “In the
early years of the Industrial Revolution, the Yale Report of 1828 asked whether the needs of a changing society required either major or minor changes in higher education. The report concluded that it had asked the wrong question. The right question was, “What is the purpose of higher education?” (“The Future of Colleges: 9 Inevitable Changes,” Chronicle of Higher Education, October 27, 2000, B10). In light of these observations comes the challenge to all Christian higher educators: “Why do we exist as a unique form of higher education?” and “How do we set proper bearings recognizing the intellectual, social, and cultural vertigo we find ourselves in?” An attempt to offer answers to those haunting questions comes in The Future of Christian Higher Education.

The Future of Christian Higher Education is the edited contribution of David S. Dockery and David P. Gushee. Dockery is President of Union University in Jackson, Tennessee and a commissioner with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. His literary contributions include The Challenge of Postmodernism: An Evangelical Engagement (Baker, 2001), Interpreting the New Testament: Essays on Methods & Issues (with David Black, Broadman & Holman, 2001), and New Dimensions in Evangelical Thought: Essays in Honor of Millard J. Erickson (InterVarsity, 1998). Gushee is the director of the Center for Christian Leadership and an associate professor of Christian studies at Union University. His literary contributions include Christians and Politics beyond the Culture Wars: An Agenda for Engagement (Baker, 2000), Toward a Just and Caring Society: Christian Responses to Poverty in America (Baker, 1999), and A Bolder Pulpit: Reclaiming the Moral Dimension of Preaching (Judson, 1998).

The Future of Christian Higher Education emerges out of the turbulent waters of the Southern Baptist Convention, which has been undergoing dynamic transformation in the past decade. In addition to the editors proper, contributors to the book include leaders and scholars from within the Southern Baptist tradition, specifically Bob R. Agee, Timothy George, Millard J. Erickson, James T. Draper, Jr., Harry L. Poe, and Robert B. Sloan, Jr. The editors balance the work by including those from the Coalition for Christian Colleges and Universities (Robert C. Andringa, Karen A. Longman) and from a broad representation of recognized scholars, administrators, and business leaders, including such notables as Joel A. Carpenter, Kenneth G. Elzinga, Stan D. Gaede, Arthur F. Holmes, Kelly Monroe, Claude O. Pressnell, Jr., and Norm Sonju). The Future of Christian Higher Education is not the first attempt to offer new directions to Christian higher education, nor will it likely be the last (cf. J. Gregory Behle, review of Models of Christian Higher Education: Strategies for Success in the Twenty-First Century, by Richard T. Hughes and William B. Adrian, eds., The Master’s Seminary Journal 9 [Fall 1998]:234-36).

The majority of the essays that comprise The Future of Christian Higher Education are addresses that have been reworked for inclusion in this edited volume. The majority of addresses were given at the Conference on the Future of Christian Higher Education held at Union University. Additional addresses were taken from a variety of venues, including the presidential inauguration of Dockery, and various
commencements, convocations, and Staley Lectures. Such a reworking was evident in the tone of the work as this reviewer often found himself “listening” to what was being presented in the book. Endnotes are provided but appear to be later inclusions of a more generic and secondary nature. The volume is replete with the usual literary citations of Christian higher education, notably George Marsden’s, *Soul of the American University* (Oxford), Philip Gleason’s, *Contending with Modernity* (Oxford), and Doug Sloan’s *Faith & Knowledge* (Westminster/John Knox)—interestingly, all three identified by James Burtchaell as the intellectual trilogy of Christian higher education (*The Dying of the Light* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998] ix). Carpenter’s essay “Sustaining Christian Intellectual Commitments: Lessons from the Recent Past” even uses the trilogy as a structural outline for an address (107-14).

In addition to referencing the trilogy, *The Future of Christian Higher Education* offers the standard quotes and remarks frequently associated with Christian higher education. These include Tertullian’s familiar quip “What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and Church?” and Abraham Kuyper’s famous statement, “There is not one single inch of this universe about which Jesus Christ does not say, “This belongs to me!”” At numerous points the reader is reminded of the Christian heritage of American higher education, usually with the standard references to the founding of Harvard, including discussions of its motto, *In Christi Glorium*, and references to the early “Laws, Liberties, and Orders of Harvard College—Every one shall consider the main end of his life and studies to know God and Jesus Christ…” (cf. Josiah Quincy, *History of Harvard University* [Cambridge, Mass.: John Owen, 1840] 515). Though such formulaic allusions are predictable, they do not diminish the quality of the essays.

In response to the stock literature citations and quotations, this reviewer would liked to have seen greater interaction with, and incorporation of, recent research on higher education as foundational to a discussion of the future. General references to the *Chronicle of Higher Education* appear, but the heavier peer-reviewed research is largely absent. One point this reviewer is particularly interested in is the recent phenomenon of institutional conversion endemic within Christian higher education circles. A hard look at the motives for converting Christian colleges and Bible institutes to “University” status and how that decision factors into a vision of Christian higher education would have been an interesting and welcomed discussion.

In spite of a certain predictability in the materials used and cited, a fairly simple use of largely secondary and parochial sources, and the motivational tone stemming from rhetorical genesis, *The Future of Christian Higher Education* is a solid reminder of the issue that the Yale Report of 1828 raised: “What is the purpose of higher education?” or in the case under consideration, Christian higher education. The book is not prescriptive about the future; rather it raises fundamental issues worth considering. In that regard, it offers a valuable contribution to the literary dialogue. Both administrators and faculties would do well to discuss these issues vigorously. The work raises several important and often overlooked questions,
including the place of scholarship and research in a Christian academic context and the question of spiritual formation and the Christian professor—issues often ignored in the literature. While emerging out of the ethos of the Southern Baptist convention, the volume is not bound by denominational ties. The editors have attempted to represent a wide spectrum of Christian higher education in the book. Previous reviewers have clearly appreciated the contribution of the work to the conversation concerning the purpose and direction of Christian higher education.

*The Future of Christian Higher Education* raises two fundamental questions: “Why do Christian colleges and universities exist and what might their vision be for the future?” The answers to these questions, and the conversations they invoke, are too important to ignore. Often absorbed with the task of navigating the turbulent skies in which they find their institutions, campus leaderships often fixate on budget spreadsheets and enrollment projections. We would do well to look up from such instruments and to the horizon. The work of Dockery and Gushee offers an excellent starting point.


This book, having a back-cover endorsement from D. A. Carson and four others, follows up on Doriani’s earlier contribution, *Getting the Message: A Plan for Interpreting and Applying the Bible.* The author is Dean of Faculty and Professor of New Testament at Covenant Theological Seminary.

The Preface points out the paucity of solid writings on application, the extent of which is usually one chapter of general guidelines in a hermeneutics book. Doriani does a more thorough work in an area where few have addressed the need in entire books, e.g., David Veerman, *How to Apply the Bible* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale, 1993) and Jack Kuhatschek, *Taking the Guesswork Out of Applying the Bible* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1990).

Highly readable, the book usually helps with examples from specific passages. At times, the author seems to go along with recent interpreters who confuse the legitimate distinction between interpretation of a text and applications that flow from the interpretation (20-27). However, Doriani does recognize the difference, even though he is not always clear (cf. a plain statement of the problem and distinctions in Brian Shealy, “Redrawing the Line Between Hermeneutics and Application,” *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 8/1 [Spring 1997]:83-105).

One of Doriani’s many good points is that we may correctly grasp a text’s meaning, true to its own setting (such as not charging interest on loans to fellow Israelites), but may falter in perceiving relevant applications of the principles in different societies today (26). One needs to add here that a correct basic interpretation and a proper, consistent application that has pertinency today are distinct. The
latter needs to flow validly from the reservoir of the former; otherwise, we apply our own ideas, fudged in, that do not have authentic support from God’s Word. To intrude our own subjective ideas of application as part of interpreting a text is to foist something that we think is better onto what we do not actually consider adequate and force a text to conform to our thoughts when the text’s meaning is quite different. In such a case, we have bypassed the patient task of first ascertaining the meaning of God’s Word and have impregnated it with our own foreign input, actually manipulating it and erring in calling this the interpretation.

Doriani at times cites statements that are not realistic, even misleading. Such a case is in his idea that if a reader really grasps the truth, for example, on stealing being self-destructive and an offense to God, he “will” renounce stealing and not practice it (26). That is not necessarily the case. How many see truth, such as the sinfulness of adultery, and yet decide to follow their own desires anyway, indulging in self-excusing rationalization? Doriani finally recognizes that interpretation and application are in some real sense distinct (26). But some of his statements show that he sees it in a blurry way. An impression he leaves, as opposed to realism, is that if people understand truth, they always will apply it (27). That requires denying the possibility that a person can understand that Christ will save him if he receives Christ, yet fail to follow through in taking Christ definitely as his own Savior.

