DISCERNING SYNOPTIC GOSPEL ORIGINS: 
AN INDUCTIVE APPROACH 
(Part One of Two Parts*)

Robert L. Thomas 
Professor of New Testament 

The claim of some NT scholars that verbal agreements in the Synoptic Gospels prove literary interdependence among them opens a challenge to investigate those Gospels thoroughly to check the claim’s validity. An inductive investigation of fifty-eight triple-tradition sections in the Burton and Goodspeed Harmony of the Gospels finds that an average of only 16% of the words in the sections are identical. Since a much higher percentage of identical words is necessary to demonstrate literary interdependence, the inductive study favors the position of literary independence. Several observations illustrate how the memories of Apostles and other eyewitnesses of Jesus’ life and ministry are sufficient to verify the independence explanation of Gospel origins. Another insight gained from an inductive study of triple-tradition sections comes from the agreements of two Gospels against a third. Agreements of two Synoptic Gospels against a third in all combinations furnishes additional evidence of the failure of literary interdependence to explain Gospel origins. If any two Gospels depended on a third, their agreement with each other against the alleged source Gospel is inexplicable. If, however, the three writers under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit worked independently of each other, the random way in which their Gospels coincide with and differ from each other is exactly what would be expected.

* * * * *

The second definition of “inductive” is “of, or proceeding from methods of, logical induction.” The sixth definition of the same word is “Logic reasoning from

---


particular facts or individual cases to a general conclusion; also, a conclusion reached by such reasoning: distinguished from DEDUCTION.\(^2\) This study purposes to compare texts of the Synoptic Gospels and to reason from particular facts, not assumptions, with the goal of gleaning indications of whether the authors wrote independently of one another or relied in a literary way on the writings of each other.

Various scholars have offered suggestions that the texts of these Gospels are so close to each other that literary interdependence is an inescapable conclusion. A number of years ago, George Ladd compared such interdependence to the modern practice of copying from the work of another without giving credit to the original author, contending that such a practice was common and acceptable in the early days of Christianity.\(^3\) On the basis of Ladd’s assumption, an inductive investigation of the Gospels would expect to find numerous identical words in parallel accounts of the same events in the Synoptic Gospels.

Osborne and Williams speak of a practice similar to what Ladd refers to when they view the author of Matthew as partly author and partly scribe in the composition of his Gospel. While copying from the Gospel of Mark as a scribe, he functioned much the same way as a manuscript copyist during the early centuries of the Christian era. They and others advocate the application of text-critical principles to answer the question of which Gospel was the earliest.\(^4\) Such a procedure carries the clear indication that literary interdependence entails verbal agreements in mutual copying that transpired among the Gospel writers. This too would lead to the expectation of many identical words in parallel sections of the three Synoptic Gospels.

Stein proposes a system of underlining in various colors to portray many verbal agreements among the Synoptic Gospels, using broken and unbroken lines according to the degree of exactness.\(^5\) He observes, “[T]here is an obvious agreement in the wording of the individual accounts, or ‘pericopes,’ that these

\(^{2}\)Ibid.

\(^{3}\)George Eldon Ladd, *The New Testament and Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967) 116. Ladd wrote, “One very common ancient literary practice was the free use of existing works…. It might be replied that a different standard of ‘literary honesty’ is required of the Word of God, the Scripture inspired by the Spirit of truth. But this once again reflects the modern fear of plagiarism, and does not accept the obvious historical milieu in which the Word of God was given to men” (ibid., 116-17).

\(^{4}\)Grant R. Osborne and Matthew C. Williams, “The Case for the Markan Priority View of Gospel Origins: The Two-Four-Source View,” in *Three Views on the Origins of the Synoptic Problem*, ed. Robert L. Thomas (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002) 48-52. In part, they write, “Thus, the following examination applies text-critical principles to the Gospel texts to determine priority…. It is important to reiterate that this analysis of the Matthew-Mark texts follows the same text-critical criteria that were used to determine the Gospel texts” (ibid., 48, 52).

Gospels have in common.\textsuperscript{6} On the basis of the comparison of three pericopes, he finds numerous instances of exact agreements in order and wording between two and often all three of the Synoptic Gospels.\textsuperscript{7} We will return to some of Professor Stein’s illustrative passages shortly, but at this point we simply note that literary inter dependence implies exact verbal agreements in the mind of this scholar.

Bock finds “pervasive similarities among the passages” that are too great to be attributed “merely to mutual eyewitness reminiscence or common oral tradition” and “details of wording and setting” that do not look like works produced independently.\textsuperscript{8} “Details of wording” would once again demonstrate that literary interdependence entails exact verbal agreements among the sources among which such interdependence prevails.

Since none of the above sources provides an extensive list to delineate these agreements among the Synoptic Gospels, the challenge remains open to furnish such a list. The present inductive study of three Gospels furnishes such a list in the Synoptic triple-tradition sections. By isolating identical forms of the same words, it tests the probability of literary interdependence and literary independence as explanations of their origins.

The comparisons limit themselves to identical forms of the same words for several reasons. First, the recognition that all conclusions about Gospel origins based on internal grounds are subjective in nature. Considering agreements that are only near agreements opens the door for personal assumptions to intervene even more in such a study as this. Doing everything possible to obtain objectivity should always be the goal in inductive study. Limiting the comparisons to identical forms of the same words is one way of achieving greater objectivity.

Second, in dealing with issues of copying someone else’s work, one must take every precaution not to attribute unfairly to anyone the copying of another’s work. If agreements with a lesser degree of exactness were to be included in the comparisons, a scholar has too much latitude that permits him to include imagined agreements to support his own bias toward a preconceived conclusion about origins.

Third, if a Gospel writer engaged in copying another Gospel, frequent identical forms would be the expectation. Only under an assumption that Gospel writers conceived of themselves as theological editors or redactors could one expect

\textsuperscript{6}Ibid., 29.

\textsuperscript{7}Ibid., 33-34.

\textsuperscript{8}Darrell L. Bock, \textit{Studying the Historical Jesus: A Guide to Sources and Methods} (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002) 172. Bock’s complete statement reads, “However, pervasive similarities among the passages seem to be too great to be attributed merely to mutual eyewitness reminiscence, common oral tradition, coincidental agreement of diverse traditions, or a shared use of an \textit{Ur}-Gospel (now lost) in Aramaic or Hebrew. It is here that issues tied to wording and clusters of syntactical order are important. Not only is the event recalled but the details of wording and setting are such that it does not look like something people independently telling the same story would happen to hit upon together (cf. Matt. 3:7-10 = Luke 3:7-9; Matt. 14:3-4 = Mark 6:17-17; Matt. 11:2-19 = Luke 7:18-35; Matt. 9:14-17 = Mark 2:18-22 = Luke 5:33-39; Matt. 11:10-24 = Luke 10-12-15; Matt. 11:25-27 = Luke 10:21-22)” (ibid.).
otherwise. Such an assumption as that, however, violates the principles of an inductive investigation. Inductivism necessitates limiting the role of a copyist to copying. It does not attribute to a copyist the motivations and techniques of a theological editor or redactor. He sought simply to copy his exemplar accurately as is evidenced in the Gospel writers’ much more precise citations of the OT in their writings.

With the above considerations in mind, we have constructed “Triple-Tradition Comparisons” for the fifty-eight triple-tradition sections found in A Harmony of the Synoptic Gospels in Greek by Earnest de Witt Burton and Edgar Johnson Goodspeed. Any one may view these Comparisons on the Internet at the following address:

<http://www.tms.edu/gospelcomp.asp>.

The remainder of this essay will consist of observations based on the Comparisons. Chart #1 at the end of the article (pages 17-18) identifies the fifty-eight triple-tradition sections in the Burton-Goodspeed Harmony. Chart #2, entitled “Summary of Triple-tradition Comparisons” and found at the end of this article (pages 19-20), furnishes statistical data based on the “Triple-tradition Comparisons” found at the above Internet address. The following comments will fall into two categories: “Percentage of Identical Words” and “Agreements of Two Gospels against a Third.”

Percentage of Identical Words

A compilation of the words involved in identical relationships within each section of the Harmony is enlightening. Information found in columns 1-4 of Chart #2 contains a numerical summary of this information, which can be confirmed at the Website given above. Exhibits #1 and #2 at the end of this essay (pages 21-24 and

---

9 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947). We have limited this study to the triple-tradition sections because these make up the majority of the Synoptic Gospel overlaps that lend themselves to comparisons. Burton and Goodspeed have only twenty-nine double tradition sections. Using the Burton-Goodspeed linear arrangements, the “Comparisons” have substituted the UBS’ text for that in the Harmony, though variations in readings between the two texts are rare. Secondary parallels have been excluded from the study because early copyists had no “cut and paste” opportunity as do users of modern electronic devices.

10 “Downloading of the Adobe Acrobat Reader and the obtaining of a Koine Greek font will probably be necessary to read the “Comparisons.”

11 In tabulations so voluminous as those found on the Internet, minor errors are inevitable. In fact, minor errors has been detected since placing the data on the Website. Corrections for these errors have been incorporated into Chart #2, even though they have not yet been corrected on the Website. None of the corrections has caused substantial difference in the statistical data. It is anticipated that the same will be true for any future corrections that need to be made.
Discerning Synoptic Gospel Origins: An Inductive Approach

25-28, respectively) furnish illustrations of how the information was derived. It supplies the texts of §78 and §144 of the Harmony, typical examples of the fifty-eight sections, because a totaling of identical words in all the sections divided by the total words in all the sections (column 2) yields an average percentage of 16%.\(^{12}\) §78 includes 17% of identical words and §144 has 15% of identical words. Through the underlined words, these sections provide a visual impression that constitutes 16% of identical words in a single section.

Though the information on the Website and Chart #2 provide opportunity for countless observations, this article’s scope will allow dealing with only a few.

**Observation #1**

Sixteen is the approximate percentage of identical words in §78 and §144, making these sections typical of all the triple-tradition sections. In §78 (see Exhibit #1), a section of approximately 600 words, 102 words are part of identical relationships, resulting in a percentage of 17%. Most of the “identicals” come in the descriptions of Jesus’ taking and blessing the bread (Matt 14:19 = Mark 6:41 = Luke 9:16) and the crowd’s eating of the bread (Matt 14:20 = Mark 6:42 = Luke 9:17). As descriptions of the miracle were repeated time after time, verbatim reports probably became indelibly impressed on the memories of the Twelve and other witnesses of the miracle. If such verbatim sections were eliminated from the calculation, the 17% figure falls to 7%. Nevertheless, the 17% figure has been retained for purposes of calculation.

Comparable situations of mass recollection in modern times illustrate how verbatim utterances may be recorded in the minds of many. “I have a dream”; “Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country”; “Give me liberty or give me death”; “It ain’t over till its over.” Countless expressions such as these have embedded themselves in the minds of multitudes in modern times. To a lesser degree, the same kind of mental records would be expected in accounts of Jesus’ actions at critical moments such as this in answering the question, “Did you see how He responded to the need of that hour?” “He took the five loaves and the two fish, looked up to heaven, and blessed.” Greater reason exists to expect that such occurred with accounts of the Lord’s words and deeds as so often happens in today’s world.

In §144 (see Exhibit #2), a section of approximately 650 words, 96 of the words are involved in identical relationships. That yields a figure of 15% of the total in the Comparisons. Of the 15%, notice that 9 of the words are proper names (Matt 21:1 = Mark 11:1 = Luke 19:29), which could easily be explained through independent accounts of the Triumphal Entry. Also, since eighteen of the words are citations of the OT passage Psa 118:26 (Matt 21:9 = Mark 11:9 = Luke 19:38), other agreements are easily accounted for through independent reporting of the incident.

---

\(^{12}\)Shaded §161 (part) has been excluded from this calculation for reasons explained by Observation #2 below.
Elimination of these agreements brings the percentage of “identicals” in this passage down to 11%. Yet for calculation purposes, the percentage figure for §144 remains 15%.

Observation #2

One of the highest percentages in column 4 is 44%. The shaded row beginning “161 (part)” registers that figure. We included this row in Chart #2 because one source included Matt 24:4-8 = Mark 13:5-8 = Luke 21:8-11 as an exhibit to prove literary interdependence.13 The reason this figure is so high is that the verses chosen do not comprise a whole pericope, but apparently, a subsection of the pericope has been selected to obtain a higher percentage figure. If the whole pericope is included—i.e., Matt 24:3-14 = Mark 13:3-13 = Luke 21:7-19—the percentage figure for §161 as a whole drops to 20%, less than half the amount of an excerpt taken from within the section. Hence, “161 (part)” has been excluded from the calculation of the percentage of identical words.

Observation #3

Another section with 44% of identicals is §155, a section dealing with Jesus’ question about the Son of David. The citation of Ps 110:1 in all three Gospels accounts for 57 of the 84 identicals in this section. Further, the threefold use of the name Δαυίδ (David, “David”) explains 9 more of the identicals. That leaves only 18 out of 84 identicals or 17% of the 106 remaining words in the section that are identical. That figure is substantially less than the 44% given in Chart #2, but the full 84 identicals were used in calculating the average number of identicals for all 58 sections.

Observation #4

Another section with 44% identicals is §148, a section in which Jesus’ authority is challenged. This was the case of a classic confrontation of Jesus by the chief priests, scribes, and elders on Tuesday of Passion Week. The section consists of approximately 370 words, with 162 of them involved in identical relationships. Of the 162 identicals, 72 identicals involve the words of the priests, scribes, and elders, and 54 identicals involve the words of Jesus. This confrontation was closely monitored by the people Jesus was teaching in the temple (cf. Luke 20:1), and was undoubtedly retold from memory repeatedly afterward. Such accounts for the identicals occurring on both sides of the controversy. Without these 126 (72 + 54) identicals, the percentage of identical words in this section drops from 44% to 15% (36 ÷ 244). Nevertheless, the 44% figure and the 162 identicals it represents have been retained in the calculations.

---

13 Stein, Studying the Synoptic Gospels 33.
Observations #5

Section 87 is one with 40% of its words involved in identical relationships, a section in which Jesus foretells His death for the first time. This was the occasion of His teaching at Caesarea-Philippi shortly after Peter’s Great Confession (Matt 16:13-20 = Mark 8:27-30 = Luke 9:22-27). All the identical words of this section are the words of Jesus, but interestingly, among all the identicals appear wording that is not common to all three Synoptics. If copying were the explanation for the identicals, why would the differences in wording creep in alongside them? The eyewitnesses clearly paid closest attention to the words of Jesus, even to the point of committing many of them to memory on this significant occasion, when Jesus called them to undistracted discipleship.\(^{14}\) In calculating the overall average, the higher figure of 40% has been retained.

Observation #6

Another triple-tradition section cited to prove literary interdependence is §30 (Matt 9:14-17; Mark 2:18-22; Luke 5:33-39).\(^{15}\) Thirty-three percent of the words in this section of about 385 words involve identical relationships with other words in the section. Again, most of the identicals come from the lips of Jesus, specifically, 117 of the 126 words that are identical with words quoted in other Gospels. Without those 117, the percentage figure drops from 33% to 3%. In the overall calculations of an average of identical words, however, the 33% figure has been retained.

Observation #7

Another section cited as proving literary interdependence is §136, Jesus’ blessing of the little children (Matt 19:13-15 = Mark 10:13-16 = Luke 18:15-17).\(^{16}\) The percentage of identical words in this section is 36%. Of the 154 words in this section, 54 involve identical words. Of the 54 agreements, 36 are accounted for through words spoken by Jesus. Eliminating those 36 reduces the percentage figure from 36% to 18%. Again, as with other overall calculations, the higher figure of 36% has been retained.

Observation #8

Section 153 is another one cited to support the theory of literary interdependence.

---

\(^{14}\) An assumption that Jesus spoke either mostly in Aramaic or mostly in Greek is impossible to prove. That most of what we have from His lips is in Greek strengthens the strong probability that, for the most part, He used Greek. This would have been especially true in Caesarea-Philippi where §87 took place. If instances of identical wording like this resulted from literary interdependence, why did such identical wording disappear outside quotations from Jesus’ lips?

\(^{15}\) Bock, *Studying the Historical Jesus* 172.

\(^{16}\) Stein, *Studying the Synoptic Gospels* 30; Osborne and Williams, “The Case for the Markan Priority View” 26.
A section with approximately 534 words, this is the account of the question from the Sadducees about the resurrection. With its 192 matches, identical words amount to 36% of this section. Taking into account that the writers had OT quotations to consult in the section, the percentage of agreements reduces to 26%. In addition, taking into account the words of Jesus reduces the percentage even further to 24%. Most of the other agreements come from the questions posed to Jesus by His Sadducean opponents. The 36% figure, however, has been retained in these overall calculations.

Observation #9
Section 17, dealing with the ministry of John the Baptist, lies at an extreme because of the infrequency of identical words, only 10%. Of these 78 identicals out of approximately 790 words, all are either the words of John the Baptist or a quotation of Isa 40:3. With this taken into account, the percentage falls to zero. Yet the 10% figure has been retained in overall calculations.

Observation #10
Commenting on the introductions to the three passages comprising §153, Osborne and Williams count 14 words in Matthew, 14 words in Mark, and 13 words in Luke. By comparing similarities between Matthew and Mark (7 identical words and 3 words of the same root but a different form), Matthew and Luke (6 identical words and 3 words of the same root but a different form), and Mark and Luke (5 identical words and 4 words of the same root but a different form), they marvel at the astronomical odds against authors who wrote independently and had “identical wording.” Yet their theory of verbatim copying as practiced by manuscript copyists would lead to far more identical words in all three Gospels rather than in pairings of two Gospels at a time. In those introductions only 15 out of the total of 41 words are involved in identical relationships, in other words, 36% of the introductions. That is a lower percentage of identical words than literary interdependence would produce.

Summary Observation
The figure of 16% for identical words in all the triple-tradition sections is an absolute maximum after considering all the factors that could work to reduce that percentage. The question is, What professor would accuse his student of copying someone else’s work if 16% of his words, scattered among words not identical, were identical with those of another student in a paper he submitted? Or what court would indict an author for appropriating someone else’s work if 16% of his words,

---

1Stein, _Studying the Synoptic Gospels_ 31-32; Osborne and Williams, “The Case for the Markan Priority View” 26-28.

2Osborne and Williams, “The Case for the Markan Priority View” 28-29.
Advocates of literary interdependence show their discomfort with the overwhelmingly large number of disagreements in comparison to agreements by such proposals as that of Osborne and Williams, who write, "[A]re we certain of the exact method that the ancients used in copying from their sources? Would not the very logistics of writing in the first century argue for the difficulty of copying word for word from scrolls over a long period of time? Perhaps McKnight is correct in saying that the Evangelists ‘appealed to short-term memory (read it, set it down—on a table or in a cylinder, write a new text).’ Such methodology of using a source yet writing a new document would account for both the similarities and the differences among the three Gospel texts" (ibid., 31). Supposedly, the mechanics of copying caused the short-term memory by Matthew and Luke to “kick in,” resulting in many disagreements. One might suggest that “short-term forgetfulness” rather than “short-term memory” would better explain the eighty-four percent of disagreements in the triple-tradition sections. Even if the assumed methodology of the authors of Matthew and Luke were correct, sixteen percent accuracy in copying is an unbelievably low figure. A capable scribe—the Gospel writers were capable—could hardly forget that much of what he had just read.

Agreements of Two Gospels against a Third

If anyone is unswayed by the low proportion of identical-word agreements, the triple-tradition sections of the Synoptic Gospels offer another opportunity for induction in probing the origins of the Synoptic Gospels. Such an opportunity lies in an area that for many has rendered the Synoptic Problem unsolvable. Most, if not all, acknowledge that no completely satisfactory solution for the problem has been found.20

---

19Advocates of literary interdependence show their discomfort with the overwhelmingly large number of disagreements in comparison to agreements by such proposals as that of Osborne and Williams, who write, "[A]re we certain of the exact method that the ancients used in copying from their sources? Would not the very logistics of writing in the first century argue for the difficulty of copying word for word from scrolls over a long period of time? Perhaps McKnight is correct in saying that the Evangelists ‘appealed to short-term memory (read it, set it down—on a table or in a cylinder, write a new text).’ Such methodology of using a source yet writing a new document would account for both the similarities and the differences among the three Gospel texts” (ibid., 31). Supposedly, the mechanics of copying caused the short-term memory by Matthew and Luke to “kick in,” resulting in many disagreements. One might suggest that “short-term forgetfulness” rather than “short-term memory” would better explain the eighty-four percent of disagreements in the triple-tradition sections. Even if the assumed methodology of the authors of Matthew and Luke were correct, sixteen percent accuracy in copying is an unbelievably low figure. A capable scribe—the Gospel writers were capable—could hardly forget that much of what he had just read.

20E.g., Scot McKnight, Interpreting the Synoptic Gospels (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988) 89. Robert H. Stein expresses the uncertainty of the two-document solution by calling it the “least worst!” of the proposed theories (“Is It Lawful for a Man to Divorce His Wife?,” JETS 22 [June 1979]:117 n. 8). Cf. also Stein, “Studying the Synoptic Gospels” 94.
The agreements of two Gospels against a third Gospel is the area in question. Columns 5-10 of Chart #2 furnish statistics of such agreements based on tabulations, supported by “Triple-Tradition Comparisons” at the above-mentioned Website. On the Website, one will see a separate itemization of the 58 sections for each of the columns: agreements of inclusion of Matthew and Luke against Mark (col. #5), agreements of omission of Matthew and Luke against Mark (col. #6), agreements of inclusion of Matthew and Mark against Luke (col. #7), agreements of omission of Matthew and Mark against Luke (col. #8), agreements of inclusion of Mark and Luke against Matthew (col. #9), and agreements of omission of Mark and Luke against Matthew (col. #10). The tabulated results on Chart #2 show that agreements of two Gospels against a third occur in almost every instance, making impossible the theory that any one of the Gospels could have been a literary source for the other two. If the identical verbal agreements of two Gospels constituted grounds for adopting a literary-interdependence theory, then an advocate for such interdependence faces an irresolvable dilemma: how can either one of the three be a source of the other two, because two of them will always agree with each other against the one designated as the source? Such an agreement negates an assumption that any one of them could be a source for the other two.

Those phenomena open the door for additional observations of a different kind.

Observation #11

Most often scholars note the infrequency of agreements of inclusion between Matthew and Luke against Mark in propounding the theory of Markan priority (cf. col. #5, Chart #2).

They do so under the assumption that Matthew and Luke used Mark as one of their sources. That assumption would eliminate the possibility that Matthew and Luke could agree with each other in a reading that differed from the reading in Mark, since Mark was the source for both in sections of triple tradition. Yet the occurrence of such agreements of Matthew and Luke against Mark in 53 of the 58 sections of triple tradition makes that assumption impossible. The impossibility intensifies when one notices that three of the five sections which contain no agreements of inclusion do have agreements of omission (col. #6, Chart #2; cf. §20, §24, and §170) and that all five (§76 and §99 in addition to the other three sections) are relatively brief sections. Coupling these considerations with the fact that two of the five cited sections have no agreements of inclusion between Matthew and Mark against Luke (§76 and §170; cf. col. #7) and three other sections have no such agreements of Mark and Luke against Matthew (§70, §99, and §160; cf. col. #9) evidences the uselessness of the infrequent agreements of inclusion

---

21E.g., Stein, Studying the Synoptic Gospels 141.

22Agreements of omission are more difficult to isolate because of the subjective element involved in selecting them. Nevertheless, they add dimension to the picture drawn by agreements of inclusion.
between Matthew and Luke against Mark as inductive evidence for Markan priority.

**Observation #12**

One section is especially noticeable for its abundant agreements of Matthew and Luke against Mark: §17 has 95 agreements of inclusion and 64 agreements of omission in Matthew and Luke against the corresponding section in Mark (see Exhibits #3 and #4 [pages 29-33 and 34-38] for these examples of §17). Some Markan prioritists would account for this by positing that Q overlapped with Mark at this point. Yet this amounts to a compounding of assumptions—an assumption of literary interdependence combined with an assumption of the existence of Q combined with an assumption that Q overlaps Mark even though Q as originally envisioned included material common to Matthew and Luke but not found in Mark. Such a compounding of assumptions can hardly fall into the category of induction.

**Observation #13**

Other proposed explanations of Matthew and Luke against Mark also fall under the heading of assumptions rather than inductivism. One grouping of such explanations includes the following categories: Matthew-Luke agreements in omission, Matthew-Luke agreements in grammar and editing, the most significant Matthew-Luke agreements, and explanations for the Matthew-Luke agreements. Summary explanations for these agreements include coincidences caused by Matthew’s and Luke’s redactional treatment of Mark, the overlapping of Q, textual corruption, and overlapping oral tradition.

The scope of the present discussion does not allow a detailed response to show how those explanations are assumptions and in many cases multilayered assumptions. In earlier writings, I have responded to some extent to the alleged redactional treatment of Mark and the supposed overlapping of Q by demonstrating that they are assumptions resting on shallow evidence. The assumption of textual

---


25Stein, *Studying the Synoptic Gospels* 127-36. In using these categories, Stein acknowledges that he adopts “apologetic” categories when he writes, “The classifications used below have sacrificed the objectivity of Stoldt for convenience and conciseness, as well as for ‘apologetic’ reasons” (ibid., 127). This seemingly evidences an awareness on his part of the “assumptive” nature of his explanations.

26Ibid., 136-41.

criticisms is the most shallow explanation of all. Dependence on a proposed solution to an unsolved Synoptic Problem to determine the text of the Synoptic Gospels is dependence on shaky subjectivism rather than inductive evidence. Abundant ancient resources are extant to help define the wording of the NT autographs. One need not fall back on modern theories that admit their own shortcomings.

Stein’s explanation of overlapping oral traditions is interesting, and raises a question: If one acknowledges that Matthew and Luke had access to oral traditions regarding the same episodes which they allegedly copied from Mark and if they chose to use those traditions as sources, how can anyone on an inductive basis conclude that they were not using those traditions rather than the Gospel of Mark as their sources? In other words, this explanation amounts to a tacit admission that literary interdependence is unnecessary, an interesting admission when accompanied by an admission that the Synoptic Problem remains unsolved. The two admissions amount to a virtual endorsement of the literary independence of the Synoptic Gospels.

Observation #14

As a general rule, the Matthew-Mark agreements of inclusion against Luke (column 7, Chart #2) are more numerous than the Matthew-Luke agreements of inclusion against Mark (column 5, Chart #2) and the Mark-Luke agreements of inclusion against Matthew (column 9, Chart #2). A possible explanation for this feature lies in the close association of Matthew and Peter, both being members of the Lord’s original twelve followers. Traditionally, the source of Mark’s Gospel was the preaching of Peter. As the two apostles, Matthew and Peter, told and retold the story of their association with Jesus countless times, they often heard from each other and others and were influenced by the same wording. That was the way they and the early church formulated tradition about Jesus. When the time came for Matthew and Mark to put their recollections of events and speeches into writing, they undoubtedly had inclinations to record what they had many times heard in similar wording. Whether Matthew’s recollections had more influence on Peter—and through him, on Mark—or Peter’s recollections had more influence on Matthew is unknown. In view of Peter’s prominence as the main spokesman for the Twelve, his preaching was probably the most influential in producing the agreements between Matthew and Mark.

Yet that is not the whole story of the tradition behind the Synoptic Gospels. In §67, §68, and §156, for example, Mark-Luke agreements of inclusion against Matthew (column 7, Chart #2) are far more numerous than those of Matthew-Mark against Luke (column 7, Chart #2). In those instances, Luke’s research apparently


Stein, *Studying the Synoptic Gospels* 138-41.
led him to testimonies of eyewitnesses depending on tradition like that from the preaching of Peter, while Matthew’s recollection of events took him in quite a different direction. This variation in two-Gospel agreements typifies the randomness of agreements of two Gospels against a third that would be expected when each writer composed his Gospel independently of what the others wrote.