A reader goes through quite a lot of preliminary theory en route to getting to application in the book. Then Chapter 3 presents principles in such a fashion that it provides clear guidance. One is told about the need and source for courage, character, and credibility to interpret, and arrives at Chapter 4 still waiting for concrete help on application. Once the author gets to direct discussion, he has much to offer. He holds up a high view of possibilities: “If we know where to look, there is an abundance in almost every text” (81). He advises driving home one chief application as the central idea and using sub-points in relation to this. His advice is good in answering questions a text provokes and also being perceptive in answering questions about living the text. He is also helpful in his suggestion that biblical texts show applications by mentioning rules (commands), ideals, doctrines, redemptive acts, images, songs, and prayers (82).

Sometimes Doriani could offer more help by pointing out essential steps by which to make applications today; at other places he is quite instructive. Some very good practical comments appear on how people of different ages can relevantly obey “Honor your father and your mother” (84). It would help to add biblical examples of honoring, such as Joseph going to check on the flocks or David delivering his father’s provisions to his brothers at the battlefront. Chapters 5–12 provide more direct assists on applications, the first of these chapters even giving four aspects that can help readers discover applications, namely finding a duty, point of character, goal to seek, or a discernment about living in line with God. An illustration of discernment is David’s perception in 1 Samuel 17 that Goliath’s challenge was against God and that God was sufficient to help meet the challenge. Various chapters show how to draw applications from narrative texts (stories, etc.),
doctrine, and ethical issues. Chapter 12 contributes to relating application to God.

Indexes to Scripture, names, and subjects end a book that furnishes many assists for teachers, preachers, and lay people who are serious to be patiently diligent about discovering and sharpening application.


This volume is part of the Anchor Bible Reference Library, designed as a major component of the Anchor Bible series. Dungan is Distinguished Professor of Humanities at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. He is author of *Documents for the Study of the Gospels and the Sayings of Jesus in the Churches of Paul*, has been one of the major contributors to the revival of the neo-Griesbach (Two-Gospel) hypothesis in Synoptic studies. He dedicates this book to his mentor, William R. Farmer, perhaps the strongest proponent of the neo-Griesbach hypothesis in modern times. The work originated in a course taught by Dungan while he was Catholic Biblical Association of America visiting professor at the Pontificio Instituto Bíblico in Rome in 1976-1977.

The work provides an account of the debate regarding the relationship of the three Synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Luke, and Mark—throughout church history, noting cultural, historical, political, technological, economic as well as theological trends that the author identifies as molding discussion surrounding the Synoptic Gospels. He demonstrates how scholars throughout church history, influenced by such factors, have defined and redefined the Synoptic “Problem.” Primarily, the book’s purpose centers in challenging the current status quo in Synoptic studies regarding the priority of Mark and the existence of Q, tracing the forces that Dungan identifies as bringing this “Protestant” hypothesis to dominance. Although the book champions the neo-Griesbach hypothesis, its review of Synoptic history is not too narrowly confined, for it gives a somewhat sweeping history of Synoptic discussion from the first century to the present.

Dungan has organized the work into a chronological narrative divided into three parts that roughly correspond to three major epochs of the unfolding debate over assumed interrelations among the Gospels. Part One covers the period from the first century to the fifth, with Origen and Augustine being key contributors. This first phase lasted long after Augustine who set the pattern for Synoptic studies for a thousand years. Part Two covers the second phase, starting with how key figures in the Reformation viewed the Synoptic Gospels, and running through the important period of the Enlightenment, and ending with World Wars I and II. Part Three takes up Synoptic discussion in the post-World War II period and examines current trends and developments.
Besides these three epochs in the Synoptic debate, Dungan sees three “Forms of the Synoptic Problem” in the history of Gospel studies: The First Form centers in Origen. The Second Form centers in Augustine with his emphasis on “authoritarian strictly literal harmonization of the differences among the Gospels.” (3). His Gospel harmony “is the telltale sign of the Second Form of the Synoptic Problem” (4). Emphasis on the Third Form of the Synoptic Problem runs from the nineteenth century to today, with such factors as Deism, the Enlightenment, Romanticism, etc., being key catalysts in the development of modern discussions of the Synoptic Problem. As skepticism regarding the Bible increased during this period, harmonization was rejected and replaced by a qualitatively different approach—i.e., literary-dependence interrelationships among the Gospels—that centered in “a new developmental approach toward the differences among the Gospels” (309). The Gospel harmony is replaced by the Gospel synopsis (5). The Griesbach (Two-Gospel) and Two-Source Hypotheses arose during this period, with the latter gaining overwhelming dominance in Synoptic discussion. Thus, the modern literary-dependence concepts of the Two-Gospel and Two-Source hypotheses arose as a direct result of acute skepticism regarding the veracity and historicity of the Gospel accounts, a skepticism, produced by the impact of philosophical presuppositions (e.g., Rationalism, Deism, Skepticism, Romanticism) upon Gospel discussion.

The author has rendered an excellent service in highlighting the various stages of the Synoptic Problem discussion, especially in terms of history and presuppositions. Such a treatment is lacking in other reviews of Synoptic discussion, especially among champions of literary-dependence hypotheses. Dungan sets his book apart by noting that his work attempts a more comprehensive treatment of Synoptic discussion, starting with the early church while most modern treatments ignore this period and begin around 1800. He also frankly admits that most treatments ignore “how destructive to Christianity the modern form [of the Synoptic Problem] is” (2). Though this reviewer does not adopt the neo-Griesbach hypothesis of Dungan, he appreciates Dungan’s constant emphasis on the impact of history and philosophical presuppositions in the development of both the Two-Document and Two-Gospel hypotheses. From the reviewer’s perspective, history and philosophical presuppositions stand as monumental testimonies against the both the Two-Source and Two-Gospel hypotheses.

Increasingly, Dungan’s work implies that within the Roman Catholic Church the neo-Griesbach hypothesis is gaining great sympathies, with the theory’s preference for Matthew being identified as the first Gospel written, especially in terms of its impact on papal interpretation. Dungan seems at times to exhibit not so subtle Roman Catholic sympathies (vii), exhibiting anti-Protestant biases in his interpretation of reformatory events in church history. For example, he writes, “[H]aving burnt the Roman Catholic bridge of Tradition (‘Scripture and Tradition’), Protestant theologians and pastors had painted themselves into the logical corner of sola Scriptura” (194).

He also correctly traces both historical criticism and the modern discussion
of the Synoptic Problem to its originator/father Baruch Spinoza who under Enlightenment influence deliberately rejected and moved away from traditional harmonization. He states,

Spinoza and his followers multiplied questions about the physical history of the text to the point that the traditional theological task could never get off the ground. That, however, was precisely the intended effect of the first step: to create an endless ‘nominalist barrage’ if you will, an infinitely extendable list of questions directed at the physical history of the text, to the point where the clergy and the political officials allied with them could never bring to bear their own theological interpretations of the Bible. In other words, Spinoza switched the focus from the referent of the biblical text (e.g., God’s activity, Jesus Christ) to the history of the text. In doing so, he effectively eviscerated the Bible of all traditional theological meaning and moral teaching (172).

Perhaps Dungan’s most valuable contribution is his demonstration that the Two-Source and Two-Gospel hypotheses are not neutral but are controlled by philosophical presupposition and speculation. Regarding historical criticism, Dungan writes, “No one told me precisely how the inventors of the new historical method first eviscerated the Bible, then secretly packed it with their own values so that, after the defenders of orthodoxy had dragged this strange Trojan horse inside their city, the hidden soldiers rule the city under the guise of biblical criticism” (148). Thus, historical criticism is not objective but has been purposefully designed to destroy the meaning, influence, and authority of the Scriptures and avoid its claims on society. In effect, it reduces the Bible to a mere handbook of morality (147).

Some significant weaknesses exist in Dungan’s work, however. He accepts the neo-Griesbach hypothesis, but Oden and Hall’s Mark, in The Ancient Commentary on Scripture series (InterVarsity, 1999), insightfully notes that no mention of literary dependence occurs among the church fathers, but is a modern (nineteenth century) development. Others have noted that literary-dependence finds no support in the fathers (e.g., Meeks, in The Relationships Among the Gospels, An Interdisciplinary dialogue-Trinity University Press, 1978). No support for neo-Griesbach or the Two-Source hypothesis appears in a review of church fathers (Dungan’s assertions regarding Augustine notwithstanding, e.g., 84-85). Instead, the Independence view predominated. Dungan’s failure to acknowledge this fact and to discuss the Independence approach in history enervates the usefulness of his treatment.

Moreover, though Dungan shows what modern Enlightenment hermeneutics (i.e., historical criticism) did to destroy the authority of the Bible, associating Griesbach with this trend, he then adopts the neo-Griesbach hypothesis. Regarding modern biblical criticism with its Spinozan roots, he states, “I never knew that I was a foot soldier in a great crusade to eviscerate the Bible’s core theology, smother its moral standards under an avalanche of hostile historical questions, and, at the end, shove it aside so that the new bourgeois could get along with the business at hand”
He notes that the neo-Griesbach and Two-Source hypotheses found foothold during this period: “It was within the crucible of Spinoza’s hatred of religious tyranny and longing for a better way that the central elements of the Third Form of the Synoptic Problem were forged” (260). If Dungan now understands such historical and presuppositional intents, why adopt literary-dependence hypotheses? That defies explanation.


This volume represents the second installment of a massive theological reference project, bringing the *Evangelisches Kirchenlexikon* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1986-97) into the English language.

The reviewer previously commented on Volume One (*TMSJ* 11/1 [Spring 2000] 124-26). In that review all features related to this series in terms of style and formatting were noted. This series represents what should be regarded as a template for biblical and theological reference works. The editors have included all the most useful access points for the reader. There is a detailed explanation of how the articles are formatted and how to use the work. There is a “List of Entries,” a listing of contributors with the articles they contributed, and a lengthy and well-conceived list of abbreviations. The articles themselves have excellent bibliographies and a liberal use of “see also” references. All publishers and editors of reference works would serve their readers well if they invested the same extra effort put forth in this volume.

This set is designed to “describe Christianity both broadly and deeply, taking full account of its varied global, ecumenical, sociocultural, and historical contexts” (x). The editor’s goal to provide scholarly reference in such a context is accomplished more than adequately. However, despite the stated goal, the articles in this volume, as in the first, reflect a decided Euro-centricity in both authors and viewpoints expressed. With that understood, the articles on “Europe” (184-93) and “European Theology in the Modern Period” (193-208) are informative and useful, although one wonders why only the theology of the modern period receives a specific entry and why there is no entry on the European Union. In fact while EU statistics are cited frequently, the EU as an entity is almost absent from the article on Europe as a whole.

Why some articles were included is a mystery, the same as in the earlier volume. Articles on subjects such as “Energy” (94-95), “Environment” (99), “Eugenics” (183), and “Information” (699-703) have no real connection to the subject of Christianity. Along with the article on “Environmental Ethics” (99-101), those on “Energy” and “Environment” are decidedly slanted toward the political and
environmental views of the European Green Parties. A few of the articles, such as the lengthy entry for “Everyday Life” (221-26), have vague and somewhat questionable entry points in terms of utility. Theological liberalism, and to a lesser degree elitism, is thoroughly entrenched in this work. To have the Bible described in the article on “Inspiration” (713-15) as a “Word from elsewhere” (715) is certainly disappointing. James Barr’s article on “Fundamentalism” (363-65) is highly pejorative, characterizing the majority of fundamentalists as “populist, ignorant, and hostile to intellectual theology” (364). The article on “Incarnation” (673-79) is a morass of incoherent historical-philosophical speculations in which the text of Scripture is never explicitly mentioned and the deity of Christ, as historically understood, is implicitly rejected.

There are some outstanding informational articles in this volume. The articles on “Greek Philosophy” (463-67), “Historiography” (553-58), the “Holiness Movement” (566-76), and “Ethics” (138-56) are extremely thorough and useful. As one of the main features of the work, the articles and statistical information on individual countries are also quite valuable.

Taken as a whole, when completed, this set will undoubtedly become a reference staple in university and seminary libraries. However, in terms of both utility and high price, it should not be a first choice for individuals.


No Other God is a concise study of the doctrine of God from a Calvinistic viewpoint in light of the rise of open theism. The book begins with chapters on “What Is Open Theism?,” “Where Does Open Theism Come From?,” and “How Do Open Theists Read the Bible?” And it ends with an analysis of the relationship of open theism’s doctrine of God to other key doctrines. In Bibliology, for example, Frame points out that, given open theism’s doctrine of libertarian free will, God cannot guarantee that what the human authors wrote is truth “without overriding the free will of those human writers” (206).

But the strength of the book is found in the chapters explaining God’s love, sovereignty, decretive and perceptive wills, relation to time, immutability, and omniscience. In these chapters, Frame gives biblical and precise answers to the hard questions about God. It is the kind of a book that pastors need in their libraries to help them give biblical answers to serious Christians who are asking hard questions about God.

One of the most intriguing explanations in the book concerns God’s relationship to time. Many classic theologians have argued that God is timeless. He is the cause and creator of time, but He lives beyond time, and His existence does not involve chronological progression. Philosophers and theologians from Plato and
Augustine to Schleiermacher and Charles Hodge have held this view. The other view, held by open theists and some classic theologians, is that God is everlasting. God has always existed and He always will. But God exists with humanity in time and personally lives in a form of chronological sequence.

Frame believes that there is a sense in which both views are partially correct. He concludes, “So God is temporal after all, but not merely temporal. He really exists in time, but he also transcends time in such a way as to exist outside it. He is both inside and outside of the temporal box—a box that can neither confine him nor keep him out. That is the model that does the most justice to the biblical data” (159).

This model then becomes the frame of reference for dealing with other matters. In regard to immutability, God is “unchangeable in his atemporal or supratemporal existence. But when he is present in our world of time, he looks at his creation from within and shares the perspectives of his creatures” (176). Moreover, in God’s atemporal and transcendent existence, “God ordains grievous events,” but “in his temporal and spatial omnipresence, he grieves with his creatures . . .” (188). Such a view seems to emphasize equally God’s transcendence and His immanence.

In his preface, Frame recounts that he had second thoughts about the necessity of publishing this book after he read the excellent critique of open theism by Bruce Ware, God’s Lesser Glory. But we can be thankful that Frame followed his third thoughts and proceeded with the publication. This is a very helpful addition to the growing literature responding to the inadequacies of open theism and expositing a biblical doctrine of God.


A Summer Greek Reader is a workbook designed to help the beginning Greek student maintain the essentials of the language. The targeted audience is the student who has just completed a year-long introductory Greek course and has the summer available to strengthen his knowledge of Greek while awaiting an intermediate Greek class in the fall. It is a well-known fact that many students who have expended great effort in learning the basics of the language, regress in their knowledge of Greek due to the lack of a systematic program to help maintain their skills during the summer. This workbook by Goodrich and Diewert addresses this situation.

Each chapter consists of three sections: (1) There are six passages for translation consisting of four to seven verses each. Unfamiliar words are identified in the footnotes by listing the lexical form, English definition, and the number of occurrences in the Greek NT. A small set of parsing questions is asked. Space is provided for both the answers to these questions and the student’s translation of the passage. (2) A raw and unpolished English translation for each of the passages to be translated is given in the back of the book. (3) A list of new vocabulary words is supplied starting with the second chapter. Once the vocabulary lists are learned, the student will know all of the words that occur in the Greek NT twenty or more times. The vocabulary lists of twenty to thirty words are divided into three interesting categories: *Friends* (words that bear a strong resemblance either to a Greek word that has already been learned or to an English word), *Cousins* (words that have a more distant resemblance to familiar Greek or English words), and *Strangers* (words that could not readily be tied to a Greek word that is known or a familiar English word). Although this classification is clever, only time will tell if it is useful. It should be noted that the list of new words is not directly related to the passages to be translated.

This book is part of the larger family of Zondervan resources designed to help an individual in the accurate exegesis of biblical texts. In light of this, it is assumed that the reader already possesses a copy of William Mounce’s, *Basics of Biblical Greek* and Daniel Wallace’s *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*. The former work is referenced frequently in the footnotes. Vocabulary counts and meanings are based upon Warren Trenchard’s work, *The Student’s Complete Vocabulary Guide to the Greek New Testament*.

Goodrich and Diewert are to be commended for producing a structured work that fills the “summer” void that students experience while waiting to take intermediate Greek. Instructors who do not utilize the whole Zondervan series of Greek textbooks will have to make adjustments for their students.


Supersessionism comes under fire in this book by Fredrick C. Holmgren, Research Professor of Old Testament at North Park Theological Seminary in Chicago. He lauds the Jewish preservation of revelation distinctly critical of Israel (1-12). With the Book of Jonah as his primary example, he takes issue with the Christian claim that God has rejected the Jews because of their blindness to divine revelation, especially the revelation that Christians claim speaks of Jesus. In the next chapter, the author attacks the promise and fulfillment interpretation of the OT (13-37). Interpreters who believe that OT prophecies present two messianic advents are charged with “arbitrary exegesis” (18). Holmgren explains that accurate exegesis
involves “depth” or “creative exegesis” (21) that was adopted from the rabbinical interpretations of Scripture (23) and is illustrated by the NT writers who, “after meeting and following Jesus, searched the scriptures and discovered him in the Old Testament” (30). Support for this conclusion is presented in a brief examination of 1 Cor 10:4 and Eph 4:8 (31-33).

Citing Jesus’ declaration in Luke 24:26-27 that Moses and the prophets had testified concerning Him, Holmgren accuses Jesus Himself of employing the OT in the same allegorical fashion as Melito of Sardis (40). Highlighting the seemingly free use of the OT, the author offers a variety of examples (Hos 11:1 and Matt 2:15; Ps 41:9 and John 1:18; Jer 31:15 and Matt 2:16-18) to attack any view that would include prediction and fulfillment as authorial intent in the OT (43-47). He argues that the NT writers favored the use of the Septuagint because it more readily corroborated their Christian faith (47-53). Holmgren totally ignores the fact that the NT writers and early Christians merely followed the lead of Jesus who had established His identity and destiny based on OT promises, claiming that He Himself was the fulfillment of OT prophecies.