Summary Observation

Agreements between two Gospels against a third Gospel present another line of evidence in favor of the independent origins of the Synoptic Gospels. Inductive investigation leads to the conclusion that the relative scarcity of agreements of Matthew and Luke against Mark means nothing by way of pointing to Mark as a literary source of the other two. Further, proposed interdependence explanations of why Matthew and Luke can agree against Mark when Mark is their source are assumptions rather than inductive conclusions. Inductive reasoning leads to the conclusion that oral and noncanonical written tradition based on eyewitness testimony was a basis for the Synoptic Gospels because of the random way they agree and disagree with one another. No proposal of literary interdependence has provided a satisfactory and factually based explanation for how the writers could have depended on the writings of each other in penning their books when two Gospels agree against a third in all possible combinations.

Concluding Remarks

Selected Gospel portions for the above discussion have come from the Burton-Goodspeed Harmony because of a recognition that one can “tailor” triple-tradition sections to prove whatever points he chooses. This investigation has sought to eliminate such tailoring by using the sectioning of a separate source. It has proceeded on the basis of observational facts in the texts of the Synoptic Gospels, seeking to eliminate assumption-based considerations.

None of the Synoptic Gospels tells of using another Synoptic Gospel as a source in its composition. The only alleged mention of interdependence comes in Luke’s prologue (Luke 1:1-4), an interpretive understanding of the prologue that is highly debated. In an inductive investigation, that kind of evidence of interdependence is inadmissible because it rests on a preference for one interpretation over another.

Based on observational facts regarding all fifty-eight sections of triple-tradition, this study has found that only sixteen percent of the words in those sections are identical in all three Gospels. That is far fewer than would have been identical if the writers had engaged in copying from one another or had functioned as copyists of each other’s Gospels. That in itself is sufficient to conclude that they worked independently of each other’s writings.

The study then focused on the agreements of two Gospels against a third Gospel in all combinations: Matthew-Luke against Mark, Matthew-Mark against
Luke, and Mark-Luke against Matthew. It showed from several perspectives the impossibility of any theory of literary interdependence created by these combinations of agreements and disagreements. From the standpoint of observational facts, it pointed to randomness as the only possible explanation for the phenomena of the Gospels.

Yet randomness is not an accurate term to apply. Discussions of the origins of the Synoptic Gospels say far too little about the role of the Holy Spirit in the composing of those Gospels. He was the major author in the divine-human process of producing the Synoptic Gospels. Some of Jesus’ last words to the Eleven were, “When the paraclete comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, that one will testify concerning Me; and you also will testify, because from the beginning you have been with Me” (John 15:26-27). Those words specify the twofold nature of the inspiration that produced the accounts of Jesus’ life. “Randomness” is not a fit description of the combination of coincidences and disagreements in the Synoptics. The Holy Spirit had a controlling role in what the human authors wrote. He had reasons for the occasions when they agree and for the occasions when they disagree. In that sense, the combination of agreements and disagreements is not random, but God-ordained. In this life, we as humans will never comprehend the mind of God (cf. Isa 40:13; 1 Cor 2:16) and be able to detect His reasons for this mixture of agreements and differences in wording. To think that we can do so by treating Scripture as just another human production smacks of egotism on our parts. Readers must content themselves with simply accepting what He used the writers to compose while they worked without consulting the written works of each other.
**Chart #1**

**Triple-tradition Sections from the Burton-Goodspeed Harmony**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>§ Number</th>
<th>Section Title</th>
<th>Matt.</th>
<th>Mark</th>
<th>Luke</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>§20</td>
<td>The Departure into Galilee</td>
<td>4:12-17</td>
<td>1:14, 15</td>
<td>4:14, 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§24</td>
<td>Healing of Peter’s Mother-in-law</td>
<td>8:14-17</td>
<td>1:29-34</td>
<td>4:38-41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§27</td>
<td>The Healing of a Leper</td>
<td>8:1-4</td>
<td>1:40-45</td>
<td>5:12-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§30</td>
<td>The Question about Fasting</td>
<td>9:14-17</td>
<td>2:18-22</td>
<td>5:33-39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§32</td>
<td>The Withered Hand</td>
<td>12:9-14</td>
<td>3:1-6</td>
<td>6:6-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§51</td>
<td>The Kindred of Jesus</td>
<td>12:46-50</td>
<td>3:31-35</td>
<td>8:19-21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§52</td>
<td>Parables by the Sea</td>
<td>13:1-9</td>
<td>4:1-9</td>
<td>8:4-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§53</td>
<td>The Reason for the Parables</td>
<td>13:10-17</td>
<td>4:10-12</td>
<td>8:9, 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§54</td>
<td>Explanation of the Parable of the Soils</td>
<td>13:18-23</td>
<td>4:13-20</td>
<td>8:11-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§66</td>
<td>The Stilling of the Tempest</td>
<td>8:18-27</td>
<td>4:35-41</td>
<td>8:22-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§67</td>
<td>The Gerasene Demoniac</td>
<td>8:28-34</td>
<td>5:1-20</td>
<td>8:26-39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§68</td>
<td>Jairus Daughter Raised; Others Healed</td>
<td>9:18-34</td>
<td>5:21-43</td>
<td>8:40-56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§70</td>
<td>The Sending Forth of the Apostles</td>
<td>9:35-10:4</td>
<td>6:6b, 7</td>
<td>9:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§71</td>
<td>Instructions for the Journey</td>
<td>10:5-15</td>
<td>6:8-11</td>
<td>9:2-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§76</td>
<td>The Departure of Jesus and the Disciples</td>
<td>11:1</td>
<td>6:12, 13</td>
<td>9:6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§77</td>
<td>The Death of John the Baptist</td>
<td>14:1-12</td>
<td>6:14-29</td>
<td>9:7-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§78</td>
<td>The Feeding of the Five Thousand</td>
<td>14:13-23a</td>
<td>6:30-46</td>
<td>9:10-17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§86</td>
<td>Peter’s Confession</td>
<td>16:13-20</td>
<td>8:27-30</td>
<td>9:18-21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§87</td>
<td>Jesus Foretells His Death</td>
<td>16:21-28</td>
<td>8:31-9:1</td>
<td>9:22-27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§89</td>
<td>The Epileptic Boy</td>
<td>17:14-20</td>
<td>9:14-29</td>
<td>9:37-43a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§90</td>
<td>Jesus Again Foretells His Death</td>
<td>17:22,23</td>
<td>9:30-32</td>
<td>9:43b-45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§99</td>
<td>The Departure from Galilee</td>
<td>19:1, 2</td>
<td>10:1</td>
<td>9:51-56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§ Number</td>
<td>Section Title</td>
<td>Matt.</td>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>Luke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§139</td>
<td>Prediction of the Crucifixion</td>
<td>20:17-19</td>
<td>10:32-34</td>
<td>18:31-34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§141</td>
<td>Bartimaeus Healed</td>
<td>20:29-34</td>
<td>10:46-52</td>
<td>18:35-43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§146</td>
<td>The Cleansing of the Temple</td>
<td>21:12-17</td>
<td>11:15-19</td>
<td>19:45-48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§150</td>
<td>The Unfaithful Husbandmen</td>
<td>21:33-46</td>
<td>12:1-12</td>
<td>20:9-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§155</td>
<td>Jesus’ Question about the Son of David</td>
<td>22:41-46</td>
<td>12:35-37</td>
<td>20:41-44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§156</td>
<td>Denunciation of the Scribes and Pharisees</td>
<td>23:1-12</td>
<td>12:38-40</td>
<td>20:45-47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§160</td>
<td>Prediction of the Temple’s Destruction</td>
<td>24:1,2</td>
<td>13:1,2</td>
<td>21:5,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§161</td>
<td>Beginning of the Olivet Discourse</td>
<td>24:3-14</td>
<td>13:3-13</td>
<td>21:7-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§170</td>
<td>Conspiracy of the Chief Priests</td>
<td>26:1-5</td>
<td>14:1,2</td>
<td>22:1,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§172</td>
<td>Plot of Judas and the Rulers</td>
<td>26:14-16</td>
<td>14:10,11</td>
<td>22:3-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§175</td>
<td>The Betrayal and Arrest</td>
<td>26:47-56</td>
<td>14:43-52</td>
<td>22:47-53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§176</td>
<td>Trial Before the Jewish Authorities</td>
<td>26:57-76</td>
<td>14:53-72</td>
<td>22:54-71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Chart #2

**Summary of Triple-tradition Comparisons**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>§</th>
<th>Word Count</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Section Topic</th>
<th>Identical words</th>
<th>Mt- Lk vs. Mk incl</th>
<th>Mt- Lk vs. Mk omit</th>
<th>Mt- Mk vs. Lk incl</th>
<th>Mt- Mk vs. Lk omit</th>
<th>Mt- Mk vs. Mt incl</th>
<th>Mt- Mk vs. Mt omit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>790</td>
<td>the Baptist</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>Baptism</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>444</td>
<td>Temptation</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>left Galilee</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>leper healed</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>leper healed</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>570</td>
<td>paralytic healed</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>call of Levi</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>385</td>
<td>fasting question</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>Sabbath grain</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>withered hand</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>Jesus’ kindred</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>seaside parables</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>parables’ purpose</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>96</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>soils explained</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>tempest stilled</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>93</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td>860</td>
<td>Gerasene demoniac</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>767</td>
<td>Jarius’ daughter</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>apostles sent</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>127</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>journey instructions</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>109</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Jesus’ departure</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>John’s death</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>5,000 fed</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>Peter’s confession</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>98</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87</td>
<td>520</td>
<td>death foretold</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88</td>
<td>620</td>
<td>Transfiguration</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89</td>
<td>530</td>
<td>epileptic boy</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>death foretold</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>the greatest?</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>depart Galilee</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>136</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>blessing children</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§</td>
<td>Word Count</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Identical words</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mt-Lk vs. Mk incl</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mt-Lk vs. Mk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>137</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>rich young man</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>139</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>cross predicted</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>141</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>Bartimaeus healed</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>144</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>Triumphal Entry</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>146</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>Temple cleansed</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>58</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>148</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>authority challenged</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150</td>
<td>625</td>
<td>unfaithful farmer</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>68</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>152</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>tribute to Caesar</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>153</td>
<td>534</td>
<td>resurrection query</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>154</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>great commandment</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>155</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>son of David query</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>156</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>leaders condemned</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>155</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>160</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>temple destruction</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>161</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>discourse excerpt</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>161 (part)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Olivet disc. begun</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>162</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>abom. of desolation</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>163</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>second coming</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>164</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>unknown time</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>170</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>leaders’ conspiracy</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>172</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>plot of Judas</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>173</td>
<td>1190</td>
<td>last supper</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>346</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>174</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>Gethsemane</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>175</td>
<td>460</td>
<td>betrayal, arrest</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>176</td>
<td>940</td>
<td>Jewish trial</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>177</td>
<td>1150</td>
<td>trial before Pilate</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>262</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>178</td>
<td>1150</td>
<td>crucifixion</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>74</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>179</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>burial</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>181</td>
<td>475</td>
<td>resurrection</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>91</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
§78. The Feeding of the Five Thousand (Matt-Mk-Lk Identicals)

Matt 14:13-23a
Mark 6:30-46
Luke 9:10-17

Kai; sunavgontai
oι ajpovstoloi proq to τον Ιησου'n.
oι ajpovstoloi
kai; ajphyggeilan aui' tw'/ pavnta
di'hgsanto aui' tw/
o { sa ejpoivhsan
o { sa ejpoivhsan.

31 Kai; legei aui'toi" ,
Deut' e-ulmei" aui'toi:
kai; ijdvan eij" e[rhmon tovpon
kai; ajnapauvasqe oj' vegon.

jAkouvsa" de; oj Ihsou'  
ajncwrhshen ejkeq' qn ejn ploivw/  
ankeleqwhsen

32 kai; ajph'qon ejn tw'/ ploivw/  
kat ihdvan eij"  
kaloumevnh Bhsai>dav.

33 kai; e[i\don aui'tou"  
kaloumevnh Bhsai>dav.  
ulpavgonta" 

kai; ajkouvsa" oj\c'lo"  
kaloumevnh Bhsai>dav.

pezh'/  
ajpo; tw'n povlewn.

34 kai; ejxelqw'n ejn ploivn  
ajpo; pasw'n tw'n povlewn
sunedrason ejkei' kai; prob'hqon

14 kai; ejtelqw'n ej\den polu\n
o\c'lo",  
o\c'lo,

kai; ejplagniv'qhyp ej' aui'toi"  
kaloumevnh Bhsai>dav.

o { ti h\san

w"  
provbata mh; ej' konta

posimevna,

kai; b\nexato didavsksein aui'tou"  
ajlavei aui'toi"  
pollaw.

peri; th"  
basileiva" te' qeou,'
Matt 14:13-23a

kai; ejqravpeusen tou;  
aptrwstou;  
aujtw'n.

15 ojyiva" de; genomevnh"  
prosh' lqon  
aujtw'  
oj maqhtai;  
levgonte".

[Erhmov" ejstin o]  
tovpo"  
akai; h  
{ra h[|dh parch' 
aujpovhsan  
tou;" o]clou".

35 Kai; h[|dh w{ra  
pollh"  
genomevnh"  
proselqovnte"  
aujtw'  
oj maqhtai;  
levgonte".

12 JH de; h[|meva  
{ra xato  
klvnem:

10 tou;" kai; "creivan e[conta"  
qerapeiva" ija'to.

Mark 6:30-46

kai; tou;" creivan e[conta"  
qerapeiva" ija'to.

Luke 9:10-17

kai; tou;" creivan e[conta"  
qerapeiva" ija'to.

12 JH de; h[|meva  
{ra xato  
klvnem:

10 tou;" kai; "creivan e[conta"  
qerapeiva" ija'to.

kai; h  
{ra h[|dh w{ra  
apθh"  
levgonte",  
ajgoravswsin  
aujtw'/  
ouj creivan e[conta"  
ajgoravswsin eJautoi';

16 oj;  
jIhsou" e[pen  
aujtw'  
oj de;  
jIhsou" e[pen  
aujtw'  
oj de;  
jIhsou" e[pen  
aujtw'.

13 eJpan  
dey'  
proc"  
aujtou".

17 oj; de;  
levgei  
aujtou"  
ouj kai;  
levgei  
aujtou"  
ouj kai;  
levgei  
aujtou"  
ouj kai;  
levgei  
aujtou"  
ouj kai;  
levgei  
aujtou".

Ouj creivan e[conta"  
ajgoravswsin eJautoi';

Dovte  
aujtou"  
ulmei"  
facei'n.

Dovte  
aujtou"  
ulmei"  
facei'n.

Dovte  
aujtou"  
ulmei"  
facei'n.

Dovte  
aujtou"  
ulmei"  
facei'n.

Dovte  
aujtou"  
ulmei"  
facei'n.

Ouj creivan e[conta"  
ajgoravswsin eJautoi';

Dovte  
aujtou"  
ulmei"  
facei'n.

Dovte  
aujtou"  
ulmei"  
facei'n.

Dovte  
aujtou"  
ulmei"  
facei'n.

Dovte  
aujtou"  
ulmei"  
facei'n.

Ouj creivan e[conta"  
ajgoravswsin eJautoi';

Dovte  
aujtou"  
ulmei"  
facei'n.

Dovte  
aujtou"  
ulmei"  
facei'n.

Dovte  
aujtou"  
ulmei"  
facei'n.

Dovte  
aujtou"  
ulmei"  
facei'n.

Ouj creivan e[conta"  
ajgoravswsin eJautoi';

Dovte  
aujtou"  
ulmei"  
facei'n.

Dovte  
aujtou"  
ulmei"  
facei'n.

Dovte  
aujtou"  
ulmei"  
facei'n.

Dovte  
aujtou"  
ulmei"  
facei'n.

Ouj creivan e[conta"  
ajgoravswsin eJautoi';

Dovte  
aujtou"  
ulmei"  
facei'n.

Dovte  
aujtou"  
ulmei"  
facei'n.

Dovte  
aujtou"  
ulmei"  
facei'n.

Dovte  
aujtou"  
ulmei"  
facei'n.

Ouj creivan e[conta"  
ajgoravswsin eJautoi';

Dovte  
aujtou"  
ulmei"  
facei'n.

Dovte  
aujtou"  
ulmei"  
facei'n.

Dovte  
aujtou"  
ulmei"  
facei'n.

Dovte  
aujtou"  
ulmei"  
facei'n.

Ouj creivan e[conta"  
ajgoravswsin eJautoi';

Dovte  
aujtou"  
ulmei"  
facei'n.

Dovte  
aujtou"  
ulmei"  
facei'n.

Dovte  
aujtou"  
ulmei"  
facei'n.

Dovte  
aujtou"  
ulmei"  
facei'n.

Ouj creivan e[conta"  
ajgoravswsin eJautoi';

Dovte  
aujtou"  
ulmei"  
facei'n.

Dovte  
aujtou"  
ulmei"  
facei'n.

Dovte  
aujtou"  
ulmei"  
facei'n.

Dovte  
aujtou"  
ulmei"  
facei'n.

Ouj creivan e[conta"  
ajgoravswsin eJautoi';

Dovte  
aujtou"  
ulmei"  
facei'n.

Dovte  
aujtou"  
ulmei"  
facei'n.

Dovte  
aujtou"  
ulmei"  
facei'n.

Dovte  
aujtou"  
ulmei"  
facei'n.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Pevnte, kai; duvo ijcquva&quot;.</td>
<td>ei\pen de pro&quot; tou&quot; maqhta;&quot; a\rtou',</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>kai; keleussa tou&quot; a[rtou&quot; o[clou&quot;</td>
<td>ajнаклих'нai</td>
<td>kатахливнate a\rtou&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ajнаклих'нai pavnта&quot;</td>
<td>sjumposvas sjumpovsia</td>
<td>kliiva&quot; w'жет; a\наc пентхкнота.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>epит oui сovrtou.</td>
<td>epит tw'/ cwtw'/ сovrtw'/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40 kai;</td>
<td>15 kai; ejprevhsan ou{tw&quot;</td>
<td>kai; katevklinan a{panta&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>kата; elikaton kai; kата; пентхкнота.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>labwn</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>41 kai; labwn; de;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>kai; filagovnta; toi&quot; o[choi&quot; i[na paratιq'wi sin a\rtou',</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>kai; tou&quot; duvo ijcquva&quot; ejmevrisen pa'sin.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Kai; euqevw&quot; hjnavkgasen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tou;” maqhtax”</td>
<td>tou;” maqhtax”</td>
<td>tou;” maqhtax”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ejmbbl’/nai ej” to; plof’on</td>
<td>ejmbbl’/nai ej” to; plof’on</td>
<td>ejmbbl’/nai ej” to; plof’on</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kai; proasgein aujto;n</td>
<td>kai; proasgein</td>
<td>kai; proasgein</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ej” to; pevran,</td>
<td>ej” to; pevran</td>
<td>ej” to; pevran</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pro;” Bhqai&gt;davn,</td>
<td>pro;” Bhqai&gt;davn,</td>
<td>pro;” Bhqai&gt;davn,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e{w” ou</td>
<td>ajpoluvsh/ tou;&quot;</td>
<td>e{w” ou</td>
<td>ajpoluvsh/ tou;&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>clou&quot;.</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>clou&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 kai; ajpolavsa&quot; tou;&quot; o</td>
<td>clou&quot;</td>
<td>46 kai; ajpotaxavmeno&quot; aujto;”</td>
<td>46 kai; ajpolavsa&quot; tou;&quot; o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ajnevbh ej” to; o</td>
<td>ro”</td>
<td>ajph’leqen ej” to; o</td>
<td>ro”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kat; ijdivan</td>
<td>proseuvxasqai</td>
<td>proseuvxasqai</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

102 words out of 600 words = 17 %
### Exhibit 2

#### §144. The Triumphant Entry (Matt-Mk-Lk Identicals)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kai: o{te h[ggisan</td>
<td>Kai: o{te eiggizousin</td>
<td>Kai: eigeveneto w</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eij&quot; Ierosovluma</td>
<td>eij&quot; Ierosovluma</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kai: h[goj eij&quot; Bhoong</td>
<td>eij&quot; Bhoong kai: Bhoqianv</td>
<td>eij&quot; Bhoong kai: Bhoqaniva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eij&quot; to:</td>
<td>pro&quot; to:</td>
<td>pro&quot; to: o{ to: kalovmenon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$Elaiw'n</td>
<td>$Elaiw'n</td>
<td>$Elaiw'n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tovte $hsoi&quot; aipervsteilen</td>
<td>aipervsteilen</td>
<td>aipervsteilen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>duvo maqhta;&quot;</td>
<td>duvo tw'n maqtw'n aujto'</td>
<td>duvo tw'n maqtw'n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 levgw aujtoi&quot;,</td>
<td>2 kai: levgi aujtoi&quot;,</td>
<td>30 levgw,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potrevese</td>
<td>JUpavgete</td>
<td>JUpavgete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eii&quot; thn kwvmhn thn katevanti</td>
<td>eii&quot; thn kwvmhn thn katevanti</td>
<td>eii&quot; thn katevanti kwvmhn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uJmwn',</td>
<td>uJmwn',</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kai: euqew&quot;</td>
<td>eijsporeuovmenoi eij&quot; aijth'n</td>
<td>eij h'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eurhwste o'non</td>
<td>eurhwste</td>
<td>eurhwste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dedemevnhn kai: p\l'on met aujth'';</td>
<td>p\l'on dedemevnon,</td>
<td>p\l'on dedemevnon,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>levgw th' aijth'n o{ti</td>
<td>levgw th' aijth'n o{ti</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eij' o{ to: ou{ pw ajnqwpwvwn</td>
<td>eij' o{ to: ou{ pw ajnqwpwvwn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eijkavqisen</td>
<td>eijkavqisen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>luhwante&quot; aigvgetev moij.</td>
<td>luhwate aujtoz kai: fervere.</td>
<td>kai: luhwante&quot; aujtoz aigvgetev.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 kai: eijav tw' uJmwn eij/ph/</td>
<td>3 kai: eijav tw' uJmwn eij/ph/</td>
<td>31 kai: eijav tw' uJmwa'' eijwta'/,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t' eijete o{ ti</td>
<td>Tiv potet' te tou'to eijpate,</td>
<td>Dia; tiv luvete ou{tw' eijete o{ ti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$O kurwio&quot; aujtoz' creivan e{cei:</td>
<td>$O kurwio&quot; aujtoz' creivan e{cei:</td>
<td>$O kurwio&quot; aujtoz' creivan e{cei:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>euqew&quot; de; aipostele' aujtoz&quot;.</td>
<td>eijsporeuovmenoi eij&quot; aijth'n</td>
<td>eij h'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Tou' to: de; gevgonen i' na phirw' to: tou' kevgen dia: tou' prohivtou levgynto&quot;;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Ei' pate th'/ qagatriz; Siwvn,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eij' kai: eijebbkeiv'; eijp</td>
<td>eij' kai: eijebbkeiv'; eijp</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o'non,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
26  The Master's Seminary Journal

καὶ εἴπετε πώλων υἱῷ Ἰησοῦν ἡμᾶς μαθήται;

καὶ προεύχεσθε καὶ προεπλήξθησθε
καὶ ἐπηρίζεσθε καὶ ἐπετάλησθε καὶ ποιήσασθε
καὶ ἔσνησθεν οὕτωι᾽ αὐτῶν.

καὶ εἴπετε πώλων δε τοὺς συνεταξάντας αὐτῶν

καὶ Πάνω εἰπέτε Πάνω.

καὶ εἴπετε αὐτοῖς ὅτι

δεδημένον πρὸς σε ἐπέκτενε στὸν ἴδίον του ἄμφωδον,
καὶ ἐκατέρρευσαν αὐτοῖς καὶ ἐπέστησαν αὐτοῖς.

καὶ εἴπετε πώλων δε τοὺς λογοκόπους καὶ τοὺς λογοτέχνες

καὶ εἴπετε πώλων δε τοὺς μετακόμιαν ἡμᾶς μαθήται.
καὶ εἴπετε πώλων δε τοὺς συνεταξάντας αὐτῶν καὶ τὴν ἱματίαν
καὶ ἐπεκατέρρευσαν ἐπὶ τοῦν τοῦν Ἰησοῦν καὶ ἐξήπτυσαν τοῦν τοῦν 
καὶ εἴπετε πώλων δε τοὺς πληθυσμὸν ὁ δόλον καὶ πολλοὶ;
καὶ εἴπετε πώλων δε τοὺς ἰδιώτας καὶ τοὺς ἱματίας τοῦν τοῦν καὶ ἐπέστησαν τοῦν τοῦν
καὶ εἴπετε πώλων δε τοὺς μετακόμιαν ἡμᾶς μαθήται.
Discerning Synoptic Gospel Origins: An Inductive Approach

9 oj de; oj cloi oj proavgonte
auton kai; oj ajkolousounte

JWsanna: tw/ uiwe/ Dauvid:
Einloghmevno" ol ejrcovmeno

ein ojnovmati kuriovou

JWsanna: ein toi" ulyvstoi

10 Einloghmevno b ejrcomevno basileiva tou' patro; h hjo/n Dauvid:

JWsanna: ein toi" ulyvstoi.

11 Kai; eijsh'lqen eij JIerosovluma eij to; iJerovn:
eij" Jlerosovluma eij" to; iJerovn:

10 Kai; ejdelqovnato aijtou' I Kai; ejplh'len

37 jEggizonten" de; aijtou' b' dh
pro; th/ katabaei tov' Orou' tw'n jElai/n
h[ezanto a [pan toc plh'qo" tw'n
maqhtw'n
caivronte" aijer'n tov' qeov fwnh'/ megavh'/ perc; pasw'n w/j n
er'don dunavmewn.

38 levonge".

39 kai; tre; tw'n Fasiasaevn aipo;
tou' oj cloi ei;pro; aijtovn,
Didavskale, ejpitivmhson tov' maqhtai" sou. 40 kai; apokriqei;" ei
pen. Levgw ulmu/n, ejan ou' toi
siwphosoun, oj livpoi
kravvoun.

41 Kai; w' h[egisen, ijdwn thn
povin eklaiyen eij aijtovn, 42
levgw oj' ti Eij ej gnw" ejn th/
hmevra/ taqsh/ kai; su; ta; pro;" ejphvnmn; n'n de; ejkrubh aipoi;
ojphalimw'n sou. 43 oj' ti h' ti sou
hmevrai ejpi; se; ka; parembalou'sin ou' ejgevor sou
cavrakav soi ka; perikdusouasivn
se kai; sunevosoun se pavntoqen,
44 kai; ejdafiou'sin se kai; ta;
teknya sou ein soi, ka; ouj
ajfivsousin livqon ejp; livqon ein
soi, ajnq w/n ouj ej' gnw" tov'
kairen th" ejpiskoph" sou.
The Master's Seminary Journal

ejseivq| pa'xa h| povh" levousa,
Tiv" ejstn ou| to"  
I I ei] de;  e\cloi e\legen, Ou| tov"  
ejstn oj| profhvrh" ]Ihsou" oj
ajpo; Nazareq th"" Galilaiva".

kai; peribkevmeno" pavnta,
ojyiva" h|/dh ou\ch" th"" w\{ta",  
ejth'p\en ejj" B\oqanivan met\a; tw\n
dwdeka.

96 words out of 650 words = 15%
### Exhibit #3

#### §17. The Ministry of the Baptist (Matt-Lk Inclusions against Mk)

|-------------|------------|-------------|
| 1 jArch; tou' eujaggelivou jIhsou' Cristou' ujJou' qeou'. | 1 jEn e'tei de; pentekaisiekavtw/ th'/ hlgemoniva/ Tiberivou Katvaro', hlgemonuvronto' Pontivou Pilavtou th'/ jloudaiva', kai; tetraarcou'nto' th'/ Galilaiva' Hrwa'/ dou', Fēvppou de; tou' ajdelou' aijou' tetraarcou'nto' th'/ jtourai/a' kai; Tracwvniidio' ewvra', kai; Lusanivou th'/ jbilhnh'/ tetraarcou'nto', eipji ajriereew'/ {Anna kai; Kai>aafka, |}

paragivnetai ejgevneto jIhs'ma qeou

jIwavmnhv' oj baptisth' ejpi; jIwavmnhn toj Zacarivou ujJou'

khruvswn ejn th'/ ejpwhmv'/ .