The fourth chapter examines the problem of OT law and NT grace (56-74). Basically, Holmgren proposes that the apostle Paul could not support the views of the writer of the Book of Hebrews (59), that the apostle “overreached the truth” (62) in his allegory of Hagar and Sarah in Galatians, and that Paul wrote Romans 9–11 in a “divided state of mind” (70). In stark contrast to the biblical view of apostles and prophets borne along by the Holy Spirit to pen clear, confident, and inerrant revelation, Holmgren believes that the apparent contradictions in Paul’s writings are due to his inability to explain his experience in the new faith (73-74).

Two full chapters (75-104) are dedicated to an interpretation of the “new covenant” in Jer 31:31-34. Rightly understanding that it was directed to Israel (rather than to the church), the author concludes the first chapter’s treatment by declaring that the covenant is just “one more call of Jeremiah to renew commitment to the Sinai covenant” (95) clothed in satirical irony. According to Holmgren, the NT employs only the imagery of the OT’s “new covenant.” The NT “was written to nourish faith, not to transmit the plain meaning of the scripture” (104).

In “The New Testament Proclamation of Jesus: What Does the Old Testament Contribute?” (105-18), the author argues that the OT is a necessary and independent part of the Scriptures. It complements the NT by providing clearer instruction on how to live a life of faith in the real world. In his view, inattention to the OT “contributed to a late response in engaging the social issues of our day” (112).

Chapter 8 (119-38) returns to the attack on supersessionism, discussing the legitimacy of calling the earlier testament the “Old Testament” and concluding that the NT does not supersede the OT. Holmgren declares that “supersede” should be eliminated from our vocabulary when discussing the relationship between the two testaments (126), because “it represents an overreach of the church which has resulted in a denigration of this scripture as well as of Judaism” (127). However, while “Hebrew Bible” and “First Testament” are potential alternative titles, they also
have potential for misunderstanding. Therefore, a judicious use of all alternative
titles alongside the traditional designations is to be preferred (134-36).

*The Old Testament and the Significance of Jesus* sometimes proposes
atrocious theology and sometimes it offers thought-provoking observations. The
final chapter ("Jesus: Human and Divine," 139-91) best exemplifies this awful

tension. In the “Foreword” Walter Brueggemann emphatically “stressed that
Holmgren is not ‘soft’ on Christian claims” (xii). However, that is a grave
misstatement that most evangelical readers will recognize immediately, as Holmgren
states repeatedly that the deity of Christ is not to be taken literally (139, 149 n. 26,
150, 155, 178 n. 95, 188; cf. 163-65). Instead, the NT writers’ intention was merely
to depict Jesus as someone “intimately related to God” (151) and “that God’s
presence dwells in him as in no other” (155). As he explains, “True, the Gospel
writer declares that this ‘Word became flesh and lived among us’ in Jesus, but this
is not the same as declaring: ‘Jesus is God’” (154). At the end of the chapter,
Holmgren denies any suppression of “the divinity of Jesus” (190), but then goes on
to declare that such an affirmation must avoid any tendency “to literalize his
divinity” (191). The book comes full cycle with this self-contradictory and unbiblical
view of Christ’s deity. The author’s theology is apparently governed by a misplaced
political (or, should we say) religious correctness illustrated by the following

declaration:

But the tragic truth is that persecution of Jews by Christians has been strongly
linked to a high Christology which frequently was interpreted to mean that
Jesus—*actually, literally*—was God. Such a Christology, when *logically*
pursued, makes the Jewish refusal to become followers of Christ a crime against
God (165).

In spite of the author’s mutilation of the biblical Christology in regard to
the deity of Christ, he rightly notes the significance of the remarkable similarities
between the personification of Wisdom in the OT and the NT association of Jesus
with it (157-58). In addition, his observation that the early church creeds were
merely interpretations of biblical teachings colored by Greek philosophy (172-73)
is sound. That observation leads him to declare with emphasis, “The creeds should
not be privileged above scripture!” (174).

Doubtless this volume will serve as a catalyst for advanced seminars in
Christology and continuity/discontinuity of the two testaments. There is nothing
evangelical about Holmgren’s views. The only emphasis of any enduring value is the
insistence upon the fact that the Christian faith is a faith that is not just a NT faith.

Edwin C. Hostetter. *An Elementary Grammar of Biblical Hebrew.* Sheffield:
Sheffield Academic Press, 2000. 176 pp. $84.00 (cloth). $29.95 (paper).
Reviewed by Michael A. Grisanti, Associate Professor of Old Testament.
This volume joins a host of other Hebrew grammars that have been published over the last 2-3 years. In this relatively short grammar (176 pp.), Hostetter provides a basic introduction to the Hebrew language. He makes use of customary grammatical terms, injecting a few labels from the field of contemporary linguistics (e.g., “sufformatives”). His pronunciation chart for the consonants and vowels indicates he follows a modern or Sephardic approach to pronouncing Hebrew words. The main body of this volume falls into three general divisions. The first third (lessons #1-13) treat nouns and particles, the second third delineates strong verbs (lessons #14-24), and the final third addresses weak verbs (lessons #25-34). Most of the lessons are 3-4 pages in length with only one lesson covering 6 pages. Each lesson is logically arranged and is divided into numbered sections. Hostetter offers examples and exercises taken from the Masoretic Text of the Hebrew Bible. Each section ends with a 10-word vocabulary section and a relatively brief set of exercises. In general, it appears that an average student could complete most of the homework exercises in about an hour.

In the first 24 lessons, Hostetter guides the student through writing/copying, oral reading, sentence analysis, usage identification, syllable division, parsing, and translation of the Hebrew text. Beginning with lesson #25, he requires the student to translate a 5-to-8-verse passage from the Hebrew Bible. For the first 7 lessons students have to parse only one verb in that passage. They have to parse all the verbs in the required passage for the last 3 lessons. Here are the passages he introduces students to, moving from narrative passages to prophecy to poetry: Genesis 12, Exodus 3, Deuteronomy 6, 2 Samuel 12, 1 Kings 18, Isaiah 49, Jeremiah 1, Psalm 100, Psalm 121, Proverbs 3. The volume ends with an appendix that offers alternative schemes for pronouncing Hebrew vowels, a basic vocabulary (all the required words plus 50 additional terms), thirteen verb paradigms, and a short (2 pp.) subject index.

A variety of features deserve brief mention. The author consistently gives attention to morphological issues, i.e., why a certain form looks the way it does. He arranges the verbs from 3rd person to 1st person. He treats the cohortative and jussives in a chapter with the imperative, distinct from the imperfect. He describes verb sequences with the labels: vav consecutive + perfect and vav consecutive + imperfect. He normally provides a helpful summary of the rules that govern a given form or construction and has a handful of helpful charts (e.g., 55-56 dealing with numbers).

In spite of these redeeming qualities, the book has a few drawbacks. In addition to the less than thorough exercises, the volume desperately needs a number of additional charts to help students visualize the forms being scrutinized.

This Hebrew grammar is well written and relatively easy to follow. The brevity of the text and the exercises makes it a somewhat user-friendly alternative to consider for learning Hebrew. However, that brevity in addition to the lack of sufficient visual presentations of the many forms a student encounters in studying the Hebrew language diminish the value of this text as a first choice for a Hebrew grammar textbook. Its price will not help the breadth of its acceptance by Hebrew
professors (and students). Although Hostetter has given this reviewer a few ideas on how to present certain aspects of Hebrew grammar, students and professors will need to look elsewhere for a grammar to use in a seminary setting.


In *Exposition of the Book of Revelation*, this scholar, who recently completed the William Hendriksen NT series, offers evangelical convictions on details of introduction, then adds lucid, detailed perspectives on verses of Revelation. Hendriksen’s own commentary, *More than Conquerors*, on the Bible’s last book has been a text in some schools favoring an amillennial view. Now Kistemaker has finished his personal contribution.

Kistemaker argues for authorship by John the Apostle around A.D. 95-96, and shows characteristics relating the Apocalypse to the Gospel of John and the Epistles of John. He presents methods of interpreting Revelation, i.e., preterist, historicist, idealist, and futurist. On the futurist view, he misleads readers in saying that such a view of Rev 4–22 leaves only Chapters 1–3 as relevant to the contemporary church. In reality, the futurist view finds in Chapters 4–22 a great number of lessons in godly living and hope for today’s saints, just as other biblical books that teach Christ’s future coming have applications for today. Even such a scholar as Kistemaker can have a blind spot and misrepresent the facts about a view other than his own. Biblical books such as Genesis, far removed from today’s church, offer an abundance of relevant truths that impact life now.

The present commentary argues against a millennium between Christ’s future coming and the final judgment (45). Again, Kistemaker misrepresents a premillennial view by saying that glorified saints could not live joyfully on an earth with sin present. They can, as even holy angels in the OT and NT earthly appearances could have joy and as Jesus, the perfectly holy one, lived in a sinful world. To disprove a literal millennium after the Second Advent, the author cites Ezek 39:9 (seven years to gather and burn weapons) and 39:12 (seven months to bury corpses of a battle to cleanse the land) (45). He reasons that these texts need to be interpreted symbolically, proving that seven speaks of complete destruction and cleansing. With such logic, one can prove a case to his own satisfaction, but not in a way convincing and natural to others. Even with literal numbers, the texts yield a very reasonable zeal to dispose of weapons and cleanse the land.

A four-page outline (66-70) precedes the commentary (76-595). A bibliography (597-603) follows before the concluding indexes of authors, Scriptures, and other ancient writings. Kistemaker helpfully has made much use of many sources, and given very readable detail, interspersed with many special, brief sections devoting more attention to Greek words, phrases, and constructions. He
often assists readers in discussing problem verses, offering reasons for favored views. Examples are “seven spirits” meaning the Holy Spirit (1:4), “the Lord’s day” designating the first day of the week (1:10), the angels of the churches referring to human messengers responsible for the churches’ well-being (Chaps. 2–3), “the one who overcomes” in these chapters denoting every truly saved person, “not erase his name” (3:5) being a strong assertion that a saved person can never lose salvation. Chapters 1–3, 4–5, and 21–22 evidence much good sense.

Those of a futurist persuasion will have great difficulty with many of the views in Chapters 4–20, especially. The seven-sealed book (5:1–8:1) reveals God’s complete plan and purpose for the entire world throughout the ages (202). Chapter 6 “describes the history of the world and the church” (219). The features of Chapter 6 occur in any era (220). The rider on the white horse (Chap. 6) represents the gospel which is unstoppable throughout the present age, for which Kistemaker uses Matt 24:14 (224). The 144,000 denote perfection of all believers from all nations, and 7:9 all of these saints entering heaven, having been kept safe (253). Locust-like beings in Revelation 9 symbolize demon forces, but a reader can be mystified by the statements, “This is a description of hell itself in which people seek to die but realize that death is eluding them (v. 6). Their mental and spiritual suffering is without end” (284). The passage depicts demons at work at any time against the saved on earth, before future blessedness. In Revelation 11, the temple of God is the church at worship (323), and Kistemaker sees no NT evidence for a physical temple being rebuilt at Jerusalem (322). The city in 11:1-2 is not earthly Jerusalem, but the New Jerusalem (326); the Christian church is the holy city (327). The 42 months signify “the times of the Gentiles” (Luke 21:24), which John makes equal to 1,260 days or three and a half years, which is the period of the Maccabean war when the temple was desecrated from June 167 to December 164 B. C. Somehow Kistemaker has this refer to 167-164, a time of triumph for the Gentiles, and then equates it with triumph of the Gentiles from Jesus’ ascension to His return (327).

More amillennialism follows. The two witnesses are the church of Christ calling the world to repent (329). Their 1,260 days of ministry are the period from the Great Commission to the end of the age of gospel witness (Matt 28:19-20). Many of the details in Chapter 11 “cannot be taken literally” (330). The woman of Revelation 12 is the covenant community of both OT and NT (355). The woman fleeing to the desert (12:6) is the church depending on God to provide necessities while waiting on earth for all of the 1,260 days for His return (359). In Chapter 20, the thousand years are “an indefinite period between the ascension of Jesus and his return” (536). For Kistemaker, the fact that Satan is bound means he is “unable to stop the advance of the gospel” (535). This suffers from problems such as the great way Satan is on the loose today, rampant (1 Pet 5:8), with Christians not being ignorant of his devices (2 Cor 2:11). In Kistemaker’s view, Christ has already taken possession of the nations as in Ps 2:7-8 (536), and has “deprived” Satan of leading them astray during this gospel age. Today, these nations receive the light of the world (John 8:12) and no longer live in darkness and deceit (536).

In Rev 21:1–22:5, God will renovate and transform the heaven and earth,
Many premillennials can agree about this. Measurements of the eternal city are, Kistemaker writes, not literal but symbolical for symmetry and perfection (568).

One will test his own interpretations as he reads this highly diligent gathering of information, and be the better for it. He also will see, as in Hendriksen’s More Than Conquerors, how an amillennial expert explains the Revelation, which has been called “the grand central station for all the railroad lines of prophecy in Scripture.”

Tremper Longman III. Song of Songs. NICOT. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001. xvi + 238 pp. $35.00 (cloth). Reviewed by Irvin A. Busenitz, Professor of Bible and Old Testament.

With the publication of this volume, Tremper Longman III has made another valuable contribution to the growing list of NICOT publications. Also known as the Song of Solomon, this OT book throughout history has often been misinterpreted by both scholars and laypeople. In an effort to bring clarity to misunderstanding, Longman addresses the background and text of this beautiful and timeless book.

The author begins with a very extensive, in-depth treatment of introductory matters, with forty percent of the book given to these issues. As to authorship, Longman concedes that “[t]here is nothing inconceivable about the idea that Solomon wrote one or more of the poems . . .” (7). Nevertheless, he chooses instead to remain neutral, contending that the authorship cannot be known with certainty. He concludes, “The most honest appraisal is that we do not know for certain who wrote the songs of the Song, a man or a woman, and in any case it is a collection of love poetry, whether by men, or women, or both” (9). He adds that the mention of the king in 1:1, as in Prov 1:1 and Eccl 1:1, does not necessarily restrict the authorship to him (4-5).

As one would expect in a commentary on the Song of Songs, Longman provides an extensive treatment of its interpretation, asserting a priori “that it is not telling a story about Solomon” (7). He details the various allegorical and literal approaches, concluding that the “Song is an anthology of love poetry” (44) that affirms love, sex, and marriage (70). At the same time, Longman claims that since one’s relationship with God is described biblically by the metaphor of marriage, there is an allegorical element that cannot be denied. Though he cautions against arbitrarily pressing the details of the analogy, he contends that “from the Song we learn about the emotional intensity, intimacy, and exclusivity of our relationship with the God of the universe” (70). He observes that viewing the Song as a collection of love poems as opposed to a drama significantly affects one’s approach to the book. “It turns attention away from the explanation of a story . . . to the explanation of the meaning of words and metaphors and an attempt to bring out the emotional texture
of the poems” (44).

Given the interpretive parameters noted above, Longman engages the reader with the details of each of the twenty-three love poems. Where applicable, he draws comparisons (and contrasts) with the love songs of other ancient Near Eastern literature, without suggesting any kind of direct borrowing of songs between the various cultures. The commentary is easy to read, with many beneficial insights into the text, both English and Hebrew, though the exclusive use of transliteration diminishes its helpfulness. A full complement of indexes and an extensive bibliography are also provided.

Though one may not agree with Longman’s conclusions, the volume provides a wealth of information for the pastor as well as the exegete.


Ultimately, the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (ACCS) will comprise 28 volumes covering both OT and NT. It targets the patristic period of church history (approximately A.D. 95-749). Computer digital research and storage techniques were employed in an innovative fashion to identify the Greek and Latin texts composed by early Christian writers who referred to specific biblical passages. The search went beyond the patristic commentaries on biblical books so that as comprehensive a selection of texts as possible would result. Obviously, only a miniscule amount of the total data could be employed in ACCS. The general editor for the series is Thomas C. Oden, Henry Anson Buttz Professor of Theology at Drew University. ACCS was conceived in the same room where Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible was produced by Drew professor James Strong in the 1880s (xxxiii).

Three goals characterize ACCS: (1) to renew preaching in the classical tradition of Christian exegesis, (2) to encourage lay study of Scripture with input from the early history of the church, and (3) to increase scholarly investigation of patristic biblical interpretation (xi). The intent, therefore, is to provide a valuable resource for laity, pastors, and academics. As a carefully selected collection of the interpretive thinking of early Christian preachers, commentators, and theologians, ACCS “seeks to offer to Christian laity what the Talmud and Midrashim have long offered to Jewish readers” (xvi).

Since only a select number of patristic citations can be published in such a limited series, principles of selection guide the editors in the process. Those principles regulate preferences for “passages that have enduring relevance, penetrating significance, crosscultural applicability and practical applicability” (xxii), as well as for passages that exhibit the power to persuade, need no secondary
explanation, and avoid idiosyncratic interpretations. Preference is also given to
passages from sources previously disregarded. A balanced representation of
geographical regions is sought as well as the inclusion of “the voices of women such
as Macrina, Eudoxia, Egeria, Faltonia Betitia Proba, the Sayings of the Desert
Mothers, and others who report the biblical interpretation of women of the ancient
Christian traditions” (xxiii). Selections are also chosen that will contribute to
effective preaching today.