2 kai; levgwn, Metanoei'te, hj' ggeken gar

hj basileiva tw'n oujranw'n 3 kai; hj' qen

2 Kaqw;" gevgraptai ejn

[Jsai'ou tou' profhvtou levgonto', ejn tw'/ jJsai'a/ tw'/ profhvh'/, ejn tw'/ jJsai'a/ tw'/ profhvh', ejn tw'/ jJsai'a/ tw'/ profhvh'/, ejn tw'/ jJsai'a/ tw'/ profhvh'/,]

jIldou; aipostevllw toj a'gelovn mou pro; prosowypou sou

o' j katakeuranwsei thon oJdou' sou:

Fwvh; bow'nto' ejn th'/ ephmvw'/, Fwvh; bow'nto' ejn th'/ ephmvw'/, Fwvh; bow'nto' ejn th'/ ephmvw'/,

[Etaiavmate thon oJdou' kurivou, Etaiavmate thon oJdou' kurivou, Etaiavmate thon oJdou' kurivou,]
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>eujqeiva&quot; poie'te ta&quot; trivbou&quot; aijtou'.</td>
<td>eujqeiva&quot; poie'te ta&quot; trivbou&quot; aijtou'.</td>
<td>eujqeiva&quot; poie'te ta&quot; trivbou&quot; aijtou'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 pa'sa favragx plhrwqhvsetai kai; pa'n o[ro&quot; kai; boumo&quot; tapeinwqhvsetai, kai; e[stai ta; skolias eij&quot; eujqeivan kai; a]j trace'i ei&quot; oJdou&quot; leiva&quot;:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 eijgevneto

jIwavnnh" oJ baptivzon ejn th'/ e]fhrmov/

kai; khruvswn bapvtisma metanoiva" eij" a]fesin a]martiv'n.

4 Aujto;" de; oJ jIwavnnh" ej\cen to; e]nduma aijtou'
ajpo; tricw'n kambvlou kai; zwrhn dermativnhn peri; th\n o]jsfu; aijtou', h\n de; trofh; h\n aijtou'
a]kvive" kai; mesli a]grion.

5 tovte ejxepeorwveto pro;" aijto'n
[jerosolvuma kai; pa'sa h\n jIoudaiva pa'sa h\n jIoudaiva cwvra kai; osi; jIerosolimi'tai pavnte".

kai; pa'sa h\n pericwvro" tou' jIordavnou,

6 kai; ejbaptivzonto ka\n ejbaptivzonto ejn tw'/ jIordavnh/ potamw'/ uJp aijtou' ejxomologoumenoi ta" ejxomologoumenoi ta" a]martiva" aijtw'n.

6 kai; h\n oJ jIwavnnh" ejndedumevno"
7 Ἰδὼν δὲ τὸν πολλὸν τῶν Φαρισαίων καὶ τῶν Ἁδαμαντίων ἔφη· ὅταν ἐβαπτίσθη Ἰησοῦς, ἐπὶ τὸ βάπτισμα αὐτοῦ, ἐπὶ τὸν αὐτόν, ἐξεσώκησαν αὐτοῖς καὶ μετέλειψαν τὸν αὐτόν. 

8 ὁ δὲ Γεννήματα ἐξείλαθεν, τῷ Ἰσραήλ̣ν ἔκαλε· ἔσωθεν ἐμεῖς ἐν τοῖς δικαίοις τοῦ Ἱσραήλ· ἔσωθεν ἐμεῖς ἐν τοῖς δικαίοις τοῦ Ἱσραήλ· ἔσωθεν ἐμεῖς ἐν τοῖς δικαίοις τοῦ Ἱσραήλ· ἔσωθεν ἐμεῖς ἐν τοῖς δικαίοις τοῦ Ἱσραήλ· ἔσωθεν ἐμεῖς ἐν τοῖς δικαίοις τοῦ Ἱσραήλ· ἔσωθεν ἐμεῖς ἐν τοῖς δικαίοις τοῦ Ἱσραήλ· ἔσωθεν ἐμεῖς ἐν τοῖς δικαίοις τοῦ Ἱσραήλ. 

9 καὶ οὐκ ἠρμόσατο οὐδὲν καλὸν· εἰκονεῖται ἑτεραν τῷ Ἰσραήλ· αὐτὸν οὐκ ἠρμόσατο οὐδὲν καλὸν· εἰκονεῖται ἑτεραν τῷ Ἰσραήλ· αὐτὸν οὐκ ἠρμόσατο οὐδὲν καλὸν· εἰκονεῖται ἑτεραν τῷ Ἰσραήλ· αὐτὸν οὐκ ἠρμόσατο οὐδὲν καλὸν· εἰκονεῖται ἑτεραν τῷ Ἰσραήλ· αὐτὸν οὐκ ἠρμόσατο οὐδὲν καλὸν· εἰκονεῖται ἑτεραν τῷ Ἰσραήλ.
10 Καὶ εἴπρωτον αὐτῷν οἴ]{cloi levgonte", Tiw ou

ο":11 απόκρισιν; " δε; ειλεγεν αὐτῶν;", Ο ειλεγεν δυνο

εὑτωνα": metaotow tw/ m; ε]{onti, kai; oj e]ewn brrwv mata

ομοτων" poieivtw. :12 h λοιο

de; kai; teλw'nai baptisqh'na kai;
ei\ran pro;" auitov, Didrivskale, tiv poihvswmen :13 oj de; ei\pen pro;" auitos", Mhdεν δe

plevon para; to; δατεραγμενον utm'ν

pravsete. :14 ejphrwvten de;
auiton kai; strateuvmenoi

levgonte", Tiw poihvswmen kai;
hjme"" kaι; ei\pen auitos"", Mhdεν δe

δαινεirivsmhe nihde;
sukofanthishe, kai; ajpκε"se τo""

ojywvnon" utm'ν. :15 Προδοκακlto"" de; tou' lao;
kai; dialogizomevnon pavntwn ejn
tai"" kardivai" auitw'n peri; tou;
jlwavnmu, mhdvute auito;" ejh oj

Cristov", 7 kai; ejdhvussen levgen,

16 απεκριναπo levgeν pa'sin oj

jlwavnh", 11 ejgw; mezm utma"" baptrvsw.

ejn u{ dat eij" metavnoia;

oj de; ojipsw mou ejcoveleno" [Ercetai eercetai de

ijscurovterov" mou ejstin, oj ijscurovterov" mou ojipsw

mou, ou onei ejimi; ilkano;" ou onei ejimi; ilkano;" kuryxa" lo'sai toγn iljnavanta

lo'sai toγn iljnavanta tw'n u{podhavtrwn auitou':

8 ejun; ohavptisa utma"" u{ dat, auito;" utma"" baptrvsei auito;" de; baptrvsei utma"" auito;" utma"" baptrvsei ejn pneuvmati algiwv/ kai; paryv:

ejn pneuvmati algiwv/. ejn pneuvmati algiwv/ kai; paryv:

12 ou{ to; pnwv en th'/ cείν auitou', kai; dikaqarivs' then a{lwma auitou', kai; sunagge'o

en uto' auitou' ejj" then apodhvikhin, 17 ou{ to; pnwv en th'/ cείν auitou

diakaq'tai then a{lwma auitou

kai; sunagge'o

en uto' auitou' ejj" then apodhvikhin auitou',
### Matt 3:1-12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Το δε α' α' κατακαυστείν πυρί αἰσθεστὰ/.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Mark 1:1-8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Το δε α' α' κατακαυστείν πυρί αἰσθεστὰ/.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Luke 3:1-20

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Πολλά μεν οὐ καὶ άτερα παρακάλω τον λαόν:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Ο ΖΗΡΩ/ΔΗ/ ο θεοτρόπος, εἴλεγον, ξηράρετος.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Προσευχθηκαν καὶ πάσιν κατεκλείσαντον θανάτου.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

95 agreements of inclusion

---
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Greek Text</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>§17. The Ministry of the Baptist (Matt-Lk Omissions against Mark)</td>
<td>Matt 3:1-12</td>
<td>1 μη είλθῃ τὸν εὐαγγελισμόν τοῦ Ιησοῦ' Κρίστου' αὐτοῦ</td>
<td>1 Let there be no καιροῦ εὐαγγελίων of Jesus' Christ.'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mark 1:1-8</td>
<td>1 καὶ τοῦ οἴκου τοῦ Ιωάννη</td>
<td>1 and of the house of John.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Exhibit #4**

---

Matt 3:1-12

Mark 1:1-8

Luke 3:1-20

5 pa'sa favragx plhrwqhvsetai
kai; pa'no o'ro" kai; baxno;" tapeinwqhvsetai,
kai; e[stai ta; skelia; ej" euqeqivan
kai; aj] trace'ai ej" o]'dou" leiva";
6 kai; o'jyetai pa'sa saazx to;
swthmion tou' qrou'.

4 eijewneto

jLwavnnh" of baptizwv

ejn th'/ ejhwmn/

kai; khrwuvwn bapvtisma

metanoiva"

eij" af'esin aJmartw'n.

4 Aujto;" de; oj jLwavnh"

ei'

cen to; e'n numa aJu'tou'

aip; triw'n kambwlo

kai; zwvnhn derma'tivnh

peri; thn oj'sfua aJu'tou',

h1 de; troth; h1

n aJu'tou'

ajkrivde" kai; mewli a'grion.

5 tovte ejseporveveto pro;" aJu'ton

jLerosovluma

kai; pa'sa hj jLoudaiva

pa'sa hj jLoudaiva cyvra

kai; oj jLerosolum'tai pavnte".

kai; pa'sa hj periwcrwo" tou' jLordavno',

6 kai; ejbapvtizwnto

ejn tw'/ jLordavnh/ potamw'/ ulp

aJu'tou'

ulp aJu'tou' ejn tw'/ jLordavnh/ potamw'/

ejxomologoumenoi ta;" aJmartiva" aJu'tw'n.

6 kai; h1

oJ jLwavnh"

ejndedumevno"

trivca" kambwlo

kai; zwvnhn derma'tivnhn.
Matt 3:1-12

perit then ejojun aujiou;
kaia; ejcoinsvun.
ajkrivda" kai' mevli a' grion.

7 jldwn de; pollou" tw'n
Farisaivwn kai Saddoukaiivwn

Mark 1:1-8

ejcromevnou'
ejj; tu; bavptisma aujiou'
ei'pen aujiou'
Gennhmata ejclidn'w'n,
tiv' ulpevdeixen ulmi'n fugei'n
ai;po; th" molloushi" ojgf'
8 poisvate ou' n karpocn
ajxion th" metanoiva":
9 kai; mhc; dovixte levegin ejn
ejaujiou".
Patevra ej'comen to;en jAbraavm,
levgw gar ulmi'n o{ti duvntai
of; qo;e; ejk tw'n livwn touvtwn
ejgerai tevka tw'/ jAbraavm.
10 hj;dh de; hj ajxinh pro';"
thn rjivzan tw'n devndron kei'tai:
pai'ou'n devndron
mhc poisou'n karpocn kalon
ejkouvpetei
kai; ej" pu't r ballletai.

Luke 3:1-20

7 [Elegen ou' n
toi'" ejkporosemevnoi' o[cloi'
baptiso'h'uai ulp  aujiou',
Gennhmata ejclidn'w'n,
tiv' ulpevdeixen ulmi'n fugei'n
ai;po; th" molloushi" ojgf'
8 poisvate ou' n karpocn
ajxivou" th" metanoiva":
kai; mhc; a[rahsqe levegin ejn
ejaujiou".
Patevra ej'comen to;en jAbraavm,
levgw gar ulmi'n o{ti duvntai
of; qo;e; ejk tw'n livwn touvtwn
ejgerai tevka tw'/ jAbraavm.
9 hj;dh de; hj ajxinh pro';"
thn rjivzan tw'n devndron kei'tai:
pai'ou'n devndron
mhc poisou'n karpocn kalon
ejkouvpetei
kai; ej" pu't r ballletai.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 Kai; ejphrwv̄n aujtōn oj] o[cloj levýgonte&quot;. Tiv ōu\n požlvwvmen :11 ajpoknpiçi&quot; de; e[legen aujtōi&quot;. JO e[ew duvo cirw'na&quot; metadowv tw' / mh; e[comi, kai; oj e[ew bwxwvma \nomovw&quot; poišeivw. :12 h'o\non de; kai; tebw'naí bapisq'̄v'̄n kai; e\pan pro&quot; aujtōn, Didavskale, tiv požlvwvmen :13 oj de; ei\pan pro&quot; aujtōi&quot;. Mhδen plevon para; to; diatagmenvon υmnun' n prævsete. :14 ejphrwv̄n de; aujtōn kai; stratosvmenoi levýgonte&quot;. Tiv požlvwvmen kai; h'jmei&quot; kai; ei\pan aujtōi&quot;. Mhdevna diaseivštē nhδe; sukofantvšhte, kai; ajrkev'̄se to'̄m ojýwvni\omov'̄n υmnun'. :15 Prōdokw'̄nto'̄ de; to'̄ laou' kai; dialogizontvmenon pavntwv̄n ejn tai'̄ kardvai'̄ aujtōn'̄n pere; tou'̄ \swv̄nou, mhvpo\te aujtō'̄ ei'̄n oj Cristov'̄.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 kai; ejkdhrusse\n levγn̄n,</td>
<td>16 ajpekriv̄nato levγ̄n pu's̄n oj \swv̄n̄n̄h&quot;.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 11 ejgw; men \ulma"'̄n baptivzw ejn u\{ dati ej" metavnoi: oj de; opi̯sw mou ejcovmeno" [Eretai ejcovmeno" oj ejcovmeno" oj ejcovmeno" oj ejcovmeno"
| ijskūrōvterov" mou ejstin, | [Eretai de ejcovmeno" oj ejcovmeno" oj ejcovmeno" |
| ou | oṷk ejm̄i; ik̄ano" | ou | oucj ejm̄i; ik̄ano" ou | oṷk ejm̄i; ik̄ano" |
| τα υ̭p̄lo̭d̄hvmata bastav̄sai: | τω̭n ṷp̄lo̭d̄hvmata ṷjtn̄: | τω̭n ṷp̄lo̭d̄hvmata ṷjtn̄: |
| 8 ejgw; ejbapti̯sa \ulma" u\{ dati αujto;" \ulma"'̄n baptivsw ejn pneṷm̄ati a̭giv̄w/ kai; puriv: | a̭giv̄w/ kai; puriv: a̭giv̄w/ kai; puriv: a̭giv̄w/ kai; puriv: |
| 12 ou | το; pruv̄n ejn th'̄ / cotri; aujtō'. | 17 ou | το; pruv̄n ejn th'̄ / cotri; aujtō' |
| kai; diakaqariv̄ th̄n a\{lw̄na aujtō', | diakaqariv̄ th̄n a\{lw̄na aujtō', |
| kai; sunaḡei\n ton si'ton aujtō' | kai; sunaḡei\n ton si'ton |
| ej̄'̄ th̄n a̭p̄pōq̄h̄v̄k̄h̄n, | ej̄'̄ th̄n a̭p̄p̄p̄o̭q̄h̄v̄k̄h̄n aujtō', |
|------------|-----------|------------|
| to; de; a'uron katakuvsei | to; de; a'uron katakuvsei | to; de; a'uron katakuvsei |
| puri; ajbevtw/ | puri; ajbevtw/ | |
| 18 Polla; me'n ou'n kai; e'tera parakalw'n ejhggelizeto toon laovn: | 19 oJ de; J'Hrwa/dh" oJ tetraavrch", ejlegevmeno" ulp ajtou' peri; J'Hrwa/davdo" th" gunako;" tou' ajdelfou' ajtou' kai; peri; pavntwn w|n ejpoivhsen ponhrw'n oJ J'Hrwa/dh", |
| 20 prosevhken kai; tou'to ejpi; pa'sin kai; katevkleisen toon Jlwavn'nhn ejt fulakh/ | 64 agreements of omission |
INTERNATIONAL PRETERIST ASSOCIATION:
REFORMATION OR RETROGRESSION?

Dennis M. Swanson
Seminary Librarian and Director of Israel Studies

The International Preterist Association (IPA) has made itself known most recently at significant venues across the United States. It serves as an umbrella organization for the theological/eschatological position called Hyper-Preterism (HP), a position that sees all prophecies of the future fulfilled in the period around A.D. 70. The ostensible motivation of the movement is to provide an answer to critics who think that Jesus was mistaken when He promised His return during the same generation of which He was a part. That motivation is flawed, however, because such critics doubt that Jesus ever existed and a response on that single issue is insufficient to change their minds. The methodology of IPA has been to position itself within the mainstream of evangelical Christianity by redefining preterist terminology and conveying the false impression of acceptance by evangelicalism. The theological claims of IPA are heterodox in the area of eschatology, lying outside any creed or statement of faith of orthodox Christianity. It rejects the millennial kingdom, the physical return of Christ, all post-A.D. 70 fulfillment of prophecy, and the traditional view of the resurrection. The consequences of IPA teachings lead to a hopeless and helpless church, a church with no remembrance and message, with no ethical imperative, with no hope and reason for patience, with no rewards for faithfulness, and with no purpose and useful equipment. The system amounts to a regression to the error of Hymenaeus and Philetus (2 Tim 2:18).

* * * *

Introduction

In the last several years an emerging eschatological movement has made itself well known and highly visible at the annual and regional meetings of the Evangelical Theological Society, the Christian Booksellers Convention, and other
significant venues. The International Preterist Association¹ (hereafter IPA) has become something of the umbrella organization for a group advocating the theological/eschatological position commonly known as Hyper-Preterism (hereafter HP).

This novel position initially began to form² within some Church of Christ assemblies in Ohio through the ministries of “C. D. Beagle and his son-in-law, Max King.”³ HP is the view that all biblical prophecy saw its fulfillment at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. It differs from the moderate form of preterism in terms of extent.⁴ Among other things, it teaches that (1) Christ has already returned and established His kingdom, (2) the resurrection of the just and unjust has occurred, (3) the final judgments have been pronounced at the Great White Throne, (4) Satan and his cohorts among men and the angelic realm have been cast into the lake of fire, and (5) Christians are now enjoying the new heavens and new earth.

The view has spread beyond the Church of Christ denomination through several writers and speakers, notably Edward E. Stevens, John Noé, and Randall E. Otto. For a while, the HP novelty seemed to be simply an internecine debate within the larger preterist sphere, so much so that outside those circles very few were aware of the issue. Of the large number of HP publications in about the last ten years, only three reviews of their books have appeared in non-preterist orientated publications.⁵

¹John Noé is president of another group called, Prophecy Reformation Institute (www.prophecyrefi.org). Max King is the leader of an organization called Living Presence Ministries (www.livingpresence.org). Several other Websites, including www.planetpreterist.com and www.preteristarchive.com, present Hyper-Preterist materials.

²Here we are speaking of the organization and systematization of the HP scheme: J. Stuart Russell’s book, The Parousia: A Study of the New Testament Doctrine of Our Lord’s Second Coming. This work was originally published anonymously and then with Russell’s name (London: Dalby, Isbiter & Co., 1878) and (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1887). Besides influencing Milton Terry and his work, Biblical Hermeneutics, Russell’s work made little impact and was out of print for nearly 100 years, until Walter Hibbard (who himself had adopted the HP position) arranged with Baker Book House to reprint the work in 1983. The Parousia is available through Baker Books and smaller single-subject publishers. However, even Russell was not entirely within the HP position as it is currently formulated. Russell viewed the millennial kingdom as “still future and unfulfilled” (523).

³Bob L. Ross, The Historical background of Modern Preterism or AD 70ism (Pasadena, Tex.: Pilgrim Publishing, n.d.) 2. This is one of a series of short monographs by Ross on the subject of preterism. All are available on his Website at http://members.aol.com/pilgrimpub/preterist.htm.

⁴We do not mean by this that extent is the only difference between preterism and HP. The theological and practical differences will be noted in the following sections. To date, preterist writers themselves have been among the most vocal critics of the HP position.

⁵In 1994 John F. Walvoord (Bibliotheca Sacra 151 [October-December 1994]:492) reviewed John Noé’s The Apocalypse Conspiracy (Brentwood, Tenn.: Wolgemuth & Hyatt Publishers, 1991). Another book by Noé, Beyond the End Times; The Rest of the Greatest Story Ever Told (Bradford, Pa.: Preterist Resources, 1999) has been reviewed by A. Boyd Luter (Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 43:4 [December 2000]:743-44); and by the present writer (The Master’s Seminary Journal 12/1 [Spring 2001]:119-21. While Walvoord’s review could be characterized as “dismissive” and not extremely detailed, the reviews by Luter and this writer were more thorough, although both have been characterized
However, in the last few years more interest has arisen in the HP position, caused in no small part by aggressive marketing by the IPA and the ubiquitous nature of the Internet. Anecdotally, this writer has recently served as interim pastor in two premillennial churches in which those advocating HP doctrine had to be disciplined. The growth of the HP position and claims of the IPA and related groups necessitate an examination what many have called the resurgence of the error of “Hymenaeus and Philetus” (2 Tim 2:18).

This article will briefly examine the HP position in four areas: (1) Motivation; (2) Methodology; (3) Claims; and (4) Consequences. The purpose is not to dispute with normative or classic preterists. Yet this discussion’s premillennial perspective will probably bring disagreement from such preterists over some points of argumentation. The present focus deals strictly with the HP position and its claims.\(^6\)

**IPA’s Motivation: Flawed**

Reading the material from HP authors, especially those associated with the IPA, clarifies their motivation immediately. The title of a recent book by John Noé states the motivation: *Dead in Their Tracks: Stopping the Liberal/Skeptic Attack on the Bible.*\(^7\) He follows the lead of *The Last Days According to Jesus,* in which R. C. Sproul introduces the objections to Christianity by the near nihilistic philosopher Bertrand Russell (1872-1970).\(^8\)

One of Russell’s objections to Christianity (and they were certainly not limited to the singular selection quoted by Sproul and Noé) was that Christ claimed that He would return within the lifetime of His hearers and, in fact, He did not.\(^9\) Noé as “scathing.”

\(^6\)For a recent and thorough treatment of traditional preterist (and by extension hyper-preterist) arguments, see Richard L. Mayhue, “Jesus: A Preterist or a Futurist?,” *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 14/1 (Spring 2003):9-22. The foundational issue in establishing preterism is the date for the writing of the Book of Revelation. As Mayhue notes, Regarding the writing dates for Revelation, Bible scholars generally recognize two possibilities. First, the early date is shortly before A.D. 70 (ca. A.D. 68) during Nero’s reign (A.D. 54-68). Second, the late date would be ca. A.D. 95 during Domitian’s time (A.D. 81-96). Significantly, a futurist would not have to change his eschatological thinking if a pre-A.D. 70 date for the writing were to be established. However, the preterist position is eliminated from consideration if the late date of ca. A.D. 95 can be validated (13).


\(^9\)Sproul notes (ibid.) that Russell did not believe that Christ actually existed as a real historical figure, but more likely was a literary creation of the Gospel writers. Russell wrote, Historically it is quite doubtful whether Christ existed at all, and if He did we do not know anything about Him, so that I am not concerned with the historical question, which is a very difficult one. I am concerned with Christ as He appears in the Gospels, taking the Gospel narrative as it stands,
also cites the “Father of the Historical Jesus” movement and noted liberal theologian, Albert Schweitzer, along with several Jewish and Islamic writers who object to Christianity on the same basis. Noë then cites the famous Christian apologist C. S. Lewis as one who concluded that Jesus was wrong about His second coming. Part of Noë’s citation has Lewis voicing the objections of Lewis’ created critic of Christianity,

It is clear that they [the disciples] expected the Second Coming in their own lifetime. And, worse still, they had a reason, and one which you will find very embarrassing. Their Master had told them so. He shared, and indeed created their delusion. He said in so many words, ‘this generation shall not pass till all these things be done.’ And He was wrong. He clearly knew no more about the end of the world than anyone else.  

To his credit, Noë takes these criticisms of the veracity of Christ and the inerrancy of the Bible seriously. He states,

Do you hear what these critics and even C. S. Lewis are saying? They are saying that Jesus was literally wrong when He made numerous time-restrictive predictions and statements regarding His coming, His return. As we shall see, the embarrassment belongs to C. S. Lewis et al. But this perceived weakness was, and still is, the crack that let the liberals in the door to begin their systematic criticism and dismantling of Scripture with its inevitable bankrupting of the faith. 

On this basis Noë asserts, “Regrettably, this ‘nonoccurrence’ problem cannot be lightly brushed aside without undermining the integrity and divinity of Christ and

10C. S. Lewis, The World’s Last Night and Other Essays (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1960) 98. In his citation, Noë actually references this essay as it appeared in The Essential C. S. Lewis, ed. Lyle W. Dorsett (New York: Collier Books, 1988; reprint, New York: Simon and Shuster, 1996) 383-92. A notation about IPA publications in general and Noë’s works in particular is in order. The works use many secondary and even tertiary sources as references. Sources are often poorly cited and even more poorly checked. In this case, Noë indicates that this essay was written in 1960, when in fact, it was first written in 1952 and appeared with a different title in the periodical Religion in Life. See the review of Noë’s Beyond the End Times (The Master’s Seminary Journal 12/1 [Spring 2001]: 119-21) for several other examples. One work published by the IPA, Daniel E. Harden, Overcoming Sproul’s Resurrection Obstacles (Bradford, Pa.: International Preterist Association, 1999), is perhaps the most egregious case to date. This book has no footnotes, even though it has extensive quotations (apparently) from various other writers. Occasionally only page numbers are listed, apparently referring to a short bibliography at the end of the book, but to no other real information. The formatting makes it difficult to know where a quotation ends and the author’s words begin. This is certainly not the paradigm for what purports to be informative or scholarly publications.

11Noë, Dead in Their Tracks 8. Edward E. Stevens makes the same comments (using a few of the same examples) in his work What Happened in A. D. 70? (Bradford, Pa.: Kingdom Publications, 1997)
placing the inerrancy of the Bible in question. It’s that simple. It’s that profound. And it calls for another reformation of Christianity around a more conservative and biblical view of eschatology.” His view is that only the HP position, which sees fulfillment of all prophecy in the A.D. 70 time frame, can answer the critics of the Bible and hopefully force them to see its truthfulness.

Despite the noble intentions and zeal exhibited here, the motivation of IPA and HP writers is overstated and apologetically flawed. A brief examination of the examples cited will demonstrate this. In the example of Russell, his objections regarding the parousia are a fraud at their very foundation. Russell was an atheist, and as already noted, he doubted that Jesus even existed! The idea that answering his objection about the supposed “nonoccurrence” of the second coming would sway him is naive at best. Russell stated,

“The whole conception of God is a conception from the ancient Oriental despotisms. It is a conception quite unworthy of free men. When you hear people in church debasing themselves and saying that they are miserable sinners, and the rest of it, it seems contemptible and not worthy of well-respecting human beings.”

In contrast to such unbelief, the writer Hebrews stated, “And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him” (Heb 11:6 [emphasis added]).

The Jewish skeptics that Noé cites are of another category. Judaism has consistently denied the identity of Jesus as the Messiah. Despite the overwhelming evidence of His deity and fulfillment of OT prophecy and even in light of the indisputable evidence of the resurrection, the Jewish leaders created an illusionary explanation as noted in Matt 28:11-15. The Islamic skeptics simply do not believe that Jesus ever claimed to be God or that He would ever return, as Noé himself notes. Islam teaches that these are simply lies that were added to the Bible. Efforts to prove that Jesus returned in A.D. 70 is a useless exercise as a foundation in witnessing to Muslims.

Regarding C. S. Lewis, the issue is a little more difficult. As significant an apologist for Christianity as he was, Lewis rejected the inerrancy and inspiration of Scripture. He was not a theologian and he affirmed several non-evangelical theological positions. For Lewis the seeming contradiction (between Jesus at one point saying that no one knows the day or hour and then seemingly giving an exact

---

12Noé, Dead in Their Tracks 10.
14Noé, Dead in Their Tracks 4.
15See Michael J. Christensen, C. S. Lewis on Scripture. (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1979).
time reference with “this generation”) was actually a mark of the “historical reliability” of the Bible. However, Lewis does get the issue correct when he states, “The doctrine of the Second Coming teaches us that we do not and cannot know when the world drama will end. The curtain may be rung at any moment: say, before you have finished reading this paragraph.” In this Lewis correctly understands that the doctrine of imminence is not so concerned with “soon” but rather with “at any time.”

But the motivation of the IPA and HP is flawed at a deeper level. Second Pet 3:4 declares that there will always be mockers, liberals and skeptics decrying the Christian faith asking, “[W]here is the promise of His coming?” As Hiebert notes, “‘Where is the promise of his coming?’ embodies their taunting reaction to the orthodox teaching concerning the return of Christ.” This is the same type of mocking that Isaiah dismissed in Isa 5:19 and the Lord through Ezekiel did the same in Ezek 12:21-25.

Richard L. Mayhue, addressing Sproul’s work particularly, clearly summarizes this issue as it relates to the HP position, stating,

The advocates of preterism appear to have missed, or at least undervalued, Peter’s reminder that in the days prior to A.D. 70 there also were scoffers similar to Russell and Schweitzer. Instead of foretelling the events of A.D. 70, just a few short years away, Peter encourages them to wait in faith, believing that all will eventually happen in God’s timing, which is different from man’s timetable (2 Pet 3:3-4, 8-9). Attempting to answer objections from the skeptics is no way to validate or evaluate a particular eschatological system.

IPA’s Methodology: “Spin Control”

The IPA has clearly attempted to position its unique views within the mainstream of evangelicalism and evangelical theology, because its theological conclusions have been labeled as heretical by both preterists and those who hold a futurist position. The noted preterist scholar, Kenneth L. Gentry, calls the position

---


18Ibid., 105.


21Mayhue, “Jesus: A Preterist or Futurist?” 12.
“heterodox,” stating, “It is outside of the creedal orthodoxy of Christianity.” Thomas Ice, Director of the Pre-Trib Research Center, wrote, “Both Dr. [Kenneth] Gentry and I believe that such a position is heretical, for it denies a bodily resurrection of believers and a future second coming of Christ.” MacArthur forcefully declares,

The hyper-preterist error is exactly like that of Hymenaeus and Philetus, who “strayed from the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past . . . . They overthrow the faith of some” (2 Tim. 2:18). The apostle Paul was not reluctant to speak plainly about the seriousness of such soul-destroying error, nor should we be hesitant to point out the dangers posted by such a serious departure from biblical truth. It is, after all, heresy of the worst stripe to deny the bodily return of Christ, and this particular brand of that heresy is currently overthrowing the faith of many.

Without using the term “heresy” R. C. Sproul states, “I share Gentry’s concerns about full preterism, particularly on such issues as the consummation of the kingdom and the resurrection of the dead.” West, however, does not mince words, calling HP a “damnable heresy.”

In view of these widely-shared conclusions, the IPA’s strategy has been to engage in what has been referred to in the political arena as “spin control,” that is, attempting to place itself in a favorable light by deflecting criticism away from the main issues. To that end, it has employed two main deceptions: (1) redefining terminology and (2) presenting an illusion of evangelical and, by extension, orthodox acceptance.

1. Redefining Terminology

Those associated with the IPA have strenuously objected to characterizing their position as “hyper-preterism.” They wish to be called “Full” or “Consistent” preterists. By doing this, they wish to redefine the terms of the debate granting to themselves the high ground as “consistent” and to give their opponents within the preterist camp labels such as “partial” or “inconsistent” preterists. In fact, in the IPA’s published material it always refers to its own position as “preterist” and all


23Thomas Ice and Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., The Great Tribulation: Past or Future? Two Evangelicals Debate the Question (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999) 7.


25R. C. Sproul, Last Days 158.

others as either futurist or partial preterists.\textsuperscript{27} As Edward Stevens, the current president of the IPA, notes,

Actually the term “preterist” is all that is needed to describe our view. “Preterist” means past fulfillment. Only those who take a past fulfillment of all the eschatological events (e.g. the return of Christ, resurrection, judgment) can rightly be called “preterist.”\textsuperscript{28}

Despite such disclaimers, it seems that the prefix “hyper” is entirely justified. Hyper connotes the taking of a position to perhaps a logical, but unwarranted and unbiblical, continuation. Two other examples in the theological world suffice to illustrate this: (1) hyper-Calvinism and (2) hyper-Dispensationalism.\textsuperscript{29}

The attempt to “spin” the terminology has not gone unnoticed and to a certain degree has been a successful tactic. R. C. Sproul attempts to forge some kind of peace in the use of terminology, and in so doing, grants to the IPA a victory in “spin.” Sproul states,

Maybe the terms that best describe the two positions are full preterism and partial preterism. Both are preterist with respect to some eschatological events, but both are not preterist with respect to all eschatological events. The terms full and partial can then be safely applied to these two positions.\textsuperscript{30}

However, this concession ignores the fact that the preteristic method of interpretation has a long history, a history that never included the novelties that the IPA and its associates have introduced since the early 1970s.\textsuperscript{31} To take the long-established theological and hermeneutical construct of preterism and grant to usurpers the high ground that the term “full” or “consistent” denotes, while relegating the established position to that of “partial” or some other weaker label, is to yield ground without reason. One preterist writer has seen this clearly and stated,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{27}As Luter noted in his review of Noë’s Beyond the End Times, preterists like Gentry must be “dumbfounded” to note that the HP’s label them as “futurists” (Luter, review of Beyond the End Times 744). This is simply more of the HP “spin” not only to redefine the terminology to suit their needs, but also to redefine the position of their opponents.
  \item \textsuperscript{28}Edward E. Stevens, Stevens Response to Gentry: Detailed response to Dr. Ken Gentry’s critique of the Preterist view entitled, “A Brief Theological Analysis of Hyper-Preterism” (Bradford, Pa.: International Preterist Association, 1999) 3. Virgil Vaduva, apparently the operator of the “Planet Preterist” Website (www.planetpreterist.com), has even filed an application with the United States government to “trademark” the word “preterism,” giving it Hyper-Preterists’ own definition in an attempt to gain control of the word, see http://tess2.uspto.gov/bin/showfield?f=doc&state=goj?b.2.1 (accessed 1/20/2004).
  \item \textsuperscript{29}Hyper-Dispensationalists also wish to be rid of the “hyper” label and so often they call themselves “Pauline Dispensationalists” or “Consistent Dispensationalists.” Hyper-Calvinists also often follow the same pattern, referring to themselves as “Consistent Calvinists.”
  \item \textsuperscript{30}Sproul, Last Days 155-56 [italics in the original].
  \item \textsuperscript{31}Ross, Historical Background 2.
\end{itemize}
We must not let them get away with calling themselves “preterists” or “consistent preterists,” or believers in “fulfilled eschatology.” The word “preterist” is a good word, the disciples of Hymenaeus are not preterists; their “dispensable eschatology” makes them heretics.\(^{32}\)

HP adherents are seeking to usurp a birthright that is not theirs.

2. *The Illusion of Evangelical Acceptance*

The IPA has maintained a conspicuous presence at both regional and national meetings of the Evangelical Theological Society. At the annual meetings for the last several years they have had a large and prominent display in the exhibitor’s area. Two of their leading spokesmen, John Noé and Randall E. Otto, have regularly presented papers at regional and national meetings. Noé’s books in particular, with few exceptions, always make mention that the material was originally presented at one ETS meeting or another.

On Noé’s Website (www.prophecyrefi.org) he notes that the flyer “9.5 Theses for the Next Reformation,” a sort of credo for the Hyper-Preterist movement, was released at the 2001 National ETS meeting. The press release for this document begins, “A new era in church history began last week with the “posting on the Church door”—i.e., presenting and distributing—of the 9.5 Theses for the Next Reformation document at the 53rd Annual Meeting of Evangelical Theological Society.”\(^{33}\) The press release goes on to talk about how many ETS participants “took” their material.

Their literature often contains anecdotal stories of “conversions” to their position, such as a “Christian college instructor” who was “convinced” of the position by reading Noé’s paper read at the 45th Annual Mid-Western Regional meeting of ETS.\(^{34}\) Of course, the “instructor” is not identified nor is his field of instruction divulged.

The IPA and other HP’s make a great deal out of the fact that the well-known theonomist theologian, David Chilton, “converted” to the HP position shortly before his death. However, Vern Crisler observes that before this conversion Chilton had suffered his first heart attack and his friends recognized that “the resulting neurological trauma probably affected his judgment more than he realized.”\(^{35}\) Crisler also predicted the “spin” of the IPA and other HP’s as he stated,

\(^{32}\)West, “Hymenaen Preterism” 22.


\(^{34}\) John Noé, *Dead in Their Tracks* vi & viii. The page numbers of this book are incorrect as the preface moves from page ”v” to an unnumbered page (which we have listed as page “vi” and then to page “vii.”

Chilton’s last minute conversion to heresy will be exploited by the remaining full-preterists, but they will only be exploiting a debilitated man’s eccentricities, not his healthy and mature judgments.36

Other attempts at “spin” can be noted in the material from IPA and its associates. In his work, What Happened in A.D. 70?, Edward E. Stevens, the president of the IPA, compiles an impressive bibliography. It is lengthy and outwardly impressive. He breaks down categories with two interesting headings. The first section he entitles “Books Which Teach a Similar View.”37 However, it is clear after looking at the listing of 76 works that “similar” is used in the most expansive manner possible. The next category, entitled “First-Century Fulfillment of Revelation,”38 is equally misleading. This unqualified statement attempts to give the impression that the listed writers agree with Stevens’ HP interpretations when, in reality, several of those listed have been among the most vocal critics of HP.39

Occasionally their “spin” borders on incredulity. One example is the aforementioned book by John Noé, Beyond the End Times. On the back cover a biographical sketch refers to Noé as a “conservative, evangelical scholar, and an active member of the Evangelical Theological Society.”40 However, in his preface for this book, Stevens, though calling him a “scholar,” admits, “John is not a professional theologian. He has had no formal seminary training, but that may be an advantage—it might have handicapped his communication style.”41 Whatever information this non sequitur may be intended to convey, it is certainly a strange manner in which one affirms his scholarly bona fides.

In the face of condemnation of their position by both the futurist and preterist camps, the concept of “spin-control” is certainly helpful public relations, but it is certainly less than forthright in many instances.42

34Ibid., 227.
36Ibid., 38.
37Various HP websites are also notorious for this type of misrepresentation. The “Preterist Archive” site (www.pretensarchive.com) lists dozens of writings as “Preterist Commentaries” that are clearly no such thing. Some of the names listed in their Websites as supposedly supporting their position include John Bengel, F. F. Bruce, and even John Nelson Darby!
38Noé, Beyond the End Times back cover.
39Ibid., x. According to the by-laws of the Evangelical Theological Society, Noé cannot be a “full member” as he lacks the necessary academic credentials. He can only be an associate member. Apparently this lack of education is no longer seen as an “advantage” as the most recent IPA publications indicate that Noé is currently a “candidate for a Ph.D. degree from Trinity Theological Seminary and the University of Liverpool” (an institution with recognition only from a non-recognized accrediting organization in Colorado).
40Whether a deliberate part of its “spin” or not, the IPA has used several different names for its publishing arm. Members have used mostly International Preterist Association. However, they have also used Kingdom Publications and Preterist Resources.
IPA’s Claims: Heterodox

The IPA’s claims have already been noted. In short, it claims that all biblical prophecy has been fulfilled, although Stevens attempts to deflect this slightly by stating that HP does not “teach that all prophecy has been totally fulfilled with absolutely no continuing implications, applications, or ongoing fulfillment.”43 By this he means that the present “Kingdom Age” continues to grow and expand:

The church only had the “earnest” and the “seal” of their kingdom inheritance during that transitional generation (AD 30-70). If anything, we in the post-70 period have a more relevant and applicable revelation [by which he means the Scripture]. We are now in the kingdom. The full inheritance is here. All the things Jesus, Paul and the other apostles taught about the kingdom now apply fully to us. Several prophetic passages have ongoing fulfillment in the kingdom (i.e. Ezek. 47:1-12 and Rev. 21:24-22:5).44

The HP’s, particularly Stevens, chafe at any mention or reference to the great doctrinal statements or creeds in the history of the church in evaluating their orthodoxy, especially as it relates to the resurrection of Christ and that of believers.

Creeds can be wrong since they embody more than just biblical material. They contain uninspired interpretations and applications of Scripture, which must always be subject to some suspicion of error. Only inspired Scripture is infallible and beyond question. And only the Biblical content of the creeds is above suspicion, error and correction.45

Though this statement is true, it is a two-edged sword for the HP’s. Stevens wants to believe that the creeds can be in error (which also is true), but somehow a material difference exists between a creedal statement and his own documentation of “properly exegeted Scripture.”46 What is a creedal or doctrinal statement other than a systematic presentation of the exegesis and interpretation of Scripture as it relates to different areas of doctrine? Stevens would like somehow to posit a supposed

43Stevens Response to Gentry 46. This is perhaps the most detailed response to criticisms faced by HP to date. However, it is a rambling 114 pages (as compared to Gentry’s original articles of little over two pages) of largely fallacious reasoning in which the tu quoque (commonly called the “you too”) fallacy is rampant. It majors on Gentry’s minor points and gives little attention to the major ones. Stevens fails to do any real exegesis of the texts that are raised in objection, making instead superficial and often non sequitur observations from the English Bible only.

44Ibid. It is beyond the scope of the present discussion to analyze how these two passages can possibly be viewed as having “ongoing fulfillment” today. In short the passage in Revelation speaks of (1) no longer any night or darkness, (2) no longer any curse [that is the complete reversal of Gen 3:14-17], (3) the glory and honor of the nations are brought into the New Jerusalem, (4) believers see Christ’s face to face. How one can claim that these things have begun to occur now, much less currently have “ongoing fulfillment,” staggers the imagination.

45Edward E. Stevens, Questions About the Afterlife (Bradford, Pa.: International Preterist Association, 1999) 1

46Ibid.
superiority of his interpretations of the Bible over against those that have been formulated throughout the last 2,000 years.

Here is the problem that the HP position cannot wish away. As Gentry notes, “No creed allows for any second Advent in A.D. 70. No creed allows any other type of resurrection than a bodily one. Historic creeds speak of the universal, personal judgment of all men, not a representative judgment in A.D. 70.” It is an indisputable fact that outside their own small group, they cannot point to a single denominational statement of faith, a single one of the great creedal statements in the history of Christianity, a single seminary or academic theological institution presently or in the past, that affirms the HP view on the return of Christ, the resurrection, and the judgments, and affirms that the new heavens and new earth have been enjoyed by believers since A.D. 70. HP finds bits and pieces here and there from this person or that (normally accomplished with violence to the original context and the overall corpus of a particular writer), but nowhere in the history of doctrine can it cite anything remotely resembling its unique theological construct.

The issue is not the creeds *per se* (which Stevens uses as a red herring); it is the absolute negation of the HP view in the history of the church. Stevens states, “Only the canon of Scripture can be used to determine true biblical orthodoxy.” But this is little more than obfuscation on his part. Though honesty forces one to admit that it is *possible* that the HP position is correct and all of Christendom for 2,000 years has been incorrect, that possibility is so remote as to be nonexistent.

Space does not allow for a full examination of some other claims of HP. However, four are briefly noted here:

- **Rejection of the Millennial Kingdom.** The HP position rejects the notion of a 1,000-year millennial kingdom, whether the 1,000 years is taken literally or figuratively. The only place it can fit in a millennium is in the 40 years or so between the Cross and its Second Advent. Max King has developed something that he calls “transmillennialism.” In this scenario the time before the Cross is called “This Age,” the period between the Cross and the Second Advent is the “Last Days,” and the post-A.D. 70 era is the “Age to Come.” Stevens is hopeful about this approach, stating, “I hope Max King’s suggestion (that the Millennium was the period from 30 to 70 AD) is the correct one (it certainly sounds

---

47 Gentry, “Theological Analysis” 23.
48 Stevens, *Response to Gentry* 17.
49 Max King, “Frequently Asked Questions” (questions 2-3), Living Presence Ministries, http://www.livingpresence.org/lpmfaq.htm (accessed 9/26/2002). For some reason King has actually trademarked the word “Transmillennialism.” Another HP writer, Kurt M. Simmons, has created another scheme called “Bimillennialism” or the idea that Rev 20 teaches that there will be two separate millenniums (http://preteristarchive.com/Preterism/simmons-kurt_05_p_01.html [accessed Jan. 19, 2004]).
good).”

- **Rejection of the Physical Return of Christ.** The HP position states that when Christ returned in AD 70 it was “in clouds of judgment.” This return was invisible to the physical eye. This is a patent rejection the description of Christ’s return predicted in Acts 1:11.

- **Rejection of Any Post-A.D. 70 Fulfillment of Prophecy.** Stevens claims that, “Jesus said that all OT prophecy would be fulfilled by the time Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70.” One passage among many in the OT, then, requires explaining. In the passage dealing with the New Covenant in Jeremiah 31, the chapter ends with a prophecy related to the city of Jerusalem (31:38-40). In that prophecy, physical Jerusalem is said to be (1) rebuilt and enlarged, (2) sanctified, and (3) immune from future destruction. The boundaries of the city are given with exacting geographic detail. This prophecy in the HP view apparently failed, in that the city was never rebuilt and enlarged to the borders stated in the prophecy, and even if it were, the prophecy failed because Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70 and also afterwards.

- **Rejection of the Traditional View of the Resurrection.** Since the resurrection occurred in A.D. 70, HP writers have to redefine what the resurrection means today. To accomplish this they, in large part, have adopted the views of Murray J. Harris concerning the nature of the resurrection, which certainly alters the nature of the physical resurrection, making it essentially “spiritual in nature.” Stevens, in rather convoluted language, denies that Christ had a literal physical resurrection body. He states, “Preterists are not removing the physical body

---

50 Stevens, “Questions and Answers” (http://www.preterist.org/preteristQA.ASP [accessed Feb. 11, 2004]).
51 Ibid.
52 Stevens, What Happened? 32.
53 For further, see this writer’s paper, “The Expansion of Jerusalem in Jeremiah 31:38-40: Never, Already, or Not Yet?” (a paper presented at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, Nashville, Tenn., 2000). As previously noted, if the traditional dating for the Book of Revelation is correct, then the entire superstructure of the HP and the normative preterist views collapses as does the HP demands that all of the NT have a pre-A.D. 70 date of writing.
54 See Murray J. Harris, Raised Immortal: Resurrection and Immortality in the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), and From Grave to Glory: Resurrection in the New Testament; Including a Response to Norman L. Geisler (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990). Harris’ works were highly controversial and led to a lengthy series of articles and exchanges, including Norman L. Geisler, The Battle for the Resurrection (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1989). In the height of the controversy a panel of scholars on behalf of the Evangelical Free Church examined Harris’ views. Stevens notes that the panel, “J. I. Packer, Gleason Archer and Peter Toon have all stated in print that they see Murray Harris’ position as Scripturally orthodox” (Stevens, Response to Gentry 52). Nine pages later in the same book, Stevens misrepresents Packer, Archer, and Toon, stating that they “take the same view of the resurrection body as Preterists [and Harris] do” (ibid., 61). It apparently escaped Stevens that there is a significant difference between stating that something falls within the realm of orthodoxy and personally agreeing with that position.
55 Stevens, Response to Gentry 51-55.
from the Bible’s systematic theology regarding the resurrection. It was never the ultimate kind of resurrection body God had planned and revealed in Scripture in the first place.\textsuperscript{56} Stevens presents this summation of the HP position on the resurrection:

The “change” of the living saints at AD 70 was not giving them their new bodies, but giving them immortality. For the dead saints, it was the reception of immortality, their new bodies, and full access to the presence of God. For both the dead and living saints, it was the consummation of the change that had already begun with Christ’s resurrection, and which was guaranteed (pledged, sealed) by the “eternal life” the Holy Spirit had quickened them with during the transition period. The “change” from being “dead in their trespasses and sins” to “alive in Christ Jesus” was fully consummated.\textsuperscript{57}

\textbf{IPA’s Consequences: A Hopeless and Helpless Church}

Beyond the theological implications of Hyper-Preterism, the practical life of the church must be a matter for consideration. Of course, the IPA does not like to refer to today’s church as the assembly of believers. Stevens states,

I’m not totally comfortable using the word “church” in reference to the Kingdom of God today. The word “church” just might refer to the “calling-out” process of the transitional period from 30-70 AD when Christ was building His Kingdom.\textsuperscript{58}

In the preface for the book, \textit{Beyond the End Times}, Stevens also remarks that the author (John Noë) is “working on a sequel that will explore more implications for Christians living after A.D. 70.”\textsuperscript{59} Such a work is certainly necessary to explain the absolute havoc their theology has wrought on the life of believers in the present age, however the church may be defined. It is clear that even a cursory examination of the NT will demonstrate that the outworking of the HP position leaves the church in a confused muddle of hopelessness and helplessness.

The HP’s overarching problem presented for believers today is that the totality of the NT is relegated to a past era, not really applicable in terms of imperatival commands. As Gentry has concluded, the position leaves the church without a revelation from God by which to guide their lives in this current age.

If all prophecy was fulfilled prior to A.D. 70 and if the entire New Testament spoke to issues in the pre-A.D. 70 time-frame, we do not have any directly relevant passages for

\textsuperscript{56}Ibid., 55.

\textsuperscript{57}Ibid., 65.


\textsuperscript{59}Noë, \textit{Beyond the End Times} xii.
us. The entire New Testament must be transposed before we can use it.\textsuperscript{60}

Beyond this, there are five specific passages of Scripture dealing with everyday life in the church that are rendered useless by the HP position.

1. \textit{The Church Is Left Without a Remembrance and Message}

   First Cor 11:26 gives the purpose of communion for the church. In the celebration of communion the assembly “proclaims the Lord’s death until He comes.” The phrase, “proclaiming the Lord’s death” can only refer to the totality of the gospel message. As Mare notes, communion is to be celebrated until “the second advent.”\textsuperscript{61} Erickson states that communion is “also a proclamation of a future fact; it looks forward to the Lord’s second coming.”\textsuperscript{62} Thiselton makes the point quite clear:

   Just as the sun outshines any source of illumination otherwise provided in everyday life, so when he (the Lord) \textbf{comes}, this reality [as pictured in communion] will eclipse and outshine the pledges and promises that have been hitherto pointed to it. In this sense the fellowship gathered around the \textit{table of the Lord} (10:21) provisionally and in partial measure constitutes the pledge and first preliminary imperfect foretaste of the “Supper of the Lamb” of the final consummation to which the Lord’s Supper points in promise. . . . The story does not reach its culmination until he \textit{comes}, and only then will the full meaning of all present moments be disclosed, beyond the need for partial significations.\textsuperscript{63}

   In the NT one of the clearest connections between evangelism and eschatology is Paul’s presentation at the Areopagus in Acts 17. In verses 30-31 Paul brings his address to conclusion with a call to repentance. The reason for repentance is καθότι (because, or in view of the fact) that God “has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness” (v. 31), and the proof of that is the resurrection from the dead. But for HP that day is past; Christ has returned and judgment has occurred. If he were preaching to a group of philosophic skeptics today, Paul would need an entirely different conclusion, according to HP.

2. \textit{The Church Is Left Without an Ethical Imperative}

   In Titus 2:11-15 Paul tells Titus to instruct those in Crete to live a godly life in light of their salvation. Particularly they are commanded to be “looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God, even Our Savior, Christ Jesus” (v. 13). Godly living is tied directly to the anticipation of Christ’s return. If

\textsuperscript{60}Gentry, “Theological Analysis” 23.


\textsuperscript{63}Anthony C. Thiselton, \textit{The First Epistle to the Corinthians}, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmian, 2000) 888-89 [bold and italics in the original].
that has already happened, the imperative is gone. Knight comments, “We live from the vantage point of ‘expectedly waiting’ and ‘looking forward’ to Christ’s appearing.” He further adds, “Paul joins to the instructions given by grace about living the Christian life (vv. 11-12) this note of looking forward to Christ’s appearing, so that the two give perspective to each other.”

Christian ethics and the outworking of the Christian life are always bound up in the anticipation of the return of Christ (see also Phil 3:15-21; 1 Tim 6:13-16). As Quinn summarizes,

The “sensible, honest, godly way” of Christian life does not derive itself from Greek ethical demonstrations; it does not hope for that knowledge (φῶς) of the good which the philosophers promised. The consolation and release that believers expect are bound up with the coming of the risen Lord and their own resurrection, literally, “the blessed hope and manifestation (εἰρήνης) of the glory of the great God and our savior, Jesus Christ.” “Hope” in the PE [Pastoral Epistles] means the person hoped for (see 1:2), Jesus, hidden for the time being but certain to appear.

Additionally, in verse 14 Paul states that Christ will “redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good works.” Since, according to the HP position, everything related to the second coming has already occurred, the conclusion must be that Christ has already purified a people. Romans 13:1-10 enjoins Christians to be subject to the governing authorities. But that set of imperatives is also enforced by anticipation of the second coming (v. 11). Far from giving a chronological time frame, Paul simply states, “[O]ur salvation is nearer now than when we first believed” (v. 11). Harrison, citing Leenhard, makes a point that HP needs to note:

The time of the appearing is subordinate to the fact of the appearing. “If primitive Christianity could note, without its faith being shaken thereby, that the ‘end’ did not come within the calculated times, that is just because the chronological framework of its hope was a secondary matter” (Leenhardt, in loc). The believer is not like a child looking for a clock to strike the hour because something is due to happen then. He is content to know that with every passing moment the end is that much closer to

---

64George W. Knight III, *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992) 321. See also I. Howard Marshall, *Commentary on Titus*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999). He adds that this text “shows that balance of realized and future divine action and salvation which is characteristic of the NT generally” (272). The Puritan divine, Thomas Taylor, demonstrates that this is an interpretation that has stood the test of time: “From this our apostle includes a very strong argument [the second coming of Christ] to enforce all the former duties, of which we have spoken in the verse going before, and an effectual means to contain believers in those duties” (Thomas Taylor, *Exposition of Titus* [Cambridge, 1619; reprint, Minneapolis: Klock and Klock, 1980] 348).

65Knight, *Pastoral Epistles* 321.

3. *The Church Is Left Without Hope and a Reason for Patience*

James 5:8 instructs the assembly to be patient amid oppression “because the coming of the Lord is at hand.” “The readers know that the Lord is coming back in the capacity of Judge. They ought to exercise patience toward their adversaries and demonstrate patience in respect to the coming of the Lord. He will avenge His people when he returns (II Thess 1:5-6).” Obviously, if the Lord has already come the church has no source of comfort when oppressed and persecuted.

Without the promise of a second coming, the church is alone and without hope in the world. No future coming Christ means no promise of God’s intervention on behalf of His people in this age. The HP position teaches that this present world will never end and offers no promise that the condition of this world will ever be anything beyond what it is: a place where the truth is suppressed by ungodly men, where Christians are persecuted and sometimes martyred, and false religions, cults and other error-laden philosophies spring up almost daily to capture men’s souls. In the middle of this, HP’s only hope for the believer is death, escape from this present and never-ending world. All of this would seemingly lead ultimately to a return to the “gloomy amillennialism” of Francis Turretin.

4. *The Church Is Left Without Rewards for Faithfulness*

In 1 Pet 5:4 the apostle instructs elders to exercise wise servant leadership over the flock, reminding them of the reward that will be theirs “when the Chief Shepherd appears.” This may seem like a minor issue, yet the thought of reward is extremely important in NT teaching. At the end of his life Paul stated, “[I]n the future there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing” (2 Tim 4:8). Paul speaks of this “day” as future and distant, certainly not in keeping with the relatively short time between his death in A.D. 68 and the HP notion of an A.D. 70 culmination.

5. *The Church Is Left Without a Purpose and With Useless Equipment*

---


69Noë, *Beyond the End Times* 41-57.