In addition to a general introduction for the series, each volume includes
an introduction for that particular volume. The special introductions present patristic
views regarding authorship of that portion of Scripture, the significance that portion
had for the early church fathers, and the challenges involved in editing the patristic
materials in preparing that volume. In this volume that included a detailed
explanation of problems involved in the Greek Septuagint translation of Genesis
1–11 (xl-xlvi). Each volume of ACCS includes cumulative chronological lists and
biographical sketches of the church fathers cited in all volumes released to the date
of the volume being consulted. Judicious footnotes provide clarification and
additional references for research. Although the original searches were conducted
in the Latin and Greek sources, dynamic equivalent English translations of the
selected texts have been produced for inclusion in ACCS (xxxii).

Each Scripture pericope is provided with a heading followed by the RSV
translation of that section of verses. However, because the Septuagint was the OT
of choice in the early church, patristic citations represent that ancient version. Thus,
in the production of this volume on Genesis 1–11, it was necessary to note the
variations of RSV (based upon the Hebrew text) from the Greek Septuagint.
Following the annotated translation, a brief overview is provided to summarize the
comments that follow from the patristic sources. The overview is a very handy
means of locating specific citations.

This volume takes readers on an informative journey back into the time of
the early church and allows them to sit at the feet of the church fathers as they wax
elloquent on the early chapters of Genesis. The significance of these chapters for
biblical theology is reinforced by exposure to the patristic comments. Either due to
editorial choices or due to absence of any patristic contributions, certain questions
commonly asked about Genesis 1–11 fail to be mentioned: When did Satan fall?
From where did Cain obtain a wife? Did sacrifice originate when God slew animals
in order to provide skin tunics for Adam and Eve?

From the patristic selections in this volume, the reader will find many gems
of ancient Christian interpretation. Ephrem the Syrian (fl. A.D. 363-373) discussed
the involvement in creation of all three persons of the Trinity (6), indicated that the
grasses and trees when they were created had the appearance of age (15), declared
that the tunics of skin reminded Adam and Eve of their own mortality (98), and
believed that the Flood destroyed all the earth except paradise (141). Chrysostom (fl.
A.D. 386-407) argued that Moses had received the revelation concerning creation
directly from God (3), insisted that the rivers of Eden were literal rivers (58), and
recorded that believers were baptized naked in his day (72). According to Clement
of Alexandria (fl. A.D. 190-215) Adam was the first prophet (69). Irenaeus (fl. A.D. 180-199) identified the “seed of the woman” in Gen 3:15 with Christ (90-91). Origen (fl. A.D. 200-254) taught that Christian martyrs would be shown by Jesus how to “pass through the cherubim and the flaming sword” into paradise (102). Both Jerome (fl. A.D. 375-420) and Augustine (fl. A.D. 387-430) recognized the discrepancies between the Hebrew and the Septuagint in the genealogies of Genesis 5 and sought to resolve them text critically and theologically (121-22).

Andrew Louth, editor of this first OT volume, is one of two Eastern Orthodox contributors to the series. He is professor of patristic and Byzantine studies at Durham University in England. Readers of TMSJ will be interested in knowing that John Sailhamer and Steven McKinion (brother of TMS graduate Randy McKinion) are among the evangelical participants in ACCS (xviii). Every student of Genesis 1-11 will benefit greatly from time spent mining the patristic sources so readily available in this important volume of ACCS. This reviewer awaits the remaining 13 volumes of the OT with eager anticipation.


During his thirty-four years as Professor of Near Eastern Languages and Literature at the University of Michigan, George E. Mendenhall often has been a controversial catalyst for scholarly investigation of the historical setting for the OT. He retired in 1986 and is currently Professor Emeritus. This volume consists of material presented in lectures for popular audiences in the 1980s and 1990s. Its purpose is to “provide a popular audience with a coherent introduction to ancient Israel’s faith and history” (xv).

Mendenhall sets the stage for the rest of the book by examining the nature, features, and developmental stages of religion. Decidedly evolutionary and humanistic in his approach, he identifies five stages in the development of religion (5-6). These stages are employed in the titles of the book’s eight chapters: “The World from Abraham to Moses: Prologue to the Emergence of the Biblical Tradition” (9-41); “Moses and the Exodus: The Formative Period of the Biblical Tradition” (43-72); “The Twelve- Tribe Federation: The Adaptive Period (I)—Yahweh Becomes ‘King’ of Israel” (73-100); “King David and the Transition to Monarchy: The Adaptive Period (II)—The Abdication of Yahweh” (101-24); “The Legacy of King Solomon: The Traditional Period (I)—Yahwism versus Yahwisticism” (125-52); “Josiah Reforms the Imperial Religion: The Traditional Period (II)—The Troubling Legacy of the Monarchy” (153-76); “Destruction and Exile: The Creative Reform of Yahwism” (177-202); and “Jesus and the New Testament Reformation: The Renewal of an Old Faith” (203-31).
In every chapter Mendenhall takes his readers on a tour of biblical history that, on the one hand, represents the Scriptures as containing “numerous inconsistencies, repetitions, and even contradictions” (10). Yet, on the other hand, he finds himself attempting to distance himself from biblical minimalists in his complaint that they go to an extreme in their claim that the Scriptures are fictitious (cf. 44). Such reluctance to follow them fully is revealed in the glossary entry where he states that “minimalist” is often “applied only to the most radical” (259) of those scholars holding that the Bible has minimal historical value. Mendenhall portrays himself as somewhere in the middle (115).

Even though Mendenhall is far from being an evangelical, evangelical readers will find many nuggets of information that will give them a clearer understanding of the historical background of the Bible. Nestled among the cactus spines of anti-supernaturalism, conjectural emendations, mythologizing, and minimalist revision of biblical history are occasional flowers of information like the following:

- Goats were “an extremely efficient ‘factory’ for converting inedible cellulose (such as wilderness stubble) into human food (milk, yogurt, cheese, and meat)” (19).
- Pharaoh Akhenaten was not a monotheist though historians often portray him that way (29).
- “The Exodus narrative simply diverges too much from too many of the well-known conventions of ancient fiction writing” (44) to be classified as fiction.
- A drawing of Jerusalem at the time of David with attendant explanation of its expansion from David to Hezekiah (113).
- In the four centuries between 300 B.C. and A.D. 100 the ancient civilizations of Egypt and Mesopotamia ceased—including languages with 3,000 years of recorded usage (179).

Charts, illustrations, maps, chronological tables, and boxes of illustrative texts and special discussions make the volume eminently readable and delightfully information intensive. Instead of tiny footnotes at the bottom of the page or irritatingly inconvenient endnotes overly distant from the text, this volume’s “footnotes” are entered in very readable type in the left-hand margin of the page. Every chapter commences with suggested readings in the Bible, listed by topic, book, chapter, and verses. At the conclusion of Chapter One, “A Research Plan for Further Study” and “Suggestions for Further Reading” are provided. Each subsequent chapter ends with the latter. Entries in Anchor Bible Dictionary (Doubleday, 1992) and Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible (Abingdon, 1962) dominate the suggested readings.

Ancient Israel’s Faith and History can be appreciated to some extent by the discerning reader for its occasional treasures and insights. For those who are ungrounded in the Word and true biblical faith, the volume is littered with land mines of historical and biblical revisionism. Its format and arrangement, though reader friendly and pedagogically sound, only serves to advance Mendenhall’s belief that the biblical record is often implausible (52, 85), garbled (71), fictitious (92,

Bruce Metzger has been associated with Bible translation for over fifty years. The George Collard Professor of New Testament Language and Literature Emeritus at Princeton Theological Seminary has participated in three major Bible translation projects and was also chairman of the New Revised Standard Version translation committee. Furthermore, due to his writings on textual criticism and the canon of the NT, he has established a reputation for being one of the foremost NT scholars of the twentieth century. No one is more eminently qualified academically and by personal experience to write a general history of how the Bible has been translated from Hebrew and Greek into other languages.

Metzger does not limit his treatment to the translation of the Bible into English. He also discusses translation of the Scriptures into other ancient languages. His work is in two sections. “Part 1: Ancient Versions” (13-54) discusses two ancient translations made for Jews—the Septuagint and the Targum—as well as eleven made for Christians—Syrac, Latin, Coptic, Gothic, Armenian, Georgian, Ethiopic, Arabic, Sogdian, Old Slavonic, and Nubian. Metzger is also careful to explain that almost every one of these had more than one version as well.

“Part 2: English Versions” (55-190) presents the story of nearly fifty translations, revisions, and paraphrases of the Scriptures done in England and America. Metzger acknowledges the obvious fact that the Bible has been translated in modern times into many more languages than English. “By the opening of the year 2000, the entire Bible had been made available in 371 languages and dialects, and portions of the Bible in 1,862 languages and dialects” (9).

The saga of the attempts to render the Bible in English, however, is the main thrust of the book. Some Bible students reared on the King James Version will be surprised to learn that eleven English versions appeared before 1611 when that “Authorized Version” became available. Metzger also discusses four little-known translations that were published between the King James Version and the British Revised Version of 1876.