The Master’s Seminary Journal

The phrase “even to the end of the age” (Matt 28:20) limits the Great Commission (Matt 28:16-20). Since HP teaches that “the age to come” is already present, the age of the Great Commission, in their view, must no longer exist. Stevens admits this point, stating, “But the ‘Great Commission’ (just like the ‘Great Tribulation’) was a special time of inspired apostolic activity that will never be duplicated.” He admits “evangelism goes on” for the HP in this age, but it is certainly not the evangel of the NT that is proclaimed. Even the ministry of the Holy Spirit toward unbelievers is severely weakened. John 16:8 promises that the Spirit will “convict of sin, righteousness and judgment.” But if the final judgment has already occurred, of what does the Spirit convict men?

One of the more startling problems with the HP position arises when the Christian arrives at Eph 6:10-20. The entire imperative of Paul to “put on the full armor of God” is predicated on the need for such armor to “stand firm against the schemes of the devil” (6:11). Paul continues by warning believers that their battles are not against “flesh and blood” but against Satan and his demonic hosts. But according to the HP position Satan and his demons are no more, they have been cast into the Lake of Fire (Rev 20:10), no longer able to wage war against the saints. The “shield of faith” (Eph 6:16) needed to combat the “flaming missiles of the evil one” is needed no more. All the armor of God (which includes the Word of God) is rendered obsolete and useless, as the enemy for which it was designed is no longer a threat (see also Eph 4:27; 1 Tim 4:1ff.; 2 Tim 2:26). As Hoehner clearly demonstrates in his commentary on Ephesians,

Due to this, one must always be cognizant that the strategies or schemes of the devil are based on lies and are designed to deceive believers. Consequently, Paul exhorts believers to put on the full armor of God for the purpose of being able to stand firmly against the lying strategies of the devil. In these strategies, the devil is crafty in that he “does not always attack through obvious head-on assaults but employs cunning and wily stratagems designed to catch believers unawares.” They are told not to attack the devil or advance against him; they are only told to “stand,” hold the territory that Christ and his body, the church, have conquered. Without the armor of God it is certain that believers will be deceived and defeated by those “schemes” of the devil, which have been effective for thousands of years.

Hoehner clearly points out, “[T]he entire armor is absolutely necessary in the

---

71 Stevens, Response to Gentry 104.
72 Ibid.
73 This is perhaps one of the most remarkable aspects of the HP scheme, the idea that Satan and demons have been completely and eternally dispatched to the Lake of Fire. To propose that there is no Satanic activity in the world today is utterly ridiculous.
74 Harold W. Hoehner, Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002) 824. See also Hoehner’s entire argumentation on the nature of the battle as being against spiritual evil personally lead and directed by Satan and the relation of the armor to that battle (819-54).
spiritual warfare against the devil and his angels.75 In the same context, one wonders what the HP view of prayer (v. 18) might be.

One of the most dramatic charges to pastoral fidelity and responsibility is in 2 Tim 4:1-5 where Timothy is told to “preach the Word.” However, Paul prefices the charge with the concept that it is to be done to serve God and Christ Jesus, who will “judge the living and the dead by His appearing and His kingdom” (v. 1). If that appearing has already happened and the judgment has fallen, the entire motivation for gospel preaching is severely weakened. Additionally, the HP teachers must also believe that “the god of this world” is no longer blinding “the minds of the unbelieving that they might not see the light of the Gospel” (2 Cor 4:4) since, again, Satan has been dispatched to the Lake of Fire.

Why the NT writers have no instruction about the Christian life for the post-A.D. 70 believers is an eminently significant issue, one that HP has no answer for. Every affirmation for the message of the church, the ethical conduct of the church, hope for the church in light of persecution, rewards for faithfulness, and the purpose and equipping of the church are all bound up in passages that teach believers to “look forward” to a future appearing of Christ, a future resurrection of the saints, and a future judgment of the wicked. The HP position robs the church of every precious promise and comfort in this life that God affords to His people.

Conclusion

The IPA trumpets the claim that its view of preterism may be the “spark that ignites the next Reformation of Christianity.”76 Strangely, nowhere in their numerous writings do its associates ever detail what this “reformation” would entail or what they expect to see happen.

In his review of Noé’s book, Beyond the End Times, A. Boyd Luter has written, “No doubt, much of his overall theological position is within the evangelical pale. However, I know of no denomination or academic institution, of whatever evangelical stripe, with an eschatological plank of consequence in its doctrinal position that Noé could affirm.”77 In this assessment Luter is far too kind. The particular eschatological position of the IPA or HP and its resulting conclusions cannot categorized as evangelical, even in the broadest sense.

The HP position, as currently construed, is “comprehensive” in that it (whether its adherents realize it or not) has developed a theological construct that affects every aspect of theology and biblical interpretation.78 So pervasive are the implications of this system and so pernicious are the outcomes that it is not too much

---

75Ibid., 853.
76John Noé, 9.5 Theses for the Next Reformation (Fishers, Ind.: Prophecy Reformation Institute and Bradford, Pa.: International Preterist Association, 2001).
77Luter, review of Beyond the Ends Times 744.
78See Gentry, “Theological Analysis” for a listing of the implications of the HP position.
to call this movement “proto-cultic,” that is, a potential cult in the making.

The implications of HP in terms of both theology and practical Christian living will not lead to the “reformation” envisioned by its adherents; it can only lead to “retrogression,” a movement backwards to the error of Hymenaeus and Philetus, an error Paul roundly condemned as “overthrowing the faith of many” (2 Tim 2:18).
THE FOLLY OF THE CROSS

Donald E. Green
Faculty Associate in New Testament

First Cor 1:23 indicates that both Jews and Gentiles refused to believe Paul’s preaching of Christ crucified. They rejected the message in part because of the cultural connotations of crucifixion in the first century. Crucifixion was a vulgar, common execution that the Romans imposed on notorious criminals, prisoners of war, and rebellious slaves. Its harsh brutality symbolized the supremacy of the Roman government over the victim. Gentiles thus viewed crucifixion as a sure sign of the victim’s defeat. Jews, on the other hand, held crucified men in even greater contempt because to them crucifixion was a sign of God’s curse on the victim. Paul’s preaching of Christ crucified thus cut deeply against the grain of his culture. Jews rejected the idea that the Messiah could be crucified (and thus cursed) and looked for signs instead. Gentiles rejected as foolishness the notion that a crucified man could be the only Savior of mankind and sought eloquent rhetoric in its place. Paul’s example challenges today’s Christian leader to confront the culture with the same message of Christ crucified and not to cater to the latest fads in marketing the gospel to the passing whims of unbelievers.

* * * *

The Folly of the Cross in New Testament Preaching

When Jesus Christ commissioned His disciples to preach the gospel, He sent them with a message that collided with the cultural sensibilities of the day. His death and resurrection were the basis for the forgiveness of sin, yet both Jews and Gentiles found the manner of His death—crucifixion—to be a severe impediment to receiving the gospel because they viewed crucified men with complete disdain.

The apostle Paul mentioned these obstacles in 1 Cor 1:23. “Christ crucified” was “to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness.” The reason for those obstacles can only be understood with an awareness of the historical background of crucifixion in the first-century Roman Empire. This essay will explain that background to enable the reader to understand why Paul’s audience found the message of a crucified Savior so repulsive.

First will come a survey of the history of crucifixion in the ancient world, followed by a more specific examination of crucifixion in the Roman Empire. The discussion will identify the usual victims of crucifixion, together with the specific manner by which they were crucified. Then, it will describe the attitudes of Jews and Gentiles toward crucifixion. Once this historical background has been developed, it will explore its bearing on the interpretation of 1 Cor 1:23. Finally, it will briefly suggest some modern applications to Christian life and ministry.
A Historical Survey of Crucifixion

As practiced in the ancient world, crucifixion was a form of capital punishment in which the victim was attached to a wooden cross and left to die. Its origin is generally attributed to the Persian Empire, although evidence indicates that diverse barbarians such as the Indians, Assyrians, and Scythians also employed the practice.

The ancient historian Herodotus establishes the widespread existence of crucifixion by the time of the Persians, although the exact form of crucifixion is not always clear in his writings. For example, the Median king Astyages (585-550 B.C.) “impaled” his advisers after they persuaded him to allow his rival Cyrus to escape. Herodotus also records a corpse being hung on a cross as a final disgrace to the deceased; the narrow escape of Egyptian physicians from impalement by Darius; and a royal judge who was actually taken down from a cross when Darius reconsidered the death penalty he had ordered against him.

Those examples illustrate the use of crucifixion for individual or small-group executions. Yet some leaders also employed crucifixion in mass executions, as shown in Darius’ crucifixion of Babylonian inhabitants. Herodotus writes,

Darius . . . chose out near three thousand of the leading citizens, and caused them to be crucified, while he allowed the remainder still to inhabit the city.

Crucifixion continued after the fall of the Persian Empire. Curtius Rufus records how Alexander the Great crucified two thousand survivors from the siege of Tyre:

Then the anger of the king offered a sad spectacle to the victors. Two thousand persons, for whose killing the general madness had spent itself, hung fixed to crosses over a huge stretch of the shore.

Crucifixion is also recorded in the Hasmonean era (142-63 B.C.). A particularly brutal incident occurred when Alexander Janneus (102-76 B.C.) crucified eight hundred Pharisees while their wives and children were viciously

---

3 Hengel, Crucifixion 24.
5 Ibid., 3.125.3, in History 2:424.
6 Ibid., 3.132.2, in History 2:428.
7 Ibid., 7.194.1, in History 4:133.
8 Ibid., 3.159.1, in History 2:442.
murdered at their feet.\textsuperscript{10} This horrifying mass execution quelled the dissent against Jannaeus’ rule for the moment and no doubt seared the awfulness of crucifixion on Jewish consciousness for many years to come.

When the Romans ascended to power in 63 B.C., they also employed crucifixion, apparently learning the practice from the Phoenicians through Carthage.\textsuperscript{11} Josephus describes several crucifixions in first-century Palestine. Varus of Syria (d. 9 B.C.) crucified two thousand men after squashing a revolt in Judea just prior to the turn of the century.\textsuperscript{12} An unspecified number of Jews underwent crucifixion after another revolt following a quarrel between Jews and Samaritans,\textsuperscript{13} and several prisoners of war were crucified in Caesarea.\textsuperscript{14}

Felix, the procurator of Judea from A.D. 52-58, crucified many robbers—“a multitude not to be enumerated”—while he was in power.\textsuperscript{15} Nero crucified Christians in his garden following the burning of Rome in A.D. 64.\textsuperscript{16} Gessius Florus, procurator of Judea from A.D. 65-70, crucified many people, including men despite their Roman dignity as members of the equestrian order.\textsuperscript{17} Still further, Titus crucified so many Jews during the siege of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 that the soldiers did not have room for the crosses and exhausted their supply of crosses to hold the bodies.\textsuperscript{18}

The heavy employment of crucifixion apparently lasted until the days of Constantine (d. 337). The fifth-century church historian Sozomen says Constantine abolished crucifixion in honor of Christ, nearly 1,000 years after the Persians used crucifixion during Astyages’ reign.\textsuperscript{19}

From this brief survey, it is clear that crucifixion was common for several centuries before the time of Christ. The manner of the Lord’s death was common for that era, which partly explains first-century skepticism toward the message of “Christ crucified.” How could Christ be someone exceptional (let alone God incarnate!) when He died a common death like thousands before Him?

The preceding discussion has addressed crucifixion only in general terms. The next section will explain more specifically the Roman use of crucifixion, specifically identifying the victims and the methods of crucifixion employed.

\textsuperscript{11}Josephus, \textit{Antiquities} 13.14.2.
\textsuperscript{13}Josephus, \textit{Antiquities} 17.10.10.
\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., 20.5.2.
\textsuperscript{15}Josephus, \textit{Wars} 2.12.6.
\textsuperscript{16}Ibid., 2.13.2.
\textsuperscript{17}Tacitus, \textit{The Annals} 15.44.
\textsuperscript{18}Josephus, \textit{Wars} 2.14.9.
\textsuperscript{19}Ibid., 5.11.1. These Jews were crucified after their death to demoralize the remaining inhabitants of the city.
The Roman Use of Crucifixion

As a general rule, Roman citizens were exempt from crucifixion. The punishment was used on rebellious slaves and during military conquests over foreign provinces. The Romans also crucified notorious criminals such as robbers and assassins.

Nevertheless, crucifixion was occasionally imposed even on Roman citizens guilty of treason or serious crimes that threatened national security. In those instances, the victims forfeited the protections of Roman citizenship because of their criminal activity.

The Empire’s policies on crucifixion conditioned Roman citizens to view crucified men with universal contempt. The crucified were either rebellious slaves, the lowest of criminals, or defeated and humiliated foes of the empire.

The victims’ indignity went beyond their alleged crimes or military defeat, however. The Romans crucified their victims publicly to deter crime and help maintain public order. Further, they had rather systematized crucifixion so that it thoroughly tortured and demeaned the crucified. First, the victim was flogged with a leather whip studded with bone or metal. This flogging reduced the back and shoulders to throbbing ribbons of bleeding flesh. The condemned then shouldered the crossbar upon which he was to be hung and carried it to the place of crucifixion (cf. John 19:17).

As he walked, a placard around his neck indicated the crime(s) of which he had been convicted. Once to the execution site, he was stripped naked and his outstretched arms were tied or nailed to the crossbar. Then, the crossbar was hoisted and fastened to an upright post. A small peg gave the condemned a place to sit to somewhat relieve the strain on his arms.

The time on the cross was one of grotesque agony for the victim. Though death could be hastened through breaking the legs (cf. John 19:31-33), it was often delayed for days as the crucified slowly succumbed to exhaustion or suffocation.

The final indignity came when the corpse was left on the cross to rot or provide food for animals and crows. Occasionally, however, the body would be given to relatives.

21Hawthorne, “Cross” 1:1038.
22Hengel, Crucifixion 39.
23The distinction between citizen and non-citizen is consistent with the traditions handed down regarding the martyrdom of the apostles Paul and Peter. Paul, the citizen, was beheaded. Peter, the non-citizen, was crucified head down (William Byron Forbush, ed., Fox’s Book of Martyrs [Philadelphia: Universal Book and Bible House, 1926] 4).
27Lintott and Watson, “Cruciﬁxion” 411.
or friends for burial (cf. John 19:38). 29

The foregoing description of crucifixion represents only the most general pattern. In actual practice, the manner of execution could vary considerably depending on the whim and sadistic impulses of the executioners. 30 Josephus describes multiple tortures and positions of crucifixion during the siege of Jerusalem as Titus crucified the rebels. 31 Seneca relays a separate incident that confirms this:

   I see crosses there, not just of one kind but made in many different ways: some have their victims with head down to the ground; some impale their private parts; others stretch out their arms on the gibbet. 32

Those historical accounts help explain why modern writers have identified at least four different kinds of crosses, shaped as follows: the letter T; the letter X; the plus sign +, and the final form which was shaped like a lowercase t. 33

The t is most likely the one used in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. It consisted of an upright beam that projected above the shorter crossbeam. The projection of the vertical beam above the horizontal beam would have provided room for the inscription of the charge against Jesus to be nailed above His head (Matt 27:37; Luke 23:38; John 19:19). 34

Modern archaeology has confirmed the ancient testimony about crucifixion practices. The remains of a first-century victim of crucifixion, replete with pierced forearms and heel bones joined together by an iron nail, have been discovered in Israel. 35 Those findings, though not directly related to the crucifixion of Christ, evidence a first-century Palestinian crucifixion consistent with the ancient records. They are particularly interesting since they come from non-Christian teamwork with no bias in favor of the biblical account of Christ’s crucifixion. 36

**Roman Attitudes toward Crucifixion**

In light of the crucified’s degraded status and the heinous nature of the punishment, Gentiles understandably and not surprisingly viewed the victim with the utmost contempt. Indeed, “crucifixion” was a virtual obscenity not to be discussed.

---

29Ibid.
30Hengel, Crucifixion 25.
31Josephus, Wars 5.11.1.
34Ibid.
in polite company. The cultured world did not want to hear about crucifixion, and consequently, as a rule, they kept quiet about it.\footnote{Hengel, Crucifixion 38.}

That attitude can be seen in Cicero’s speech defending a Roman senator named Rabirius against a murder charge. As part of his trial strategy, Cicero warned against the runaway prosecutor who was suggesting crucifixion as the penalty for Cicero’s client, a Roman citizen. Cicero sought to sway the jury with the plea, “The very word ‘cross’ should be far removed not only from the person of a Roman citizen, but from his thoughts, his eyes, his ears.”\footnote{Cicero, “The Speech In Defence of Gaius Rabirius,” sec. 16, in The Speeches of Cicero, trans. H. Grose Hodge, The Loeb Classical Library (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1927) 467.}

The deep contempt Gentiles had for those crucified is best seen, however, in pagan statements against Christian worship of Christ. Several examples are worth noting.

First, pagan ridicule can be seen in a graffito scratched on a stone in a guardroom on Palatine Hill near the Circus Maximus in Rome. The graffito shows the figure of a man with the head of an ass hanging on a cross. Just below the cross, another man is shown raising his hand in a gesture of adoration. The inscription reads, “Alexamenos worships his god.”\footnote{Everett Ferguson, Backgrounds of Early Christianity, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993) 559-61.} This comparison of Christ to an ass, so repulsive to believers today, vividly illustrates pagan contempt toward the crucified Christ whom Paul proclaimed.\footnote{Ibid., 561.}

Further animosity is seen in Justin’s First Apology (c. A.D. 152). He summarizes the views of Christian opponents by saying, “They proclaim our madness to consist in this, that we give to a crucified man a place second to the unchangeable and eternal God, the Creator of all.”\footnote{Justin Martyr, “The First Apology of Justin,” in The Ante-Nicene Fathers, eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969) 1:167.}

Still later, Origen (A.D. 185-254) quoted his opponent Celsus as mocking Christianity by saying,

And in all their writings (is mention made) of the tree of life, and a resurrection of the flesh by means of the ‘tree,’ because, I imagine, their teacher was nailed to a cross, and was a carpenter by craft; so that if he had chanced to have been cast from a precipice, or thrust into a pit, or suffocated by hanging, or had been a leather-cutter, or stone-cutter, or worker in iron, there would have been (invented) a precipice of life beyond the heavens, or a pit of resurrection, or a cord of immortality, or a blessed stone, or an iron of love, or a sacred leather! \textit{Now what old woman would not be ashamed to utter such things in a whisper, even when making stories to lull an infant to sleep?}\footnote{Origen, “Against Celsus,” in The Ante-Nicene Fathers, eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968) 4588 [emphasis added].}

This animosity toward crucified men was deeply engraved on the social consciousness of the world to which Paul brought his message about a crucified
Jewish Attitudes toward Crucifixion

Jewish attitudes toward crucifixion are evident in two areas. First, the Jews detested the Roman practice of crucifixion. The Roman government had exclusive authority over the death penalty in Judea at the time of Jesus, having taken it out of the hands of the Sanhedrin in the middle of the first century B.C. Crucifixion was thus a reminder of the absence of Jewish autonomy in Palestine. This helps explain the Jewish statement to Pilate, “We are not permitted to put anyone to death” as they sought the crucifixion of Christ (John 18:31). The heavy use of crucifixion by the Romans in subjugating Judea also affected Jewish views. Hengel writes, “The excessive use made of crucifixion by the Romans in the pacification of Judea meant that from the beginning of direct Roman rule crucifixion was taboo as a form of the Jewish death penalty.”

More strikingly, the Jews viewed the victim of crucifixion with even more contempt than did the Gentiles. Though Gentiles viewed crucifixion as a punishment reserved for detestable people like rebellious slaves, criminals, and defeated foes of the Roman Empire, the Jews believed the victim was cursed by God (cf. Deut 21:23). Consequently, the stigma went beyond social disgrace to a declaration of God’s spiritual judgment against the victim.

This attitude was deeply ingrained in Jewish thought. The second-century Mishnah indicates that blasphemers and idolaters especially were to be hanged in this manner. The Mishnah rhetorically states, “Why is this one hanged? Because he cursed the name, and the Name of Heaven was found defiled.”

Though normally the Jews did not crucify living persons, they did hang corpses as a means of intensifying the shame of their death. The corpse was hanged by fastening the hands together and affixing them to a beam fixed in the ground with a crosspiece. The beam was leaned against a wall then taken down immediately. That fulfilled the curse of Deut 21:23, and also allowed the corpse to be buried the same day.

So the Gentile contempt for the crucified was exceeded only by the Jewish belief that the victim was actually under God’s curse. With that historical background in mind, attention can now turn to its significance for the interpretation of 1 Cor 1:23.

---

45 Ibid. Their surpassing contempt for Christ can be measured by their desire to see Him crucified—a method of punishment they normally abhorred.
46 Hengel, Crucifixion 85.
47 Ibid., 83.
49 Hawthorne, “Cross” 1:1038. The Jewish ruler Alexander Janneus was an exception.
50 O’Collins, “Crucifixion” 1:1207; Drumwright, “Crucifixion” 1042.
Crucifixion and the Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 1:23

Humanly speaking, these cultural attitudes toward crucifixion presented a formidable obstacle to the spread of the gospel in the first century. Jews and Gentiles alike viewed the crucified with extreme contempt and scorn. A crucified man was a societal reject; but a crucified god was a contradiction in terms. Nevertheless, the centerpiece of Paul’s message was “Christ crucified.” A starker contrast with prevailing societal thought could scarcely be drawn.

But Paul’s message did more than contradict prevailing wisdom. It also ignored the desires and demands of the first-century audience. In 1 Cor 1:22, Paul says Jewish listeners were looking for signs—miraculous wonders that would authenticate a messianic claim.51 By contrast, the Gentile hearers were looking for wisdom to satisfy their intellectual pursuits.52 “Christ crucified” was the polar opposite of both expectations. Obviously, Paul did not give his audience what they wanted to hear.

Paul describes the impact of this message in the midst of that hostile environment in 1 Cor 1:23. The reaction was hardly favorable. Jews saw “Christ crucified” as a “stumbling block,” and Gentiles found it to be “foolishness.” Those respective reactions will now be examined.

“Stumbling block” comes from the Greek term σκάνδαλον (skandalon), which refers to a “temptation to sin” or “an enticement to apostasy and unbelief.”53 A stumbling block was “an obstacle in coming to faith and a cause of going astray in it.”54

In other words, the spiritual offense of the cross actually worked to make some Jews go astray. Remarkably, the crucifixion—so essential to eternal life—actually hindered Jews from coming to saving faith. They simply could not overcome their preconceived notions about the significance of crucifixion. As one writer puts it, “He who is placed there for faith Himself becomes an obstacle to faith.”55 The very content of Paul’s message caused Jews to turn away.

In some respects, this reaction could be expected. The Jewish mind, unenlightened by the Holy Spirit, could only have concluded that the proffered Messiah was cursed. To believe in Christ would be to embrace an oxymoron. They would have had to jettison their messianic presuppositions about a conquering Messiah, and also overlook centuries of conditioning about the accursed nature of all who were crucified. The gospel called them to surrender to the very one they considered “smitten of God and afflicted” (Isa 53:4). The challenge of the message was extreme and the Jewish reaction against it predictable.

The Gentiles, by contrast, considered Paul’s message to be “foolishness,” which comes from the Greek term μωρία (mória). The significance of “foolishness” in this context is debated. One theological dictionary says mória in this context indicates only superficial foolishness. Paul’s preaching of “Christ crucified”

---

55 Ibid., 7:352.
“must have seemed very tactless” to his hearers because crucifixion was not discussed in polite company, as noted above. According to this view, Paul violated prevailing etiquette by openly discussing a crucifixion.56

That view, however, does not adequately account for the historical background underlying 1 Cor 1:23. True, worthy citizens did not discuss crucifixion in cultured company, but Paul obviously intends far more in this context. He was addressing the impact of an exclusive message of salvation that had as its central component an itinerant preacher from Judea who had been crucified at the hands of the Roman army. Given the degraded status of crucified men, Gentiles would have found Paul more than uncouth. In the midst of Roman power and world domination, they would have found Paul’s message to be utterly ridiculous. Paul was speaking absurdities not worthy of serious consideration. That is the foolishness Paul described in 1 Cor 1:23.

An examination of contemporary Roman writers bears out that conclusion. They variously call Christianity a “pernicious superstition,”57 a “depraved and excessive superstition,”58 and “figments of an unhealthy belief, and vain sources of comfort.”59 Obviously, “Christ crucified” was utterly mad and contradicted all prevailing rational thought.60 Thus, though the Jews had to abandon their notions of a curse being upon the crucified, the Gentiles had to abandon their associations of weakness and contempt before they could believe in Christ. It was simply preposterous to suggest that this crucifixion was the focal point of the redemption of mankind.61 Hengel writes,

To believe that the one pre-existent Son of the one true God, the mediator at creation and the redeemer of the world, had appeared in very recent times in out-of-the-way Galilee as a member of the obscure people of the Jews, and even worse, had died the death of a common criminal on the cross, could only be regarded as a sign of madness. The real gods of Greece and Rome could be distinguished from mortal men by the very fact that they were immortal—they had absolutely nothing in common with the . . . one who . . . was bound in the most ignominious fashion and executed in a shameful way.62

The importance of this perspective on the first-century preaching of the gospel can scarcely be overstated. When Paul boasted in 1 Cor 1:23 that he preached “Christ crucified,” he understood that his message cut deeply against the grain of his culture. Yet the apostle was undeterred. Paul understood that cultural expectations did not alter his responsibility to preach the truth, nor did those

60Hengel, Crucifixion 1; Fee, 1 Corinthians 76.
61Hengel, Crucifixion 19-20.
62Ibid., 6-7.
expectations hinder the power of the gospel to save. Remarkably, Paul did not alter the message even though it often turned his hearers away.

So instead of signs, the Jews got a stumbling block. Instead of wisdom, the Gentiles got foolishness. God was pleased to manifest His power through that enigma to save sinners from doom (1 Cor 1:18, 24).

**Practical Application**

When evaluating 1 Cor 1:23, the expositor is struck by the lack of modern analogies to crucifixion, at least in American society. The haze of time has obscured the repulsive connotations of crucifixion. Modern executions provide no comparison, because they occur behind penitentiary walls, away from public scrutiny. Consequently, a crucified Savior does not sting today’s ears as it did in the first century.

Still, Paul’s insistence on preaching Christ crucified is rich and vital to the modern believer. First, 1 Cor 1:23 strengthens him to overcome antagonism and rejection in personal evangelism. Modern man does not differ from the first-century Roman. Neither one wants to hear about a sovereign Lord who demands allegiance, repentance from sin, and faith in the crucified Christ. People today still reject the gospel even though crucifixion per se may not be the catalyst of the rejection. Paul’s example can guard the believer from the temptation to conform the gospel to the perceived desires of the lost. A recollection that Paul was scorned lessens the believer’s fear of rejection in personal evangelism.

On a broader scale, this verse shows the church of Jesus Christ that it must return to cultural confrontation with its gospel preaching instead of pursuing cultural accommodation. “Christ crucified” was not a “seeker-friendly” message in the first century. It was an absurd obscenity to Gentiles and a scandalous oxymoron to Jews. The gospel guaranteed offense.

The modern church would do well to reflect on that example. Its efforts to remove the offense of the cross flatly contradict the apostolic pattern. Paul did not meet the expectations or desires of his audience. Rather, he honored God by preaching the message entrusted to him. In so doing, he gave the culture what it needed—the transforming power of Jesus Christ leading to salvation—and God was pleased through such seeming foolishness to save those who believed.

That truth must significantly impact how everyone in Christian leadership proclaims the gospel. The content of the message must be determined by the Scriptures that speak of “Christ crucified,” not modern marketing concerns that cater to audience desires. The audience does not dictate the message; the message dictates to the audience. Such a conviction will anchor preaching in the eternal, unchanging truth of God’s Word instead of the passing fancies and sensibilities of man.

In the final analysis, 1 Cor 1:23 shows that allegiance to the truth supersedes any desire to please men. Far better to live under the smile of God than to dilute the gospel for the approval of men and thereby empty the cross of its power (1 Cor 1:17). True, the church of Christ may face ridicule, rejection, or persecution

---

"Ibid., 5.