This reviewer was fascinated by his account of “Julia E. Smith’s Bible” printed in 1876 (92-98). Miss Smith, unlike most of the young ladies of her day, was educated in classical Greek and Latin. When she became convinced that a “literal” translation was needed (motivated by her involvement with the Millerite “Adventist” movement), she taught herself Hebrew and began to work. She labored for eight years and “translated the Bible five times, twice from the Greek (LXX and NT), twice from the Hebrew and once from the Vulgate” (95). Although only one thousand copies of her Bible were printed, these did enable Smith and her sister to
pay their delinquent tax bills! The inclusion of personal stories like these about the translators as they labored makes Metzger’s volume immensely interesting as well as informative.

The *English Standard Version* (2001) and the *NET Bible* (2001) were published after Metzger completed his manuscript and discussions of them are not included in this volume. This reviewer was disappointed, however, to notice the omission of any reference to the *New Living Translation* (1997), a major revision of the paraphrased *Living Bible*, which Metzger did describe on pages 79-81. Perhaps Metzger will be granted the time to publish a second version of this fine work that will take into account these three and other versions that will inevitably appear, such as the Southern Baptist related *Holman Christian Standard Bible*, to be published in 2004.

English Bible translations abound and with them comes the subsequent confusion of how to sort out all of them. Here then is a guide that describes them all (almost) and also explains the translation theory behind each one. It is also helpful for us today to realize that Bible translation is an enterprise that has been carried on for over two thousand years. Translators today stand on some strong shoulders.

I heartily commend this volume to pastors, scholars and students of the Word.


If Greek is going to be a useful tool for interpreting the NT, then the exegete must devote himself to the task of learning the vocabulary of the Greek NT. The use of as many of the senses as possible is required for this task. A sense that is often neglected, but is extremely valuable when learning Greek vocabulary, is hearing. Jonathan Pennington, a NT teaching fellow at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, has provided an excellent resource to aid the student in building a strong, working vocabulary of the NT. By means of two audio CDs and a small booklet, a person is able to work on, by ear as well as through the eyes, the vocabulary of Koine Greek.

All the words, even proper nouns, that occur in the Greek NT ten times or more are included in *New Testament Greek Vocabulary*. The words are divided into categories based on frequency and are then alphabetized within each list. Pennington first pronounces the lexical form of the word. Nouns are given in their nominative and genitive form, followed by the article. The first principal part of verbs is given. All three genders of the nominative form of adjectives are stated. After the lexical form is given, Pennington pauses a few moments so that the hearer can make an attempt at the correct definition of the word which has just been
pronounced. The audible entry concludes with the statement of the correct gloss. The source of the glosses is not clear. There are enough differences with Bruce Metzger’s *Lexical Aids for Students of New Testament Greek* to reject it as the source. The only explanation that was given in the introductory booklet is that the glosses are “first-try” and generally give a good working definition.

Disc 1 contains 15 vocabulary lists. It begins with those words that occur 450 times or more, and concludes with words that occur 24 to 25 times. The second disc has 11 lists and resumes with words that occur 22 to 23 times and ends with words that occur 10 times. One of the nice features of these lists being on CD is that a person who wishes to learn a particular frequency list can select that track via the CD player. It would have been nice if the booklet that contains the entire frequency list of words with their glosses actually identified the disc and track for each list. Another attractive feature is the introduction of each track by instrumental music.

Pennington is to be applauded for utilizing recent technology to help the learning of NT Greek vocabulary. The student who is serious about mastering Greek vocabulary now has another tool to aid in this task. He or she can reinforce learning through the valuable sense of hearing and that learning can take place while working at home, while driving, or while jogging. Furthermore, these CDs will assist the Greek student in the proper pronunciation of Greek words. I highly recommend *New Testament Greek Vocabulary* to all students of Greek. The individuals who will benefit the most are students of intermediate Greek. It is hoped that the success of these audio CDs will result in CDs being produced for all popular beginning Greek grammar books, as well as vocabulary books, particularly *Lexical Aids for Students of New Testament Greek*.


It is generally an honor to an exceptional life or significant contributions that an individual will earn an entry in an encyclopedia or reference work. Few earn enough respect to have a whole encyclopedia devoted to them. C. S. Lewis (1898-1963), however, is certainly worthy of such an endeavor, his written works in the areas of literary criticism, fiction, theology, and ethics constitute one of the most diverse and penetrating bodies of work of the twentieth century.

This work is eminently readable and the format is clear. There is an excellent “Brief Biography” (9-65) written by John Bremer. The appendices include additional resources on Lewis, a timeline of his life, a listing of his article titles and a listing of the contributors. The articles themselves cover everything about Lewis, including his works, associates, friends, and thoughts on various literary, theological, and ethical issues. The volumes are well illustrated and there are several useful charts. Among those is a chart listing his famous radio addresses on “Mere
Christianity” on the BBC during World War II.

Interest in Lewis, although always at a high level, has been seemingly re-energized in recent years. His most popular works, The Chronicles of Narnia (1948-54), The Screwtape Letters (1941), Mere Christianity (1941), Miracles (1947), among others, have remained in print since their original publications. The recent success of the Harry Potter book series and movie as well as the beginning of the theatrical release of J. R. R. Tolkien’s Lord of the Rings Trilogy, has brought renewed interest in Lewis. Those who are working through the issues regarding the place of such fiction in the Christian life will be well served by referencing this work and Lewis’ thoughts on these matters.

Perhaps the most important article to read in this work is that on “Theology.” Here Lewis is aptly described by the author:

C. S. Lewis was not a professional theologian, nor was he a ‘lay theologian’ as some have claimed. He wrote no books of theology nor has he left us a system of theological thought. His religious works such as The Problem of Pain, Miracles, and Mere Christianity were intended to evangelize and to instruct in the basics of the common faith (orthodoxy) held by all Christians (399).

Lewis is almost impossible to classify theologically. His beliefs on matters such as eternal punishment, purgatory, inspiration, and even the singularity of Christ and the gospel in terms of saving faith were certainly not conservative. His theological conclusions were driven more by Platonic philosophy and the church fathers than by an examination of the text. He remains popular in conservative circles mainly on the strength of two works, Mere Christianity and Miracles. However, Lewis is also a popular source of quotable material for universalists and proponents of Openness Theology.

For those who are interested in Lewis, this work serves as a great introduction to his writing and thoughts. The biography alone is worth the price of the work. This volume is highly recommended.


Twenty years after the second edition came into print, Richard Soulen (a NT scholar) has been joined by his son (a systematic theologian) to produce the third (revised and expanded) edition of this handbook of terms, ideologies, and movements in the realm of biblical criticism. Although the third edition does represent a significant number of changes, the book is only 10 pages longer than the second edition. The primary structural change in the third edition of this book was
the deletion of an appendix dealing with a guide for writing an exegesis paper and
the addition of a diagram of biblical criticism at the very end of the volume. Among
other things, this chart categorizes critical methodologies by asking three questions:
Whence? (the world behind the text), What/What About? (the world of the text), and
Whither? (the world in front of the text). The chart provides a helpful overview of
how a critical scholar views the various interpretive methodologies impacting the
interpretive process.

After a brief introduction, the major body of the volume (211 pages)
provides a discussion of numerous key terms, critical methodologies, significant
individuals in biblical studies, and various points in interpretive debate. The entries
appear alphabetically and conclude with a few cross-reference hints and sometimes
a brief bibliography. The book concludes with abbreviations that are commonly
used in biblical studies (those used in textual criticism and abbreviations of a
selection of works commonly cited in biblical/theological studies).

The entries from the “h” part of the volume will serve as an example of the
changes made by this edition. The present volume added entries dealing with
“Hebrew Bible,” “Hillel,” and “Hittite.” It divides the essay on “Hermeneutics” into
three entries (the total of these three entries exceeds the length of the one entry in the
second edition). At least 10 of the entries in this part of the volume were expanded
significantly.

A book like this offers great help to anyone trying to navigate through the
reading of various biblical and theological reference tools by giving a concise
explanation of a number of relevant terms and methodologies. To be sure, it will not
treat all the terms or methodologies that one wished it did. However, this reviewer
has turned to it on numerous occasions to receive a thumbnail sketch of a certain key
term, individual, or critical approach. A reader of this volume must also know that
these writers come from a non-conservative perspective, a bias that will come
through in some of the entries.

of Old Testament.

This Hebrew reference tool is an updated version of a two-volume edition
published by Moody Press (vol. 1 in 1986 and vol. 2 in 1990). The purpose of the
present work is to provide a verse-by-verse parsing aid for every verb in the OT.

This volume lists every verb form in order of occurrence in the OT
according to chapter and verse. Verbs that occur twice in a verse are parsed twice.
This tool is based on the Hebrew text in the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia.*

Each verb has a potential of ten categories of information provided by a
given entry. The example below serves as a sample entry (the third verb in 1 Sam
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ChVs</th>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Stem</th>
<th>Tnse</th>
<th>PGN</th>
<th>Root</th>
<th>Sfx</th>
<th>BDB</th>
<th>KB</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10:3</td>
<td>qal</td>
<td>wcp</td>
<td>3cp</td>
<td>בָּשָׁלָֽם</td>
<td>2ms</td>
<td>592</td>
<td>619</td>
<td>find</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **ChVs** - refers to the chapter and verse of the verb under discussion.
- **Form** - provides the consonants and vowels of the verb form (without any accentuation). If a *Ketiv-Qere* variant occurs in the marginal notations, both forms are parsed. The *Ketiv* form is immediately preceded by a “k” and the *Qere* form has a “q” right in front of it.
- **Stem** - presents the verb stem (e.g., Qal, Niphal, Piel, etc.)
- **Tnse** - without intending to comment on the ongoing discussion concerning the Hebrew verbal system (whether it is tense-oriented, aspectual, or some combination of the two), this column designates the verb form as a perfect, imperfect, imperative, infinitive construct, infinitive absolute, or participle. In addition to these major designations, this volume also makes use of four other verbal labels: waw consecutive + imperfect (*wci*), waw consecutive + perfect (*wcp*), jussive (*jus*), and cohortative (*coh*).
- **PGN** - provides the person, gender, and number of the verb form
- **Root** - gives the tri-consonantal Hebrew root for the verb form
- **Sfx** - if appropriate, this column delineates the person, gender, and number of the noun suffix
- **BDB** - provides the page number in BDB where its discussion of this verb begins.
- **KB** - provides the page number in Koehler and Baumgartner’s, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament (HALOT)*, where its discussion of this verb begins.
- **Meaning** - this final column provides a basic gloss/mean ing for the verbal root (the most common meaning for that verbal root in the stem indicated).

This volume has five features that the earlier edition did not possess. First of all, it provides the page number where a given verb finds treatment in Koehler and Baumgartner’s *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (since the fifth volume of this work was not available at the time this parsing guide went to print, page numbers where Aramaic words find treatment in HALOT will be included in a future revision of the present work). Second, it provides the vowel pointing for each verbal form. Third, it includes a number of corrections that came to the attention of its editors since the publication of the original edition. Fourth, being in one volume rather than two allows the Hebrew student to take fewer trips back to the bookshelf. Finally, as a paperback edition it is more affordable than the hardback two-volume edition published by Moody Press.

This parsing guide will provide great assistance to the pastor seeking to find the parsing of a specific verb in the midst of his exegesis of an OT passage. The book is clearly laid out and easy to use. Its primary disadvantage is that its major competitor, John Owens’ *Analytical Key to the Old Testament* (Baker) provides
some grammatical information for all verbal and non-verbal items in each verse in
the Hebrew OT.

224 pp. $12.99 (paper). Reviewed by William D. Barrick, Professor of Old
Testament.

In 1989 I read Stephen Hawking’s A Brief History of Time (Bantam, 1988). It was a very informative and enjoyable adventure into the realm of physical science. As a result, I also read Craig Penrose’s The Emperor’s New Mind (Oxford University, 1990). I came away from the two books with an increased wonder at God’s creation and the delicate balance and intricate symmetry of the universe, the earth, and life. Therefore, I read Wilkinson’s volume with the anticipation that my awe of the Creator would be increased. I was not disappointed.

Dr. David Wilkinson is both minister and scientist. He has a Ph.D. in Theoretical Astrophysics, is a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society, and is a Methodist minister and Fellow in Apologetics at St. John’s College, Durham, U.K. The current volume is an expansion and revision of God, the Big Bang and Stephen Hawking (Monarch, 1993). In it Wilkinson interacts with many of the scientific and theological responses to Hawking since the publication of A Brief History of Time.

Beginning with a brief biographical sketch of Stephen Hawking, Wilkinson breaches the subject of God’s role in the origin of the universe. Even Carl Sagan had to admit that A Brief History of Time demonstrated that Hawking himself viewed the “God question” as a significant issue (26). God, Time and Stephen Hawking is divided into two parts: a history of scientific thinking concerning the universe’s origin (Chapters 2–6) and the contribution and interaction of the Christian concept of God with scientific thinking (Chapters 7–12). Occasional illustrations visualize significant concepts.

With the launching of the Hubble Space Telescope (HST) in 1991, astrophysical research gained a powerful tool. Wilkinson provides the reader with an engaging description of HST’s influence upon the scientific world’s search for the origin of the universe (29-44). He follows that with a brief history of the “Big Bang” theory that superseded the steady state model of the universe (45-59). Of course, the heart of the discussion of origins focuses on the nature of the proofs that science can offer in support of the Big Bang. So the author gives the reader a guided tour of quantum theory, the uncertainty principle, and chaos theory (63-71). In addition, the nature and methods of scientific investigation are evaluated. Several views of science are defined and discussed, including naïve realism, positivism, instrumentalism, idealism, and critical realism (73-76). Although he does not specifically mention neothemitism, Wilkinson does relate the concepts of quantum theory and uncertainty to theological considerations. He writes that man’s free will is related to the area of the uncertainty principle (67). As for God, “Some will say
that this unpredictable nature of certain chaotic systems gives an ‘openness’ to the world and this is where free will and the actions of God are located” (70).

“A Singular Problem or Two with the Big Bang?” (79-98) is a fascinating discussion of various problems and challenges to the Big Bang theory. The biggest problem is the matter of equilibrium or a balanced result that would be conducive to the existence of carbon-based life. This would require a balance that is so delicate that it must be within “1 part in 10^60 (1 followed by sixty zeros!). In Paul Davies’ words, that is the same accuracy as shooting at a target 1 centimetre square on the other side of the universe—and hitting it!” (90-92). Such subtle balances permeate the forces of the universe and account for the increasing attention to design and the God question in the last two decades of the twentieth century (135).

Hawking’s goal is to discover a unification theory for all the laws of physics. However, as Wilkinson points out, such a theory of everything still fails to provide viable answers for all the questions. Hawking’s book does not answer all the questions. “If this is true in the area of science, it is even more important in the area of God” (108). One such question has to do with the nature of time (109-21). Once more, Wilkinson moves into the realm of “openness” in regard to the inherent unknown involved in the future (119). In spite of this brief excursion into openness, he decides that the biblical concept of time is basically linear and that God transcends time.

How do we know that God exists? One of the arguments often posed is the cosmological argument for God’s existence. Hawking’s unification theory accomplishes two things: (1) it makes the cosmological argument irrelevant in any attempt to convince a physicist of God’s existence and (2) it does not prove that God does not exist (123-33). Wilkinson seems to favor a complementarian relationship between science and theology. Science handles the “How?” questions, while theology takes care of the “Why?” questions (130-32).

The argument from design is equally unsatisfactory since it does not prove the existence of a singular Christian God of goodness, love, and grace (141). The anthropic balances in the universe, however, do demonstrate that science is pressed to give an adequate explanation (143). Wilkinson also stresses the role of wonder and awe that the anthropic balances and the inherent symmetry and beauty of nature produce in the minds of scientists and theologians alike.

Observation of supernovae in 1998 led to the announcement that the post-Big Bang universe is not slowing down its expansion, it is speeding up (153). Although the scientific consequences are yet unclear and the evidence far from proven, Wilkinson claims that “the theological consequences are clear” (155). A rapidly expanding universe directs our attention naturally to a future of futility and death. We might very well be living in an increasingly hostile universe. If the state of the universe is less anthropic-oriented than previously thought, could it be that extra-terrestrial intelligences of an imperfect nature were the creators of our universe (160-63, 166-67)? “The evidence for the existence of God is much stronger than that for superior beings in another universe” (167), Wilkinson concludes.

The final chapter of the volume (169-89) is a refreshing focus on divine
revelation as the means of true knowledge about the universe. Human intelligence cannot comprehend the mind of God, so God has initiated the contact and revealed His sovereign will. From Scripture the Christian can be certain that “God is the sole creator of the universe” (175-77), “God is the source of the order in the universe” (177-82), “God puts relationship at the heart of the universe” (182-85), and “God is meant to be worshipped” (185-86). All four of these biblical truths come to full fruition in the person of Jesus Christ (186-89). Jesus Himself is the supreme evidence for the existence of God and His creation of the universe.

Wilkinson takes the position that there should not be a conflict between true science and true Christian faith. He explains that the ultimate questions raised in scientific investigation are often of a nature answerable by biblical faith. Without apology he stands firmly against deism and staunchly defends Christian theism. The only seeming failure is his apparent acquiescence to an ancient universe requiring some 12 billion years to reach its current state. In an appendix (“A ‘Brief History’ of Genesis,” 195-205) he lays out in greater detail the reasons why he believes that a literary analysis of Genesis 1 results in a rejection of 7-day creationism, the gap theory, the day-age theory, and the revelatory-days theory. The book closes with a helpful annotated bibliography (207-13), end notes (214-18), and an index (219-24).