"One can only speculate how the seeker-friendly model of ministry would respond to Paul’s example at this point. For a popular-level exposition showing how this material affects the proclamation of the gospel to unbelievers, see John MacArthur, *Hard to Believe* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 19-36."
for being “out-of-step” with the times. But let the praise of the world pass by. Perhaps the Lord would be pleased to use such foolishness to call some of His own through the ministry of the good news of the cross.

Conclusion

The historical background of 1 Cor 1:23 shows that Paul’s message of “Christ crucified” directly collided with the cultural and spiritual wisdom of his day. The gospel was utter folly to the natural mind of both Jews and Greeks due to their abhorrence of crucifixion. Consequently, its success in the conversion of thousands during Paul’s ministry can only be explained by the power of God (1 Cor 1:18).

Though crucifixion does not offend the modern ear as it did in ancient times, the gospel itself still offends. Today’s Christian leader should not shrink from that offense. Those faithful to the truth will find their message stamped with the authenticity of God—even if unbelievers spurn the truth as they did in Paul’s day.
PHILOSOPHICAL NATURALISM AND THE AGE OF THE EARTH: ARE THEY RELATED?

Terry Mortenson∗

Contemporary concern over the negative impact of theories of biological evolution is justified, but many Christians do not understand the stranglehold that philosophical naturalism has on geology and astronomy. The historical roots of philosophical naturalism reach back into the sixteenth century in the works of Galileo Galilei and Francis Bacon. Evolutionary and naturalistic theories of the earth’s creation based on uniformitarian assumptions and advocating old-earth theories emerged in the late eighteenth century. In the early nineteenth century, many Christians sought to harmonize biblical teaching with old-earth geological theories such as the gap theory and a tranquil or local Noachian flood. However, many evangelicals and High Churchmen still held to the literal view of Genesis 1–11. Two Enlightenment-generated philosophical movements in the eighteenth century, deism and atheism, elevated human reason to a place of supreme authority and took an anti-supernaturalistic view of the Bible, holding it to be just another human book. The two movements with their advocacy of an old-earth and their effect on astronomy and geology preceded Darwin and supplied him with millions of years needed for his naturalistic theory of the origin of living things. From this lineage it is clear that geology is not an unbiased, objective science and that old-earth theories, naturalism, and uniformitarianism are inseparable. Intelligent-design arguments usually used to combat evolution fail to account for the curse imposed by God in Genesis 3 and are therefore only partially effective. Intelligent-design advocates should recognize that the naturalism represented in evolutionary theories began much earlier than Darwin. A return to the Scriptures and their teaching of a young earth is the great need of the day.

∗∗∗∗∗

Many are concerned about the negative impact of evolution on today’s world. Some see the consequences in terms of moral and spiritual chaos in society and the church. Others see the damage that the brainwashing of evolution is causing in academic and intellectual arenas. They correctly argue that neo-Darwinism (or any related theory of biological evolution, such as “punctuated equilibrium theory”)

∗Terry Mortenson earned his Ph.D. in history of geology from Coventry University, England, and is currently a speaker, writer, and researcher with Answers in Genesis. Before joining the staff of AIG, he served as a missionary in Eastern Europe for 26 years.
is not pure science, but largely philosophical naturalism\textsuperscript{1} masquerading as scientific fact. Many such critics of evolution are part of what is called the “Intelligent Design” (hereafter ID) movement. But many are also within the “young-earth creationist” (hereafter YEC) movement.

I strongly agree with and appreciate a great deal of what leaders in the ID movement are writing, not only about the scientific problems with all theories of biological evolution, but especially about the stranglehold that philosophical naturalism (hereafter simply “naturalism”) has on science.

However, from my reading of ID books and articles and listening to lectures by some of those leaders, I do not think that they see clearly enough the extent to which science is dominated by naturalism. The reason for this observation is that many ID leaders have made oral or written statements something like this: “We are not going to deal with the question of the age of the earth because it is a divisive side issue. Instead we want to address the main issue, which is the control of science by naturalism.”\textsuperscript{2} The implication of such statements is that the age of the earth is unrelated to naturalism. Many Christians have not even considered the arguments for young-earth creationism because they think that the ID movement has the right view and is dealing with evolution correctly. But this disjunction of naturalism and the age of the earth is incorrect, as I hope to show.

As I read their writings, the ID people do not seem to understand the historical roots of the philosophical control of science. Or, perhaps, they do not appear to have gone back far enough in their historical investigations. A closer look at history, especially the history of the idea of an old earth, provides abundant evidence that the originators of the idea of an old earth and old universe interpreted the physical evidence by using essentially naturalistic assumptions. Similarly, a closer look at the way modern old-earth geologists and old-universe cosmologists reason shows that both geology and astronomy are controlled by the same naturalism that dominates the biological sciences, and indeed nearly all of academia.

I submit, therefore, that the age of the earth strikes at the very heart of naturalism’s control of science and that fighting naturalism only in the biological sciences amounts to fighting only one-third of the battle. Worse still, many of the people involved at the highest levels in the ID movement (e.g., Hugh Ross, Robert Newman, Walter Bradley) are not neutral regarding the age of the earth (as the recognized leader of the ID movement, Phillip Johnson, attempts to be), but are actively and strongly opposed to the young-earth view. Although the ID movement is fighting naturalism in biology, it is actually tolerating or even promoting naturalism in geology and astronomy—which is not a consistent strategy—thus undermining its potential effectiveness.

\textsuperscript{1}This philosophy or worldview, promoted under various names (philosophical materialism, atheism, or secular humanism), says that nature (or matter) is all there is and everything can and must be explained by time plus chance plus the laws of nature working on matter. This worldview includes not only the way the world operates, but how it came into being. These materialists either believe that matter is eternal (and merely changes form) or that the initial simple matter somehow came into existence by chance.

\textsuperscript{2}For example, Phillip Johnson recently wrote, “To avoid endless confusion and distraction and to keep attention focused on the most important point, I have firmly put aside all questions of Biblical interpretation and religious authority, in order to concentrate my energies on one theme. My theme is that, in Fr. Seraphim’s words, ‘evolution is not ‘scientific fact’ at all, but philosophy.’ The philosophy in question is naturalism.” See his introduction to Fr. Seraphim Rose, \textit{Genesis, Creation and Early Man} (Platina, Calif.: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 2000) 50.
I. HISTORICAL ROOTS

The idea of an old earth really began to take hold in science in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, before Darwin’s controversial theory appeared on the scene. Prior to this, in Europe and North America (where science was born and developed under the influence of Christianity and assumptions about physical reality were rooted firmly in the Bible), the dominant, majority view was that God created the world in six literal days about 6,000 years earlier and judged it with a global, catastrophic flood. How, then, did the old-earth idea arise?

Two important people in the sixteenth century greatly influenced the development of old-earth thinking at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries. Those two were Galileo Galilei and Sir Francis Bacon. As is well known, Galileo (1564–1642) was a proponent of Copernicus’s theory that the earth revolves around the sun, not vice versa. Initially the Roman Catholic Church leadership had no problem with this idea, but for various academic, political, and ecclesiastical reasons, in 1633 the pope changed his mind and forced Galileo to recant his belief in heliocentricity on threat of excommunication. But eventually heliocentricity became generally accepted and with that many Christians absorbed two lessons from the so-called “Galileo affair.” One was from a statement of Galileo himself. He wrote, “The intention of the Holy Ghost is to teach us how to go to heaven, not how heaven goes.”

In other words, the Bible teaches theology and morality, but not astronomy or science. The other closely related lesson was that the church will make big mistakes if it tries to tell scientists what to believe about the world.

Galileo’s contemporary in England, Francis Bacon (1561–1626), was a politician and philosopher who significantly influenced the development of modern science. He emphasized observation and experimentation as the best method for gaining true knowledge about the world. He also insisted that theory should be built only on the foundation of a wealth of carefully collected data. But although Bacon wrote explicitly of his belief in a recent, literal 6-day creation, he like Galileo insisted on not mixing the study of what he called the two books of God: creation and the Scriptures. He stated,

But some of the moderns, however, have indulged in this folly, with such consummate carelessness, as to have endeavoured to found a natural philosophy on the first chapter of Genesis, the book of Job, and other passages of holy Scripture—‘seeking the dead among the living.’ And this folly is the more to be prevented and restrained, because, from the unsound admixture of things divine and human, there arises not merely a

---


fantastic philosophy, but also a heretical religion.”

As a result of the powerful influence of Galileo and Bacon, a strong bifurcation developed between the interpretation of creation (which became the task of scientists) and the interpretation of Scripture (which is the work of theologians and pastors). With the advent of the nineteenth century, the old-earth geologists, whether Christian or not, often referred to Bacon and Galileo’s dictums to silence the objections of the “Scriptural geologists,” a group of Christian clergy and scientists writing from about 1820 to 1850 who raised biblical, geological, and philosophical arguments against old-earth theories and for the literal truth of Genesis—a literal six-day creation about 6,000 years ago and a global catastrophic flood at the time of Noah, which they believed was responsible for most of the geological record. The warning of the old-earth proponents was powerful in its effect on the minds of the public. The message was that defenders of a literal interpretation of Genesis regarding Creation, Noah’s flood, and the age of the earth were repeating the same mistake the Roman Catholic Church made three centuries earlier in relation to the nature of the solar system. And just look at how that retarded the progress of science and exposed the church to ridicule, said the old-earth advocates.

II. NEW THEORIES ABOUT THE HISTORY OF CREATION

In contrast to the long-standing young-earth creationist view, different histories of the earth began to be developed in the late eighteenth century, which were evolutionary and naturalistic in character. Three prominent French scientists were very influential in this regard. In 1778 Georges-Louis Comte de Buffon (1708–1788) postulated that the earth was the result of a collision between a comet and the sun and had gradually cooled from a molten lava state over at least 75,000 years (a figure based on his study of cooling metals). Buffon was probably a deist or possibly a secret atheist. Pierre Laplace (1749–1827), an open atheist, published his nebular hypothesis in 1796. He imagined that the solar system had naturally and gradually condensed from a gas cloud during a very long period of time. In his Zoological Philosophy of 1809, Jean Lamarck (1744–1829), who straddled the fence
between deism and atheism, proposed a theory of biological evolution over long ages, with a mechanism known as the inheritance of acquired characteristics.

New theories in geology were also being advocated at the turn of the nineteenth century as geology began to develop into a disciplined field of scientific study. Abraham Werner (1749–1817) was a German mineralogist and probably a deist. Although he published very little, his impact on geology was enormous, because many of the nineteenth century’s greatest geologists had been his students. He theorized that the strata of the earth had been precipitated chemically and mechanically from a slowly receding universal ocean. According to Werner’s unpublished writings, the earth was at least one million years old. His elegantly simple, oceanic theory was quickly rejected (because it just did not fit the facts), but the idea of an old earth remained with his students.

The Scotsman, James Hutton (1726–1797), was trained in medicine but turned to farming for many years before eventually devoting his time to geology. In his *Theory of the Earth*, published in 1795, he proposed that the continents were gradually and continually being eroded into the ocean basins. These sediments were then gradually hardened and raised by the internal heat of the earth to form new continents, which would be eroded into the ocean again. With this slow cyclical process in mind, Hutton could see no evidence of a beginning to the earth, a view that precipitated the charge of atheism by many of his contemporaries, though he too was most likely a deist.

Neither Werner nor Hutton paid attention to the fossils in rocks. But another key person in the development of old-earth geological theories, who did, was the Englishman, William Smith (1769–1839). He was a drainage engineer and surveyor and helped build canals all over England and Wales, which gave him much exposure to the strata and fossils. He is called the “Father of English Stratigraphy” because he produced the first geological maps of England and Wales and developed the method of using fossils to assign relative dates to the strata. As a vague sort of theist, he believed in many supernatural creation events and supernaturally induced floods over the course of much more time than indicated in the Bible.

The Frenchman, Georges Cuvier (1768–1832), was a famous comparative anatomist and paleontologist. Although he was a nominal Lutheran, recent research has shown that he was an irreverent deist. Because of his scientific stature, he was most influential in popularizing the catastrophist theory of earth history. By studying fossils found largely in the Paris Basin he believed that over the course of untold ages there had been at least four regional or nearly global catastrophic floods, the

---

last of which probably was about 5,000 years ago. This obviously coincided with the date of Noah’s flood, and some who endorsed Cuvier’s theory made this connection. However, in his published theory, Cuvier himself never explicitly equated his last catastrophe with Noah’s flood.

Finally, Charles Lyell (1797–1875), a trained lawyer turned geologist and probably a deist (or Unitarian, which is essentially the same), began publishing his three-volume Principles of Geology in 1830. Building on Hutton’s uniformitarian ideas, Lyell insisted that the geological features of the earth can, and indeed must, be explained by slow gradual processes of erosion, sedimentation, earthquakes, volcanism, etc., operating at essentially the same average rate and power as observed today. By the 1840s his view became the ruling paradigm in geology. So, at the time of the Scriptural geologists (ca. 1820–50), there were three views of earth history (see the chart at end of this article for a graphical comparison).

It should be noted that two very influential geologists in England (and in the world) at this time were William Buckland (1784–1856) and Adam Sedgwick (1785–1873). Buckland became the head professor of geology at Oxford University in 1813 and Sedgwick gained the same position at Cambridge in 1818. Both were ordained Anglican clergy and both initially promoted old-earth catastrophism. But under the influence of Lyell they both converted to uniformitarianism with public recantations of their catastrophist views in the early 1830s. Buckland is often viewed as a defender of Noah’s flood because of his 1823 book, Reliquiae Diluvianae. But this apparent defense of the flood was actually a subtle attack on it, as Scriptural geologists accurately perceived. Because of their powerful positions in academia and in the church, Sedgwick and Buckland led many Christians in the 1820s to accept the new geological theories about the history of the earth and to abandon their faith in the literal interpretation of Genesis and in the unique and geologically significant Noachian flood.

One more fact about geology at this time deserves mention. The world’s first scientific society devoted exclusively to geology was the London Geological Society (LGS), founded in 1807. From its inception, which was at a time when very little was known about the geological formations of the earth and the fossils in them, the LGS was controlled by the assumption that earth history is much older than and different from that presented in Genesis. And a few of its most powerful members were Anglican clergy. Not only was very little known about the geological features of the earth, but at that time there were no university degrees in geology and no professional geologists. Neither was seen until the 1830s and 1840s, which was long after the naturalistic idea of an old earth was firmly entrenched in the minds of those who controlled the geological societies, journals, and university geology departments.

---

19Georges Cuvier, Theory of the Earth (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1813). This was the first English translation of the French original, “Discours Préliminaire” in Recherches sur les ossemens fossiles de quadrupèdes (Paris, 1812).

20It was the Scottish editor and publisher of Cuvier’s English editions, Robert Jameson, who made the clear connection between Cuvier’s last catastrophe and Noah’s flood, no doubt to make it more compatible with British thinking at the time. The Oxford geologist, William Buckland, made this idea even more popular. See Martin Rudwick, The Meaning of Fossils (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985) 133–35.

III. CHRISTIAN COMPROMISES WITH OLD-EARTH GEOLOGICAL THEORIES

During the early nineteenth century many Christians made various attempts to harmonize these old-earth geological theories with the Bible. In 1804, the gap theory began to be propounded by the 24-year-old pastor, Thomas Chalmers (1780–1847), who after his conversion to evangelicalism in 1811 became one of the leading Scottish evangelicals. It should be noted that Chalmers began teaching his gap theory before the world’s first geological society was formed (in London in 1807), and before Cuvier’s catastrophist theory appeared in French (1812) or in English (1813) and over two decades before Lyell’s theory was promoted (beginning in 1830). In part because of Chalmers’ powerful preaching and writing skills, the gap theory quickly became the most popular reinterpretation of Genesis among Christians for about the next half-century. However, the respected Anglican clergyman, George Stanley Faber (1773–1854), began advocating the day-age theory in 1823. This was not widely accepted by Christians, especially geologists, because of the obvious discord between the order of events in Genesis 1 and the order according to old-earth theory. The day-age view began to be more popular after Hugh Miller (1802–1856), the prominent Scottish geologist and evangelical friend of Chalmers, embraced and promoted it in the 1850s after abandoning the gap theory.

Also in the 1820s the evangelical Scottish zoologist, Rev. John Fleming (1785–1857), began arguing for a tranquil Noachian deluge (a view which Lyell also advocated, under Fleming’s influence). In the late 1830s the prominent evangelical Congregationalist theologian, John Pye Smith (1774–1851), advocated that Genesis 1–11 was describing a local creation and a local flood, both of which supposedly occurred in Mesopotamia. Then, as German liberal theology was beginning to spread in Britain in the 1830s, the view that Genesis is a myth, which conveys only theological and moral truths, started to become popular.

So from all this it should be clear that by 1830, when Lyell published his uniformitarian theory, most geologists and much of the church already believed that the earth was much older than 6,000 years and that the Noachian flood was not the cause of most of the geological record. Lyell is often given too much credit (or blame) for the church’s loss of faith in Genesis. In reality, most of the damage was done before Lyell, often by Christians who were otherwise quite biblical, and this compromise was made at a time when geologists knew very little about the rocks and fossils of the earth.

Nevertheless, many evangelicals and High Churchmen still clung to the

---


23 George S. Faber, Treatise on the Genius and Object of the Patriarchal, the Levitical, and the Christian Dispensations (London: n.p., 1823) 1:chap. 3.


The literal view of Genesis because it was exegetically the soundest interpretation. In fact, until about 1845 the majority of Bible commentaries on Genesis taught a recent six-day creation and a global catastrophic flood. So in the early nineteenth century competing old-earth geological theories and competing old-earth interpretations of the early chapters of Genesis existed, and the Scriptural geologists fought against all these theories and interpretations.

IV. PHILOSOPHICAL DEVELOPMENTS

As a prelude to this Genesis-geology controversy, the eighteenth century also witnessed the spread of two competing but largely similar worldviews: deism and atheism. These two worldviews flowed out of the Enlightenment, in which human reason was elevated to the place of supreme authority for determining truth. This enthroning of human reason not only challenged the authority of the church in society, but also led to all kinds of anti-supernatural attacks on the Bible, undermining its authority as a source of historical, as well as moral and theological truth. Deism and atheism were slightly different ways of packaging an anti-supernatural view of history.

Apart from the deists’ belief in a rather vaguely defined Creator God and a supernatural beginning to the creation, they were indistinguishable from atheists in their views of Scripture and the physical reality. In deism, as in atheism, the Bible is merely a human book, containing errors, and not the inspired Word of God, and the history and function of the creation can be totally explained by the properties of matter and the “inviolable laws of nature” in operation over a long period of time. Deists and atheists often disguised their true views, especially in England where they were not culturally acceptable. Many of them gained influential positions in the scientific establishment of Europe and America, where they subtly and effectively promoted what is today called naturalism. Brooke comments on the subtle influence of deistic forms of naturalism when he writes,

Without additional clarification, it is not always clear to the historian (and was not always clear to contemporaries) whether proponents of design were arguing a Christian or deistic thesis. The ambiguity itself could be useful. By cloaking potentially subversive discoveries in the language of natural theology, scientists could appear more orthodox than they were, but without the discomfort of duplicity if their inclinations were more in line with deism.

But the effects of deistic and atheistic philosophy on biblical studies and Christian theology also became widespread on the European continent in the late eighteenth century and in Britain and America by the middle of the nineteenth century. As Reventlow concluded in his massive study,

We cannot overestimate the influence exercised by Deistic thought, and by the principles of the Humanist world-view which the Deists made the criterion of their biblical criticism, on the historical-critical exegesis of the nineteenth century; the consequences extend right down to the present. At that time a series of almost unshakeable presupposi-

---


28 Brooke, Science and Religion 194.
So the biblical worldview, which had dominated the Western nations for centuries, was rapidly being replaced by a naturalistic worldview. And it was into the midst of these revolutions in worldview and the reinterpretation of the phenomena of nature and the Bible that the Scriptural geologists expressed their opposition to old-earth geology in the first half of the nineteenth century.

In summary, deism (which is a slightly theologized form of naturalism) flourished briefly in the early eighteenth century and then went underground as it spread into liberal biblical scholarship and in the nineteenth century into science. Atheism (naked naturalism) became increasingly popular and aggressive in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, especially on the European continent. So, naturalism first affected astronomy and geology and then only later did it gain control of biology. Many old-earth geologists (e.g., Sedgwick) vigorously opposed Darwin's theory in 1859. But they failed to realize that Darwin simply applied the same naturalistic thinking to his theory of the origin of living creatures that the geologists had applied to their theories about the origin of the earth and geological record of strata and fossils. Their naturalistic geological theories laid the foundation for naturalistic biology.

Clearly, Buffon's theory that the earth was the result of a collision of a comet and the sun and then cooled from a molten state over at least 75,000 years was a naturalistic theory. His deism led him to try to separate science from religious and metaphysical ideas and to reject teleological reasoning and the idea of any supernatural, divine intervention in nature. It is therefore no surprise that he firmly rejected the biblical flood (along with its implications for the history and age of the earth). Laplace's nebular hypothesis for the origin of the solar system over much more than 75,000 years (which became the seedbed of the "big bang" theory) was atheistic and therefore naturalistic. So was Werner's deistic geological theory of a slowly receding ocean producing the geological record over one million years. So were Hutton's and Lyell's deistic uniformitarian theories. William Smith's and Georges Cuvier's deistic catastrophist theories were also quite naturalistic in that they too ignored Scripture and considered only natural causes for the geological record (though they had a supernaturalistic view of the origin of biological life).

V. GEOLOGY—AN OBJECTIVE SCIENCE?

These developers of old-earth theory were hardly objective, unbiased, let-the-facts-speak-for-themselves interpreters of the physical evidence, as is so often supposed. Regarding early nineteenth-century geology, a respected historian of science has noted,

Most significantly, recent work in cultural anthropology and the sociology of knowledge has shown that the conceptual framework that brings the natural world into a comprehensible form becomes especially evident when a scientist constructs a classification [of rock strata]. Previous experience, early training, institutional loyalties, personal temperament, and theoretical outlook are all brought to bear in defining particular boundaries as

---


30 Article on Buffon in *DSB* 577–78.
It would be misleading to think that all these factors influenced all scientists to the same degree. Furthermore, a major component of anyone’s theoretical outlook is his religious world view (which could include atheism or agnosticism). Worldview had a far more significant influence on the origin of old-earth geology than has often been perceived or acknowledged. A person’s worldview not only affects the interpretation of the facts but also the observation of the facts. Another prominent historian of science rightly comments about scientists, and non-scientists, “[M]en often perceive what they expect, and overlook what they do not wish to see.” In his enlightening description of the late-1830s controversy over the identification of the Devonian formation in the geology of Britain, Rudwick wrote,

Furthermore, most of their recorded field observations that related to the Devonian controversy were not only more or less ‘theory laden,’ in the straightforward sense that most scientists as well as historians and philosophers of science now accept as a matter of course, but also ‘controversy laden.’ The particular observations made, and their immediate ordering in the field, were often manifestly directed toward finding empirical evidence that would be not merely relevant to the controversy but also persuasive. Many of the most innocently ‘factual’ observations can be seen from their context to have been sought, selected, and recorded in order to reinforce the observer’s interpretation and to undermine the plausibility of that of his opponents.

In his covert promotion of Scrope’s uniformitarian interpretations of the geology of central France, Lyell had similarly said in 1827, “It is almost superfluous to remind the reader that they who have a theory to establish, may easily overlook facts which bear against them, and, unconscious of their own partiality, dwell exclusively on what tends to support their opinions.” However, many geologists, then and now, would say that Lyell was blind to this fact in his own geological interpretations.

Philosophers of science have repeatedly demonstrated that more than one theoretical construction can always be placed upon a given collection of data. History of science indicates that, particularly in the early developmental stages of a new paradigm, it is not even very difficult to invent such alternatives.

---

Just as the catastrophist felt irresistibly driven by the “obvious” evidence to believe in great regional or global catastrophes, so also the uniformitarian “saw” equally undeniable evidence that they had never happened. In the same way, Scriptural geologists, like Rev. Henry Cole (with virtually no geological knowledge) or Rev. George Young (with excellent geological competence), felt that all the opposing geologists were “blind” to the plain evidences for a recent supernatural creation and a unique global flood.  

Not only did various influences bias the developers of old-earth theory. They were in fact either blatantly or subtly hostile toward Scripture. We get a glimpse of the anti-scriptural attitudes of old-earth geologists from the writings of Charles Lyell. Writing to Roderick Murchison (a fellow old-earth geologist) in a private letter dated 11 Aug. 1829, just months before the publication of the first volume of his uniformitarian Principles of Geology (1830), Lyell reflected,

I trust I shall make my sketch of the progress of geology popular. Old [Rev. John] Fleming is frightened and thinks the age will not stand my anti-Mosaical conclusions and at least that the subject will for a time become unpopular and awkward for the clergy, but I am not afraid. I shall out with the whole but in as conciliatory a manner as possible.

About the same time Lyell corresponded with his friend, George P. Scrope (another old-earth geologist and MP of British Parliament), saying, “If ever the Mosaic geology could be set down without giving offense, it would be in an historical sketch.” Why would Lyell want to rid geology of the historically accurate (inspired) record of the flood? Because as a Unitarian he was living in rebellion against his Creator, Jesus Christ, and he wanted geology to function with naturalistic presuppositions, just like his uniformitarian forefather, James Hutton, who wrote,

The past history of our globe must be explained by what can be seen to be happening now…. No powers are to be employed that are not natural to the globe, no action to be admitted except those of which we know the principle.

So contrary to what people in the ID movement and many Christians influenced by the ID movement seem to think, naturalism (with its attendant anti-Bible, especially anti-Genesis, attitude) took hold of geology and astronomy in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. And this spread of the infection of naturalism in science was concurrent with the development of the same critical naturalistic approach to Genesis in biblical scholarship. In other words, it was reasoned, Moses did not write Genesis under divine inspiration. Rather, Genesis is no different from any other fallible human book and was in fact the purely natural product of many human authors and redactors working many centuries after Moses.

Although some of the catastrophists and uniformitarians believed in a
Creator and some even professed to be Christians, the old-earth theories were developed by applying naturalistic philosophical assumptions in their interpretations of geological and astronomical evidence. Many old-earthers were not 100 percent philosophical naturalists. But all of them were operating largely with naturalistic assumptions, whether they realized it or not. In other words, they reconstructed their histories of the earth and solar system by appealing only to the presently observed laws and processes of nature plus time and chance (i.e., excluding the supernatural interventions of God at the fall and the flood, which disrupted or altered at least some of the laws and processes of nature).

It was on the basis of this anti-biblical naturalistic thinking that fifty years later Darwin promoted his naturalistic uniformitarian theory in biology to explain the incredible design in living things. Old-earth geological theories and old-universe astronomical theories are nothing but naturalistic philosophy (or really religion) masquerading as scientific fact, just like the evolutionary biological theories of Neo-Darwinism and Punctuated Equilibrium are.

VI. NATURALISM AND UNIFORMITARIANISM

Much more needs to be explored regarding this subject of naturalism and uniformitarianism. There has been some shallow and even incorrect thinking and writing on this subject by YECs as well as by their old-earth Christian and non-Christian critics. John Reed has written two very helpful articles.\(^4\)

I want to state clearly that naturalistic assumptions do not necessarily mean that a scientific conclusion is wrong. For example, a person with naturalistic assumptions as his starting point could conceivably deduce the law of inertia from his observations. Or, in the matter of actualities, Francis Crick, who is an atheist, was a co-discoverer of the structure of the DNA molecule. But these examples have to do with what I like to call operation science. This research uses the so-called “scientific method” of observation of repeatable experiments in a controlled environment to determine how the present creation, or an individual entity in the creation, operates. For example, medical research, engineering research, and much research in biology, chemistry, and physics fall into the category of operation science. This is the kind of science which put a man on the moon, a refrigerator in almost every kitchen, and finds cures for diseases. But operation science does not have any significant bearing on any doctrine of Scripture, and it is rarely affected by a scientist’s religious worldview.

However, the matter of the origin of the law of inertia or of the DNA molecule or of the origin, age, and history of the earth and universe (and everything in them) is a distinctly different question. These questions fall into the domain of what is often called origin science. This kind of research does not use the “scientific method” of experimentation (except sometimes to propose possible causes of past events). Rather, to determine the actual past cause for some present effect that was produced in the unobservable past (e.g., a fossil or Grand Canyon), origin scientists use the legal-historical method of consideration of any relevant eye-witness testimony of the past event and careful investigation of the existing circumstantial evidence of the past event. Sciences such as archeology, paleontology, and historical geology fit into this category of origin science. Origin science is like criminal

---

Leading creationist researchers on this subject believe there is unequivocal evidence for only one Ice Age and that it was triggered by climatic, atmospheric, geological, and oceanic factors existing at the end of the 371-day flood at the time of Noah. See for example, Michael Oard, *An Ice Age Caused by the Genesis Flood* (El Cajon, Calif.: Institute for Creation Research, 1990) and Larry Vardiman, *Ice Cores and the Age of the Earth* (El Cajon, Calif.: Institute for Creation Research, 1996). For a less technical treatment, see Don Batten, ed., *The Answers Book* (Green Forest, Ark.: Master Books, 1990) 199–210.

Naturalistic, and even uniformitarian, thinking of sorts is not to be totally excluded from Christian thinking. From roughly the end of the post-flood, ice-age period (about 500–700 years after the flood) to the present time, physical processes (e.g., volcanoes, earthquakes, wind and water erosion and sedimentation, meteor impacts, etc.) have been operating essentially as they do today and at the same average rate and intensity presently observed. Furthermore, although some different starting conditions for the processes and laws of nature prevailed in the interval between creation week and the flood, there was a uniformity of natural processes then, too. Some of the laws of nature started functioning during creation week after God made particular things (e.g., laws governing the growth and reproduction of plants did not commence until God supernaturally made the first kinds of plants on Day 3, laws related to the movements of the heavenly bodies commenced when God made those bodies on Day 4, and certain laws affecting animal life began to take effect on Day 5 when God made the first birds and sea creatures). Certainly, by the time God made Adam all the laws of nature were operational.

But it is likely that some of the laws of nature were altered in some way by God’s curse on the whole creation in Genesis 3, resulting in the bondage to corruption that Paul speaks of in Rom 8:19–23. This present world is similar to, but significantly different from, the perfect world that God originally created during the six literal days of creation week. We now live in, and scientists study, a creation damaged by human sin and divine judgment. Today all old-earth geologists and astronomers (whether professing Christians or not) deny the cosmic impact of the fall, just as their predecessors did in the early nineteenth century. Such a denial is an obvious implication of a non-Christian’s worldview. Many old-earth Christians explicitly deny this cosmic impact of the fall. Others unconsciously reject it. That is, they explicitly affirm that the fall affected the whole creation, but because they accept the evolutionary view of history (even if they reject Darwinism to explain the origin of the various kinds of life), they unwittingly imply that the curse of Genesis 3 had no discernable impact on the non-human creation.

Furthermore, although many laws continued to operate during the flood (e.g., water still flowed downhill and with sufficient speed could erode and carry silt, sand, rocks, and boulders but with reduced speed would drop and sort its load, as it...
does today), there was a significant divinely induced disruption in the “normal”
course of nature during that year-long event, due to several supernatural acts of God
(e.g., the flood began exactly seven days after God said it would, God brought the
animals to Noah in the ark, the floodgates of heaven and fountains of the deep broke
open simultaneously on a global scale, etc.).

In light of these considerations, biblically informed students of God’s
creation should invoke supernatural explanations only when there is an explicit
biblical indication that God has done supernatural things (e.g., creation week, the
fall, the flood, and the Tower of Babel). Otherwise, Christians should seek to
explain what they see in creation by the processes and laws of nature. The laws of
nature describe not what God must do, but what He normally does to uphold his
creation providentially. God does not have to obey the laws of nature. Rather,
nature must obey God. Put another way, the laws of nature reflect the customs of
God as He works in creation, and miracles are simply God acting in His creation in
an uncustomary manner for a special purpose.

What all YECs (both the Scriptural geologists in the early nineteenth
century and the YECs in the last 50 years) have always argued is that Genesis 1–11
is inspired, inerrant history given to us by the Creator. One cannot correctly interpret
the physical evidence of His acts in creation (either the customary “natural” acts or
the uncustomary supernatural acts) if he ignores His written revelation about those
acts. Even more problematic is the use of naturalistic interpretations of the present
physical evidence to reinterpret the plain meaning of God’s Word. But that is what
the ID movement and most Christian leaders and Bible scholars have been doing and
advocating in varying degrees (explicitly or implicitly, consciously or unconsciously)
for almost the past 200 years, as they have tried to accommodate millions of years
(and sometimes Darwinian evolution) in their interpretation of Scripture.

VII. “INTELLIGENT DESIGN” ARGUMENTS OF AN EARLIER TIME

One more observation about the early nineteenth century is necessary. As
atheism was advancing in the late eighteenth century, Christians and others expended
much effort to defend the existence of a creator God. To do this they developed
arguments from design, especially in living creatures. The most famous design
argument at this time was developed by the Anglican minister, Rev. William Paley
(1743–1806), in his Natural Theology: Evidence of the Existence of and Attributes
of the Deity Collected from the Appearances of Nature (1802). It was very popular,
going through 20 editions by 1820 and continuing in use as a set text at Cambridge
University into the early twentieth century. Darwin and all his old-earth mentors
studied and knew the book well.

But there were other such writings, including a work by one of the
Scriptural geologists and a fellow Anglican clergyman, Rev. Thomas Gisborne
(1758–1846), who in 1818 published Testimony of Natural Theology to Christianity.
Gisborne said that Paley’s work was very good as far as it went, but it was weak
because of its omissions. Paley’s argument only vindicated God’s so-called positive
attributes, such as goodness, wisdom, eternity, and omnipotence. But it failed to
point to God’s holiness and justice as well as his mercy, as witnessed in nature.
Paley, in other words, had ignored the cosmic impact of sin and God’s judgment on
His once perfect creation. Gisborne sought to rectify this weakness by illuminating
the witness of nature to these neglected divine attributes.

Then in the 1830s the celebrated 8-part series of “Bridgewater Treatises”
appeared. These presented design arguments from (1) the moral and intellectual
nature of man, (2) the physical nature of man, (3) astronomy and physics, (4) animal and plant physiology, (5) the human hand, (6) chemistry, meteorology, and digestion, (7) geology (written by the old-earth geologist, William Buckland), (8) the history, habits, and instincts of animals (the only one of the eight treatises written by a young-earth creationist). Robson correctly identifies two important weaknesses of these efforts to defend the existence of God. First, because they largely divorced themselves from divine revelation (the Bible), the natural theology that was produced failed to deal with one of the greatest difficulties in theology, namely the existence of evil. To put it simply, by arguing for a Designer without incorporating the Fall, they raised the obvious question of what sort of Designer would create some of the pathological features of this world. Second, argued Robson, contrary to the intent of the authors of the Bridgewater Treatises, their arguments had an inherent tendency toward deism or even pantheism. Regarding the impact of the Fall, a consideration of the following subsequent criticisms of the design argument is necessary. The famous atheist, Bertrand Russell, told why he was an atheist. One reason was that

When you come to look into this argument from design, it is a most astonishing thing that people believe that this world, with all the things that are in it, with all its defects, should be the best that omnipotence and omniscience have been able to produce in millions of years. I really cannot believe it.

More recently, the evolutionist philosopher, David Hull, argued in a similar way in his review of Phillip Johnson's *Darwin on Trial* (InterVarsity, 1991), which essentially launched the ID movement. Hull wrote,

The problem that biological evolution poses for natural theologians is the sort of God that a darwinian [sic] version of evolution implies.... The evolutionary process is rife with happenstance, contingency, incredible waste, death, pain and horror.... Whatever the God implied by evolutionary theory and the data of natural history may be like, He is not the Protestant God of waste not, want not. He is also not a loving God who cares about His productions. He is not even the awful God portrayed in the book of Job. The God of the Galápagos is careless, wasteful, indifferent, almost diabolical. He is certainly not the sort of God to whom anyone would be inclined to pray.

This line of reasoning applies even if one rejects Neo-Darwinian evolution and instead believes that God supernaturally created new forms of life occasionally over the course of millions of years of death, bloodshed, and extinction.

The early nineteenth-century design arguments, while enthusiastically

---

42For a recent scholarly comparison of the way early nineteenth-century old-earth and young-earth proponents dealt with this issue of evil in the creation, see Thane Hutcherson Ury, "The Evolving Face of God as Creator: Earth Nineteenth-Century Traditionalist and Accommodationist Theodical Responses in British Religious Thought to Paleontological Evil in the Fossil Record" (Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 2001).


received by the already “converted” of that day, failed to stem the rising tide of atheism and other forms of anti-biblical (and therefore anti-God) skepticism. In fact, history shows that the unrecognized assumptions of naturalism, which were buried in the foundations of the old-earth, “the-age-of-the-earth-doesn’t-matter” design arguments, actually paved the way for Darwin’s theory, which would demolish the force of those design arguments in most people’s minds.

VIII. MODERN COMPROMISE WITH OLD-EARTH NATURALISM

Phillip Johnson and the other old-earthers in the ID movement have not gone back far enough in their historical studies. Johnson appears to think that naturalism took control of science only after Darwin, or maybe even at the time of the 100th anniversary of Darwin’s book. Speaking about a famous international celebration of about 2,000 scientists in Chicago in 1959, Johnson writes,

What happened in that great triumphal celebration of 1959 is that science embraced a religious dogma called naturalism or materialism. Science declared that nature is all there is and that matter created everything that exists. The scientific community had a common interest in believing this creed because it affirmed that in principle there is nothing beyond the understanding and control of science. What went wrong in the wake of the Darwinian triumph was that the authority of science was captured by an ideology, and the evolutionary scientists thereafter believed what they wanted to believe rather than what the fossil data, the genetic data, the embryological data and the molecular data were showing them.46

Nancy Pearcey likewise seems historically short-sighted. In her excellent discussion of the victory of Darwin’s theory, she speaks of the Christians who tried to make peace with Darwinian evolution. She states, “Those who reformulated Darwin to accommodate design were hoping to prevent the takeover of the idea of evolution by philosophical naturalism. They sought to extract the scientific theory from the philosophy in which it was imbedded.”47 But those Christians and many before them had for over 50 years allowed and even advocated (albeit unknowingly) the takeover of geology and astronomy by naturalism, and then advocated the day-age theory or gap theory and local-flood theory to save old-earth theory. I attended the ID movement conference in 1996, where Pearcey originally gave this paper. When in the comment period after the presentation I remarked about philosophical naturalism taking control of science decades before Darwin through old-earth geology and referred to my just-completed Ph.D. work on this matter, I had no response from anyone, either publicly or privately. It seemed that the old-earthers did not want to know about naturalism’s involvement in the development of the idea of millions and billions of years of history.

The above-mentioned conference was sponsored by the Christian Leadership Ministry (hereafter CLM), a ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ which is focused on university professors and is very supportive of the ID movement and of such old-earth proponents at Hugh Ross and Walter Bradley. Through its link

to the “Origins” Website, CLM targets “top scientists and philosophers on issues concerning intelligent design and theism.”

That site linked to CLM states confidently,

For Christians, the date of creation is not a primary issue of faith and should not be regarded as such, because the Bible does not specifically state a date of creation. This fact can be easily confirmed by reviewing sources such as The NIV Study Bible, The Believers Study Bible, The New Geneva Study Bible and evangelical commentaries…. Therefore, we believe Christians are free to follow the scientific evidence, minus hostile philosophical assumptions like naturalism.

For starters, what most Christian scholars believe today on this issue is no confirmation of the correct interpretation of Scripture, because popular scholarly vote does not determine truth. If it does, then the Protestant Reformation was wrong (which is not the case), for the Reformers were definitely in the minority for many decades. But note the emphatic statement in italics. These old-earth proponents do not understand that the “scientific evidence” for billions of years is really only a naturalistic interpretation of the observed geological and astronomical evidence. Remove the “hostile philosophical assumptions” of naturalism from geology and astronomy, and there is no scientific evidence for millions and billions of years.

Another example of people who say they are fighting naturalism’s stranglehold on science, while at the same time promoting naturalistic “scientific” theories in the church, is the new book by Hugh Ross and Fazale Rana, Origins of Life (2004). Their Reasons to Believe Website advertisement for the book says, “For years naturalistic theories have monopolized academia as the only possible scientific explanation for the origin of life…. Rana and Ross explode the myth that scientific evidence supports naturalistic theories…. The subtle implication is that the origin of life is the only topic in which naturalism reigns. But it also reigns in billions-of-years theories of geology and astronomy, which Ross and Rana effectively persuade Christian laymen, pastors, and scholars to accept and use as they interpret their Bibles. So Ross and Rana are deceiving themselves and other Christians by this opposition to naturalism in the area of the origin of life while they simultaneously promote the Big Bang and billions of years.

Even a few young-earth creationists do not seem to see things very clearly. Nelson and Reynolds state in their debate with old-earthers, “Our advice, therefore, is to leave the issues of biblical chronology and history to a saner period. Christians should unite in rooting out the tedious and unfruitful grip of naturalism, methodological and otherwise, on learning.” But there never will be a saner period, because sin will continue to darken the minds of people who do not want to submit to their Creator and His Word. Nelson and Reynolds are mistaken when they say that “the key thing is to oppose any sort of attempt to accommodate theism and naturalism.”
No, the key is to oppose the accommodation of biblical revelation with naturalistic interpretations of the creation, which is what all old-earth reinterpretations of Genesis are. The issue is not a vaguely defined theism’s marriage with naturalism but rather the adulterous union of biblical teaching and naturalism.

Thus, fighting naturalism only in biology will not work. Ignoring the Bible—especially Genesis—and its testimony to the cosmic impact of sin and God’s judgments at the fall, the flood, and the Tower of Babel, even though arguing for design in living things (and even God’s designing activity), will not lead people to the true and living God, but rather away from Him and His holy Word. Nor will fighting naturalism only in biology, while tolerating or even promoting naturalism in geology and astronomy, break the stranglehold of naturalism on science. So the “wedge” of the ID movement is not a wedge (leading to more truth) at all. It is simply a nail, which will not split the log open. It will not lead the scientific establishment to embrace the biblical view of creation, nor will it lead most people to the true God, the Creator who has spoken in only one book, the Bible.

In his book about his “wedge strategy,” Johnson explains how Christians should proceed in what he thinks is the coming public dialogue between religion and science (actually, it has been going on for years before the ID movement was born, as a result of the efforts of young-earth creationists and others). He says, “The place to begin is with the Biblical passage that is most relevant to the evolution controversy. It is not in Genesis; rather, it is the opening of the Gospel of John.”

He then quotes and discusses John 1:1–3 followed by Rom 1:18–20. Though those passages are certainly relevant, they do not directly address the creation-evolution and age-of-the-earth debates as Genesis does. Furthermore, John and Paul clearly believed Genesis was literal history and based their teaching on Genesis, as Jesus did. More recently, in a 2001 interview, Johnson also stated,

I think that one of the secondary issues [in the creation-evolution debate] concerns the details of the chronology in Genesis.... So I say, in terms of biblical importance, that we should move from the Genesis chronology to the most important fact about creation, which is John 1:1. It’s important not to be side-tracked into questions of biblical detail, where you just wind up in a morass of shifting issues.

On what basis does Johnson assert that the most important fact about creation is John 1:1? He has never provided a theological or biblical argument to defend this assertion. It is difficult to see how his comments indicate anything but a very low view of and indifference to the inspired inerrant text of Genesis 1–11. I suggest that Johnson’s failure to see (or to explain to his listeners, if he does see) that the idea of billions of years of geological and cosmic history is nothing but philosophical naturalism masquerading as scientific fact, is the reason that he avoids the text of Genesis.

This failure to see the influence of naturalism, even by a person warning about the danger of naturalism, is further illustrated in a paper by one of America’s greatest evangelical philosophers, Norman Geisler. In 1998 Geisler was president of the Evangelical Theological Society and gave the presidential address at the
Philosophical Naturalism and the Age of the Earth: Are They Related?

November annual meeting of the ETS. In it he warned of a number of dangerous philosophies that are assaulting the church and having considerable influence. The first one he discusses is naturalism (both methodological and philosophical naturalism), which he says has been one of the most destructive philosophies. Therefore, he devotes more space to it than any of the other dangerous philosophies that he discusses. As far as it goes, it is a very helpful warning about the dangers of naturalism. He even says that “James Hutton (1726–1797) applied [David] Hume’s anti-supernaturalism to geology, inaugurating nearly two centuries of naturalism in science.”

What is terribly ironic and very disappointing is that Geisler has endorsed the writings of Hugh Ross, who aggressively but subtly (whether consciously or not) promotes naturalistic assumptions and thinking in the church by persuading Christians to accept billions of years and the “big bang” as scientific fact. Also, in Geisler’s own Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics, published the year after his ETS presidential address, he tells his readers, “Most scientific evidence sets the age of the world at billions of years.” But as I have shown, it was not the evidence that set the age at billions of years, but rather the naturalistic interpretation of the evidence. Because of the confusion of evidence and interpretation of evidence, Geisler rejects the literal-day interpretation of Genesis and believes that the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 have gaps of thousands of years, even though he says that “prima facie evidence” in Genesis supports literal days and no genealogical gaps in Genesis. After laying out the various old-earth reinterpretations of Genesis (all of which are based on naturalistic interpretations of the scientific evidence, have serious exegetical problems, and have been refuted by YECs), he mistakenly concludes, “There is no necessary conflict between Genesis and the belief that the universe is millions or even billions of years old.”

But Geisler is not the only evangelical philosopher who is highly trained to spot philosophical naturalism and yet has missed it in the issue of the earth’s age. I am not aware of any leading evangelical philosopher who is a convinced YEC. If our greatest Bible-believing and Bible-defending philosophers cannot see naturalism’s control of geology and astronomy, how will the rest of the church see it?

Herein is the bewitching influence of old-earth thinking. The fact is that we all (from the intellectually lowest to the most brilliant) have been brainwashed. “Brainwashed” is a strong word, so let me explain. As we saw earlier, soon after Lyell published his Principles of Geology (1830–33), geology came under the control of the dogma of uniformitarianism, and catastrophism essentially passed off the scene. Reflecting this fact, in 1972 the following definition of “catastrophism” appeared in a geological dictionary written by two of the leading geologists and academics of the day: “Catastrophism: The hypothesis, now more or less completely discarded, that changes in the earth occur as a result of isolated giant catastrophes of relatively short duration, as opposed to the idea, implicit in Uniformitarianism,

56Ibid., 5.
58Ibid., 270 (on days) and 267 (on genealogies).
59Ibid., 272.
that small changes are taking place continuously."^60

However, at about the same time a very unexpected thing was occurring in geology—the birth of “neo-catastrophism.” All the neo-catastrophists were evolutionists and believed in the billions of years of earth history. But they believed that much of the geological record was formed quickly and catastrophically, as the early nineteenth-century catastrophists had believed. One of the leading neo-catastrophists was Derek Ager, a British geologist who had conducted geological investigations in about 50 countries of the world. In one of his books he reviewed the early nineteenth-century development of catastrophism and uniformitarianism and made this revealing comment:

My excuse for this lengthy and amateur digression into history is that I have been trying to show how I think geology got into the hands of the theoreticians [i.e., the uniformitarians, in Ager’s view] who were conditioned by the social and political history of their day more than by observations in the field.... In other words, we have allowed ourselves to be brain-washed into avoiding any interpretation of the past that involves extreme and what might be termed ‘catastrophic’ processes.^61

Ager admits that he was brainwashed through his geological education and early years in geological work, so that he could not see the evidence for catastrophe. The evidence was staring him in the face, but a mind-controlling set of assumptions made him blind to it. However, what he failed to see was that he had not only been brainwashed with assumptions coming from nineteenth-century social and political philosophy; he had been blinded by a whole philosophical-religious worldview called naturalism (he was a willing victim, however, for his writings give sufficient indication that he was a sinner in rebellion against God and his Word). So, as far as I am aware, until the day of his death a few years ago he was blinded (by naturalism) from seeing the overwhelming evidence in the rocks and fossils for Noah’s flood. If the geologists themselves were (and most geologists, even most Christian geologists, still are) brainwashed with the assumptions of philosophical naturalism, think of other Christians (including the most brilliant evangelical philosophers and OT Bible scholars), who through education, museums, national-park tours, TV science programs, etc., have been led to believe that the geologists have proven that the earth is billions of years old and that the global, catastrophic, year-long flood never happened.

IX. CONCLUSION

The source of naturalism’s control of science goes further back than Darwin, back to the old-earth and old-universe theories of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and even back to the writings of Galileo and Bacon (to whose dictums about Scripture and science the early nineteenth-century old-earth geologists frequently referred), who drove the first wedge between Scripture and science.


The age of the earth matters enormously if one wants to fight naturalism in science effectively and if he wants to be faithful to the inspired, inerrant Word of the Creator of heaven and earth, who was there at the beginning of creation and at the flood, and has faithfully and clearly told us what happened.

But the ID movement is such a mixture of agnostics and theists of great theological variety that it can never be concerned about faithfulness to the true God and His Word. As noted earlier, there really is no wedge in Johnson’s strategy. It is rather a nail strategy that will not split the log. A vaguely defined intelligent designer (not even necessarily divine) is as far as a Scripture-less approach can reach. Having deliberately ignored the biblical teaching given by the Creator—especially in Genesis—the ID arguments will not open the door to the true God.

If Johnson and the other Christian ID participants want eventually to bring Genesis into the origins debate, I predict,

- they will be accused of having been deceptive (a suspicion that many evolutionists have already expressed) during all the years that they have distanced themselves from YEC and ignored Genesis, and
- they will scare away most of their old-earth bedfellows in the ID movement who for various reasons do not want to live under the authoritative Word of God.

The lack of faithfulness to Scripture in the ID movement should be a concern to every Bible-believing Christian. Christians do not help God or help the evolutionized world by ignoring His holy Word.

This is a call to my Christian brothers in the ID movement to return to the Word of God, especially to the book of Genesis, which opens eyes to see the naturalism that controls geology and astronomy and leads people to think mistakenly that science has proven that the creation is billions of years old. I urge them to use their considerable mental powers and speaking and writing abilities to expose the lie of the naturalistic interpretations of old-earth geology and old-universe astronomy and to defend the clear truth of Genesis, both in the church and in the secular world.

The evidence is abundant and clear. The enemy has invaded the holy citadel. Naturalistic (atheistic) ways of thinking have increasingly polluted the church over the last 200 years through old-earth “scientific” theories and through liberal theology. Who will take up the sword of the Spirit (Eph 6:17)—especially Genesis 1–11—and help expel the enemy of naturalism? The only alternative is to ignore the invasion and pollution and further abet it by compromise with the evolutionary belief in millions of years.
Early Nineteenth-Century Views of Earth History

Biblical View (Scriptural geologists)

God supernaturally created the world and all the basic ‘kinds’ of life in six literal days (SC) and then judged the world with a global flood (F) at the time of Noah, which produced most of the geological/fossil record, and all present-day (P) processes have continued essentially since the flood. This will continue until God supernaturally brings the world to an end (SE).

Catastrophist View (e.g., Cuvier, Smith)

During the earth’s long history (millions of years at least) since God supernaturally began a primitive earth (SB), there have been many natural regional or global catastrophic floods, which produced most of the geological/fossil record and current geography of the earth. After each catastrophe (C) God supernaturally created some new forms of life. Since the past catastrophes were natural events, there may be another in the future on earth, which may also have a natural (or supernatural) end (NE).

Uniformitarian View (e.g., Hutton, Lyell)

All geological processes on the earth (perhaps) had a beginning (SB) millions of years ago on a primitive earth. These processes (e.g., erosion, sedimentation, volcanoes, and earthquakes) continued into the present and will continue into the future at the same rate and intensity as observed today (P). No one knows whether there will be an end to the current natural processes (NE?).
SECOND-BLESSING MODELS
OF SANCTIFICATION
AND EARLY DALLAS DISPENSATIONALISM

Mark A. Snoeberger*  

An assumption that dispensationalists are anti-Reformed in their soteriology may stem from an honest misunderstanding of publications of the early dispensationalists who separated the indwelling of the Spirit from sanctification. A historical survey of four early dispensationalists—J. N. Darby, James Hall Brookes, C. I. Scofield, and Lewis Sperry Chafer—reveals whether this model of sanctification is essential to dispensationalism. Darby rejected a second work of the Holy Spirit in a believer’s life and was critical of D. L. Moody’s Keswick beliefs. Brookes, after years of denying a second work of the Spirit, began affirming that doctrine in 1880. Beginning in 1893, Scofield apparently supported Keswick teaching of a second work of the Spirit in a believer’s life, though the teaching was strongly opposed by other dispensationalists. Neither he nor Brookes associated it with the dispensational system. Chafer, founder and longtime president of Dallas Seminary and systematizer of dispensationalism, embraced the second work of the Holy Spirit from the beginning, but not as a part of his dispensational system. His “second work” view arose from his Oberlin training, his itinerant evangelism, and the influence of Moody and Scofield on him, not from his dispensational theology. From a study of these dispensationalists, it is clear that dispensationalism is not necessarily anti-Reformed in its soteriology.

* * * * *

Introduction

Of all the charges leveled against dispensationalism, few are as unsettling as the classification of dispensationalists as anti-Reformed in their soteriology.

*Mark A. Snoeberger is the director of library services and part-time instructor at Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary in Allen Park, Michigan. He is currently pursuing Ph.D. studies at Baptist Bible Seminary in Clarks Summit, Pennsylvania.
Sometimes this charge stems from mere ignorance—a misplaced assumption that a denial of Reformed eschatology must include with it the denial of Reformed soteriology. Often, however, the charge derives from an honest misunderstanding of publications by the early faculty of Dallas Theological Seminary, a significant fountainhead of dispensational thought and literature in the last century.

Central to the charge is a disjunction of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit from regeneration and sanctification that was common among early Dallas dispensationalists such as Lewis Sperry Chafer, John F. Walvoord, and Charles C. Ryrie. For these, indwelling was a new ministry of the Holy Spirit in the dispensation of grace (cf. John 14:17), and thus not essential to regeneration or sanctification. Instead, these must be accomplished by other means.

Early Dallas dispensationalists developed an answer to the disjunction of indwelling and regeneration: the Holy Spirit uses an external operation to efficaciously awaken a depraved person, who then necessarily responds in faith for regeneration. While this explanation has drawn fire for allegedly denying total inability, unconditional election, and irresistible grace, an examination of early Dallas arguments proves these charges false. Early Dallas dispensationalists may have been guilty of peculiar disjunctions between the effectual call, regeneration, and indwelling, but they were not Arminians. Many dispensationalists are Arminian, but it is unfair to affirm that the early Dallas dispensationalists were Arminians, or


3For instance, the chief objection and majority emphasis of John H. Gerstner’s *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth: A Critique of Dispensationalism*, 2d ed. (Morgan, Pa.: Soli Deo Gloria, 2000) is that dispensationalism has an Arminian view of election and regeneration and a Keswick/holiness view of sanctification (113–304). Richard Mayhue (“Who Is Wrong? A Review of John Gerstner’s *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*,” *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 3 [1992]:73–94) describes Gerstner’s argument as adhering to the following syllogism:

Premise 1: Calvinism is central to all theology.
Premise 2: Dispensationalism does not embrace Calvinism.
Conclusion: Dispensationalism is a “spurious” and “dubious” expression of true theology (2).

4For instance, in answering Gerstner, Turner lists several thorough-going Calvinists that have been prominent dispensationalists: James Hall Brookes, W. G. Morehouse, Wilbur Smith, Allan A. MacRae, Carl McIntire of early Westminster Theological Seminary/Faith Theological Seminary, and John MacArthur of The Master’s Seminary/David L. Turner, “‘Dubious Evangelicalism’? A Response to John Gerstner’s Critique of Dispensationalism,” *Grace Theological Journal* 12 [1991]:266; updated for presentation at the 44th national meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society [San Francisco, Calif., 19 November 1992] 4). We could add to these S. Lewis Johnson and Edwin Blum of Dallas Seminary and wholeblocks of faculty at dispensational schools such as Grace Theological Seminary, Talbot School of Theology, Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, Baptist Bible Seminary, and Grand Rapids Baptist Seminary.
worse, that Arminianism is essential to dispensationalism.\(^5\)

Dispensational apologists have been less active in answering the more legitimate criticism raised by the disjunction between indwelling and sanctification in the theology of key early Dallas Seminary faculty. Their position that indwelling is new to the present dispensation demanded that indwelling could not be essential to sanctification—or else OT saints were never sanctified. Unmoored from the Reformed connection of sanctification to indwelling,\(^6\) experimental sanctification had to have a different starting point—a crisis event that can occur weeks or even years after regeneration, in which the “carnal” Christian transforms into a “spiritual” Christian in an event where the believer makes Christ “Lord of his life.”\(^7\) This understanding of sanctification (and of perseverance) is significantly different from the Reformed view, and instead reflects a Wesleyan holiness or Keswick pedigree,\(^8\) thus seeming to confirm historians’ linking of dispensationalism to “second-blessing” theology.\(^9\)


\(^{\text{7}}\)For his twenty-eight years as president of Dallas Seminary, Chafer opened each year with a series of lectures on consecration as “the basic requirement for effective seminary study” (John Walvoord, Foreword to Chafer’s He That Is Spiritual, rev. ed. [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1967] n.p.). Charles Ryrie’s Balancing the Christian Life (Chicago: Moody, 1969) confirmed in chart form the need for a second work of the Holy Spirit in order for progressive sanctification to begin (187). In 1987, Walvoord went so far as to describe this view of sanctification as the “Augustinian-Dispensational” view of sanctification, thus communicating his understanding that this is a virtually unanimous view among dispensationalists (“Augustinian-Dispensational View,” in Five Views on Sanctification, ed. Melvin E. Dieter [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987] 199–226).

\(^{\text{8}}\)For instance, Walvoord lauds the Wesleyan understanding that “there is normally a later act of the will in which individuals surrender their life to the will of God,” and affirms that Wesley, unlike later Wesleyans, did not believe in entire sanctification in this life (John F. Walvoord, “Response to Dieter,” in Five Views on Sanctification 57). Responding to the Keswick view, Walvoord also claims broad sympathy, cautioning only that Keswick might lead to belief in perfectionism (John F. Walvoord, “Response to McQuilkin,” in Five Views on Sanctification 194). Robertson McQuilkin, who represented the Keswick view in the same volume, was happy to announce that Walvoord’s understanding “is in harmony with the Keswick approach” (Robertson McQuilkin, “Response to Walvoord,” in Five Views on Sanctification 237). Dieter, representing the Wesleyan view, comments, “Walvoord’s general description of the entrance into the Spirit-filled life is one that most Wesleyans would accept” (Melvin E. Dieter, “Response to Walvoord,” in Five Views on Sanctification 228). See also David L. Turner, review of Five Views on Sanctification, in Grace Theological Journal 12 (1991):94–99.

\(^{\text{9}}\)George M. Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture (New York: Oxford University, 1980) 100–101, 257–58 n. 32; Melvin E. Dieter, The Holiness Revival of the Nineteenth Century, 2d ed. (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow, 1996) 254; Donald Dayton, Theological Roots of Pentecostalism (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow, 1987) 143–47. Interestingly, all three of these authors speculate on the
Being a historical project, this essay will not develop the exegetical or theological necessity/non-necessity of this model of sanctification to the dispensational system. Instead, it will map the development of early dispensational views of sanctification to discover whether there is historical continuity or discontinuity within dispensational ranks on sanctification. To this end, it will examine the views on sanctification of four early dispensationalists, J. N. Darby, C. I. Scofield, James Hall Brookes, and Lewis Sperry Chafer, who arguably form a chain of influence that connects the origin of dispensationalism to Dallas Theological Seminary, the self-styled “academic center of dispensationalism.”

J. N. Darby

Although elements of dispensational theology existed before Darby, Darby was the first to begin systematizing dispensationalism, and is thus a logical starting point for discussion. Charles Price and Ian Randall suggest that Darby’s spiritual “discontentment” and “dissatisfaction with the status quo . . . contributed to a desire for spiritual renewal.” With such the case, Darby represented the “wine skin” that Robert Pearsall Smith’s Keswick “wine” would fill.

It is unlikely that Darby would share this assessment. Darby has documented his negative view of Keswick theology, and the repudiation of second-blessing theology is a key factor in the history of the Plymouth Brethren. As early as 1846, the reference volume Christian Sects in the Nineteenth Century characterized Darby’s sect as failing to “pray . . . for the presence and influence of the

connection between dispensationalism and holiness models of sanctification, but each proposes a different point of connection. For Marsden it is the common pessimism about culture and optimism about the individual; for Dieter it is the surprise element that is common to both rapture-seekers and second-blessing seekers; for Dayton it is the heightened role of the Holy Spirit in the eschaton, a prominent theme of dispensationalism.


Spirit."  

Thus from their earliest days, Darbyites objected to the idea of a second work of the Holy Spirit.

In 1873, Robert Pearsall Smith published the book *Holiness Through Faith,* which became the chief impetus for the formation of the Keswick Convention two years later. In it he advocated a distinct work of the Holy Spirit, accessible through faith, whereby the carnal believer could achieve a life of “victory,” “consecration,” “holiness,” or “deeper life,” that immediately and perfectly transformed the believer’s life from the slough of Romans 7 (Paul’s frustrated dialogue with himself) to the serene victory of Romans 6:11 (reckoning oneself dead to sin and alive to Christ). Darby responded immediately with a negative review of Pearsall Smith’s volume. Though Darby maintained with Pearsall Smith the two states of Romans 7 and Romans 6:11, he denied that Romans 7 represents a “Christian state.” Instead it is the “regenerate state under law,” that is, the experience of believers under the OT economy. Since the death and resurrection of Christ, however, all believers exist immediately in the Romans 6 experience at regeneration—not in a state of perfection (this does not occur until heaven), but with the “old man” dead “once for all,” needing no second work of

---


17 Pearsall Smith called this the “baptism of the Spirit,” but contemporary Keswick leaders adopted the term “filling of the Holy Spirit,” noting that baptism occurs at the moment of salvation (Price and Randall, *Transforming Keswick* 52).


19 Darby, “Review of Pearsall Smith” 184; see also his *Letters* 2:328, 335.


21 Ibid., 184, 204.

22 Ibid., 188, 191, 194.

23 Ibid., 195, also 189–90, 196–203, 208–10. To affirm otherwise, Darby maintained, is to “apply the blood continually as if it were never finished” (200).
consecration whereby the believer “leaps by an act of faith into a positive purity.”

Darby was not, however, without inconsistency. In his comments on 1 Corinthians 3, Darby, curiously, recognizes two classes of believers—“carnal (not spiritual)” and “spiritual”—without explanation. Later dispensationalists would seize this distinction as the difference between “un-consecrated” and “consecrated” believers, a difference Darby would have denied, but unwittingly precipitated in his inconsistent exegesis of 1 Corinthians 3. Darby was also one of the first to describe his Reformed understanding of progressive sanctification in terms of repeated acts of the “Spirit-filling,” a category that Dallas dispensationalists also redefined as the progressive work of the Holy Spirit after the consecration event. Thus, while early Dallas dispensationalists may have borrowed some of Darby’s terms in formulating their second-blessing theology, they inherited little of his theology on this point.

This section cannot conclude without a word concerning Darby’s relationship to D. L. Moody, whose Keswick beliefs, as will be demonstrated below, heavily influenced J. H. Brookes, C. I. Scofield, and Lewis Sperry Chafer. In 1873, Darby broke all ties with Moody, initially due to his disapproval of Moody’s Arminian views of depravity and grace. Weremchuk describes the disagreement as sharp and decisive—Darby simply “closed his Bible and refused to go on,” effectively canceling Darby’s agreement to speak for Moody at an upcoming engagement in Chicago. Over the next four years Darby made several disparaging comments concerning Moody and Pearsall Smith, usually together, in his personal correspondence, regularly accusing the former of preaching a gospel that gives assurance to unsanctified professors of faith, and the latter of making humans sole agents of sanctification, denying priority of place to God.

---


27Darby, Letters 3:466. This is not the same “filling” seen in Keswick writings. In Keswick, “filling” is simply another synonym for “consecration,” “full surrender,” etc.—a single event that vaults one into the “victorious life.”

28E.g., Walvoord, Holy Spirit 189. Reformed theologians have generally avoided “filling” as a category, and those who do are careful to explain that filling commences immediately after salvation, not after a separate work of consecration (e.g., Robert L. Reymond, A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith [Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998] 765).


James Hall Brookes

As founder and long-time leader of the Niagara prophecy conferences, personal mentor of C. I. Scofield, and editor of the fundamentalist periodical The Truth from 1875 until his death in 1897, Brookes was highly influential in systematizing American dispensationalism.31 Although Brookes embraced premillennialism in the early 1860s,32 there are several strands of evidence that Darby’s direct influence was minimal at best: (1) Darby never mentions Brookes in his forty volumes of collected writings; (2) Brookes omits reference to Darby in his explanation of how he became a premillennialist;33 and rarely cites him in his writings;34 (3) Brookes opted against Darby’s dispensational scheme, citing instead W. C. Bayne, another Brethren writer;35 and (4), most significantly for this study, Brookes welcomed Moody to St. Louis in 1879 and adopted Moody’s second-blessing sanctification model.

Moody experienced the filling of the Holy Spirit in 1871 in connection with the prayers of three women and the great fire of Chicago.36 After the fire and destruction of his Chicago work, Moody became an itinerant evangelist, spending much of the following five years in England and Scotland, giving life to the fledgling Keswick impulse there.37 In 1875, Moody even preached the sermon in which F. B. Meyer, a key Keswick leader, attained “full surrender.”38 However, Moody disagreed with Pearsall Smith’s particular methods of finding the second blessing,39 and was

33Ibid.
34Sanders, Premillennial Faith of James Brookes 28–35.
37Pollock, Keswick Story 18.
38Day, Bush Aglow 188.
39Pollock, Keswick Story 19.
not involved in the operation of Keswick until 1891.\textsuperscript{40} Moody never defined his own method for achieving the second blessing—he just rejected Pearsall Smith’s method.\textsuperscript{41} These factors, coupled with his immense popularity and American fundamentalist roots, rendered Moody a “safe” speaker for early fundamentalist dispensationalists.

That the origins of Brookes’s second-blessing theology are a result of Moody’s influence is not certain. Being an Old-School Presbyterian, however, it is unlikely that Brookes picked up the American version of second-blessing theology from Finney and Mahan, making the transatlantic version (Keswick) a more plausible source. We also know from his Way Made Plain that Brookes was adamantly opposed to the idea as late as 1871. In it he wrote,

> The second error [concerning the work of the Holy Spirit] arises from the still more common mistake of thinking, or, at least, of practically acting, about the Spirit as if He came on occasional and uncertain visits to the believer, in place of knowing that He abides with us forever. Many Christians are continually singing and praying, “Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly dove,” but He is already come.\textsuperscript{42}

Without any precedent during his first five years of publishing The Truth, however, Brookes suddenly began affirming a second work of the Spirit in the periodical in 1880.\textsuperscript{43} After this year the second blessing became a regular theme of the periodical.\textsuperscript{44} Not too much should be made of this abrupt appearance of second-blessing theology, but it points tantalizingly to the year of Moody’s St. Louis campaign of 1879–80.\textsuperscript{45}

\textsuperscript{40}Pollock, Keswick Story 116; J. B. Figgis, Keswick from Within (New York: Marshall Brothers, 1914; reprint, New York: Garland, 1985) 106; Price and Randall, Transforming Keswick 57.

\textsuperscript{41}Price and Randall, Transforming Keswick 67; Day, Bush Aglow 219.


\textsuperscript{43}James Hall Brookes, “Consecration (2 Cor 5:9–15),” The Truth 6 (1880):65–68.


\textsuperscript{45}Several authors have noted Brookes’s waning interest in his denomination starting in 1880. Joseph Hall attributes the decline to his premillennialism (“James Hall Brookes—New School, Old School, or No School!” Prebyterian 14 [1988]:35–54), Sanders to his increasing responsibilities at the Niagara prophecy conferences (Prewillelennial Faith of James Hall Brookes 70–74). Though Sanders’s argumentation is more convincing than Hall’s, it is possible to posit a third option: that in adopting Moody’s revivlist and second-blessing ideas, Brookes had severed some of his theological links to Old School Presbyterianism.
Brookes was also one of the first to deny the indwelling of the Holy Spirit prior to the dispensation of grace, noting, “It is never said of the Old Testament saints that the Holy Spirit abode with them, or that He dwelt in them, or that by one Spirit they were all baptized into one body of which the risen Jesus was the glorified head. He had not then ascended, and consequently there was no man at God’s right hand, to whom believers could be united by the Holy Ghost.”\textsuperscript{46} The Dallas construct of sanctification was beginning to take shape.

**C. I. Scofield**

C. I. Scofield, who exercised immense influence on dispensational theology through the 1909 publication of his *Reference Bible*,\textsuperscript{47} became a believer in 1879 through the witness of Thomas McPheeters, a resident of St. Louis and volunteer for the Y.M.C.A. By joining Brookes’s church in St. Louis and volunteering for the Y.M.C.A. (of which Moody was then president), Scofield thus had immediate contact with both men. Scofield regarded Brookes a mentor\textsuperscript{48} and Moody a close friend.\textsuperscript{49}

Clearly by 1899, Scofield had drunk deeply from the Keswick well. In that year he wrote a treatise on the Holy Spirit wherein he espoused essentially what would become the Dallas Seminary position. Indwelling, baptism of the Spirit, sealing, and union with Christ did not accompany regeneration in the OT, but in the NT they did—instantaneously.\textsuperscript{50} However, not all NT believers are “filled” with the Spirit, a prerequisite of “securing the fullness of blessing, victory, and power.”\textsuperscript{51} Scofield then goes on to give a detailed formula for realizing the initial “filling.”\textsuperscript{52} Once the Holy Spirit fills the believer by an initial “act” or “event,”\textsuperscript{53} he can repeat the filling many times.\textsuperscript{54} The believer, however, will never be completely empty


\textsuperscript{49}Ibid., 33–34.

\textsuperscript{50}Ibid., 53.

\textsuperscript{51}Ibid., 54–69.

\textsuperscript{52}Ibid., 67.

\textsuperscript{53}Ibid., 49.
When Scofield imbibed Keswick theology is disputable. Reports are inconsistent, and most important, Trumbull’s authorized biography of Scofield is inconsistent with itself. Early in the volume, Trumbull reports that Scofield met the conditions for filling immediately at salvation, noting that “Christ came in, and drink went out. The miracle of the Victorious Life was instantly wrought for him and in him.” However, Trumbull later notes, fourteen years later, “although God had greatly blessed the Dallas pastor in his own life, and was blessing his studies in the Word to himself and to others, he had not entered into the New Testament teaching of the life of power and victory.” Trumbull then goes on to describe this event as occurring in 1893.

An incident in 1891 suggests the latter account to be the true one. As I have noted, Moody’s disassociation with Keswick until 1891 had rendered him a “safe” speaker for American fundamentalists. In 1891, however, Moody attended the Keswick Convention, and, impressed by what he observed, invited F. B. Meyer to speak at his Northfield Conference the same year. The decision provoked consternation among the “Old Guard” at Northfield, among them Scofield, A. T. Pierson, and George C. Needham, the latter . . . who protested the invitation, describing Keswick as “the ancient heresy of a sentimental higher life, . . . a fancied perfection taught through fancied interpretations.” Moody prevailed, and Meyer spoke at the conference in 1891 and in each of the next four conferences. During those four years, many significant American Keswick leaders emerged: J. Wilbur Chapman (1892), A. T. Pierson (1895), and, ostensibly, Scofield (1893). Scofield’s concerns about a Keswick incursion had been realized in dramatic fashion. Why Trumbull’s account conflicts is a matter of speculation. It is this author’s guess that Scofield or Trumbull hoped to give legitimacy to Keswick teaching by extrapolating a later, Keswick interpretation on the 1879 event, and simply overlooked the inconsistency.

Scofield refined second-blessing theology, and even avoided the label in

---

55Ibid., 68.
56‘Trumbull, Life Story of C. I. Scofield 32–33. This is not inconsistent with Scofield’s own theology of Holy Spirit filling. He maintains that, though most do not, some believers can experience regeneration and indwelling simultaneously (Plain Papers on the Holy Spirit 48–49).
58William M. Runyan, Dr. Gray at Moody Bible Institute, 5 vols. (New York: Oxford University, 1935) 2:5–7; Pollock, Keswick Story 117; Bruce Shelley, “Sources of Pietistic Fundamentalism,” Fides et Historia 5 (1972–73):73; Sandeen, Roots of Fundamentalism 176; G. M. Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture 249 n. 36. Marsden suggests that the conflict was overstated through the process of retelling the story, but admits “there was a definite gain in acceptance of explicit Keswick teachers in these years when Keswick speakers came to Northfield.”
59Watchword 13 (1891):60.
60G. M. Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture 149 n. 36.
lieu of terms like “renewal” or the place of “power and blessing.” However, while he eschewed the label, his *Reference Bible* nonetheless purveyed the disjunction of indwelling and sanctification into dispensational-fundamentalist and specifically Dallas dispensational thought. However, we must note that he, like Brookes before him, appealed only minimally to dispensational thought as the basis for Keswick ideology, and both were dispensationalists for many years before they adopted Keswick notions. The link between dispensationalism and second-blessing sanctification is *actual*, but not *necessary*.

**Lewis Sperry Chafer**

Lewis Sperry Chafer, founder and longtime president of Dallas Theological Seminary, provided intellectual legitimacy to the practical disjunction of the Holy Spirit’s indwelling from regeneration and sanctification. One biographer of Chafer wrote, “If Scofield—due to the influence of his reference edition of the Bible—can be called the popularizer of dispensational thought, Chafer—on the basis of his *Systematic Theology*—can be called the systematizer of dispensational teaching.”

We might borrow these terms and add that as Moody was the popularizer of American second-blessing thought, so also was Chafer the refiner and systematizer of second-blessing teaching. That is, he legitimated popular anthropocentric invitations for the unregenerate to “come to Christ” and for the regenerate to “surrender all” within a “moderate Calvinist” theological context. And, since he did this at the “academic center of dispensationalism,” Dallas Theological Seminary, it is not surprising that critics would link dispensational and second-blessing theology.

Chafer received his scant ministerial education at Oberlin College conservatory, and upon leaving the school traveled for five years as a musician with

---

61 *Scofield Reference Bible* 1200.


63 Arguably the essential feature of any second “blessing” or second “experience” theology (see esp. Combs, “Disjunction Between Justification and Sanctification”).

64 Houghton, “Lewis Sperry Chafer” 299.

65 As Scofield before him, Chafer eschewed the term “second blessing,” opting instead for descriptive ideas like “an experience… accompany[ing] the first entrance into the Spirit-filled life” (*He That Is Spiritual* 43). He also sought to distance himself from Wesleyan perfectionism by denigrating the term “second blessing.” By my decision to associate Chaferian sanctification to earlier second-blessing models, however, I hope to highlight the fact that the Chaferian sanctification model is not an independent model, but one closely descendand from and similar to earlier second-blessing models (see supra, n. 8).


67 Houghton, “Lewis Sperry Chafer” 300.
several evangelists, most notably Arthur T. Reed, whom he met at Oberlin in a Y.M.C.A. meeting. In 1897 he became an evangelist himself, sometimes alone, sometimes as part of a team. Interestingly, he traveled briefly with the Keswick leader J. Wilbur Chapman during these years, but soon left him because of his Arminian methods and “gimmickry.” In 1901 Chafer moved to Northfield, Massachusetts, where he ministered for many years beside Ira Sankey in Moody’s music ministry. Scofield, who pastored in Northfield from 1895–1902, influenced Chafer heavily during the next two years before he returned to Dallas. The two maintained a strong relationship for the rest of Scofield’s life, corresponding extensively and conducting “short-term ‘Bible institutes’ in churches” together. Chafer also taught at Scofield’s educational efforts, the New York Scofield School of the Bible and Philadelphia School of the Bible. In 1918 Chafer had a “remarkable spiritual experience in the study of Dr. Scofield in Dallas, Texas, [where he] . . . definitely dedicated his life to an exacting study of the Bible.” Chafer assumed the pastorate of Scofield’s church in Dallas for four years after Scofield’s death—Chafer’s only pastorate.

Oberlin training, itinerant evangelism, Moody, and Scofield combined to create in Chafer fertile soil to appropriate the second-blessing sanctification model and to adapt it into the distinctive “Chaferian” model that came to distinguish Dallas Seminary. Unlike the other three dispensationalists analyzed in this study, no evidence exists to suggest that Chafer ever believed differently.

Conclusion

Dispensationalism has long been associated with the second-blessing model of sanctification and its variations. However, the coexistence of these two emphases is incidental rather than necessary, as illustrated by the theological odysseys of four leading dispensationalists who pre-dated Dallas Seminary. Those models of sanctification within dispensationalism do not arise essentially from dispensational


46Hannah, “Early Years” 21.


49Chafer’s biographers tend to emphasize Scofield’s role in influencing Chafer’s theology, and there is little doubt that his was a key influence. However, it is difficult to ignore Chafer’s ministerial experiences in the thirteen years before he met Scofield as stimuli in his theological development.
theology, for dispensationalism existed independently of second-blessing and second “experience” thinking for all of Darby’s ministry and for parts of Brookes’s and Scofield’s ministries. Instead, these sanctification models stemmed from the popular evangelism of the day, especially that of D. L. Moody, and were systematized by Lewis Sperry Chafer.

To conclude that Dallas Theological Seminary began with two separate emphases is better: (1) dispensationalism, which intrinsically demands no distinctive soteriology, whether Calvinist or Arminian, and (2) a variation of the second-blessing model of sanctification that intrinsically demands no distinctive theological system, whether Reformed or dispensational. Only speculative historiography has made a link between these two emphases essential.
BOOK REVIEWS


The author of this new reference work is a widely regarded NT scholar and long-time professor at the University of Notre Dame. His writing credits are extensive and well-regarded, including a three-volume commentary on the Book of Revelation in the Word Biblical Commentary series (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998) and The New Testament in Its Literary Environment (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox, 1987).

This work, which has been under development for ten years (xi), focuses on providing a reference source for the literary and rhetorical dimensions of early Christian literature from its beginnings, about 50 C.E., through the mid-second century C.E. (ibid). One note, albeit perhaps a quibbling one, must be made at this point. This reviewer understands that the conventions of secular scholarship have now made the shift from the chronological identifiers B.C. (‘before Christ’) and A.D. (anno Domini, or ‘year of our Lord’) to B.C.E. (‘before the common era’) and C.E. (‘common era’). This shift is an unwelcome intrusion by secularism, and it has no place in writings or works that purport to center on biblical and theological studies (although in this work that style is used throughout). The author acknowledges that, unlike typical reference works, he has authored the overwhelming majority of the articles. He notes that 21 articles were completed by ‘eight current or former students’ (xii). Though this might tend to render the work a little idiosyncratic, that is far from the case. The author’s breadth of research and noted scholarship has created a well-rounded and highly useful reference work.

The basic format follows standard conventions with two columns and a generous use of ‘see also’ notations at the end of the articles. Also plentiful ‘see reference’ entry points appear throughout the work, although more careful editing might have helped this feature. For example, a ‘see’ for ‘Luke, Gospel of’ points the reader to the very next entry (‘Luke-Acts’; 280); however, no ‘see’ entry for Acts of the Apostles directs the reader to the correct entry. Additionally, one ‘see also’ entry points the reader to a non-existent article on ‘Rhetorical Theory’ (424). Other examples could be cited. A unique feature is the manner in which the author handled the bibliographies for the articles. Instead of a short reference that is often difficult
The reader can then go to an extensive (112 pages) bibliography in the back of the book and find the desired work. The articles range from a few paragraphs to several pages. The use of charts is judicious and quite helpful to the reader. Remarkably, in a work this complex, almost no editing or typographical errors of note occur.

In terms of content, this work centers on literature and rhetorical issues rather than personalities. All the NT canonical works and the non-canonical works in the stated time scope (see above) have articles and normally an extensive outline as well as a discussion of normal introductory issues (authorship, date, etc.) and a more detailed rhetorical analysis of the works. Some individuals such as Irenaeus (234-37) and Justin Martyr (257-62) have dedicated articles, but others such as Clement (99-102) and Tatian (211) are mentioned only in articles related to their works. A few more ‘see’ notations, especially for an individual like Tatian who appears mainly in the article on ‘Harmonies (of the Gospels)’ or in a wider index of persons, would have been helpful. Other helpful main articles deal with the terminology of literary and rhetorical studies.

The one general criticism of this work is the manner in which the concept of ‘inspiration’ is handled, or better, not handled. In a reference work concerned with Early Christian Literature, it is amazing that not one article on ‘inspiration’ is included, although without a doubt this is a central concept in the early church’s view of the NT (see ‘Bible, Inspiration of the’ in *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell [Baker, 1996]). Even in the article on the ‘Canon’ (85-88) inspiration as a factor in how the early church viewed the canon is unmentioned. Clearly, the author rejects the evangelical concept of biblical inspiration. He rejects Pauline authorship of the Pastorals, questions it in Ephesians, rejects Petrine authorship entirely, rejects James and Jude as authors of their respective works, and denies an apostolic connection in the Gospels (88). In the article on the Book of Titus, the references to both Paul and Titus are regarded as ‘fictitious’ and the entire basis of the letter and setting in Crete is regarded as a ‘fictive rhetorical setting’ (475). Even an article in which the author ‘laid his cards on the table’ regarding inspiration, even if his conclusion categorically denied it, would have had more scholarly integrity than simply skirting the issue.

Historical and rhetorical critical examinations as well as comparative Greco-Roman literature serve as the starting point for the author in examining and interpreting the NT. The weaknesses in this approach are evident, especially when combined with a rejection of biblical inspiration (and by extension inerrancy). In many respects this is one of the better reference works that has been produced for this field, and when the reader understands the underlying philosophy of the work, it can be very useful.

Reference works are, in general, a ‘first stop’ in research, and reference works that match this volume in terms of research and scholarship while supporting an inspired and inerrant Scripture that this volume rejects, are a much needed commodity so that evangelical theology does not become more obscured, such as the

This is the first volume in a two-part study on Jesus by a Dallas Theological Seminary Research Professor of New Testament Studies. As the title announces, Professor Bock intends to provide “the beginning student of the Gospels” with an introduction to the study of the historical figure of Jesus that is “brief enough for students to digest,” but with “enough guidance . . . to encourage further independent study” (9). He emphasizes that his aim is not to be “technical,” but to furnish “a primer” so that his intended audience will be able to “dig deeper” into the Gospel writings.

The book is important for two reasons. First, it illustrates the recent trend in evangelical scholarship on the Synoptic Gospels. Second, because the book is published by a conservative evangelical publisher and the author teaches at Dallas Theological Seminary, it may have a wide readership among evangelicals. The ideas presented in the book will therefore likely have an influence far beyond the walls of the seminary classroom or the individual reader who purchases it at a bookstore.

To accomplish his stated purpose, Bock begins with an introductory chapter (13-41) in which he discusses sources with the most direct bearing on a knowledge of Jesus, namely, biblical documents, Apocrypha, OT Pseudepigrapha, Dead Sea Scrolls, Philo and Josephus, as well as Jewish sources postdating the first century A.D. He divides the rest of the book into two sections. In the remainder of Part 1, Bock appears to have accomplished his purpose fairly well through four chapters that survey non-biblical literary sources for the life and background of Jesus (1), discuss the chronology of Jesus’ life and death (2), succinctly summarize the complicated political history of the intertestamental period (3), and examine the cultural background of the land and people of Palestine in the first century A.D. (4).

Part 2, “Methods for Studying the Gospels,” consists of a chapter on the “Three Quests” for the historical Jesus (5), followed by one each on Historical (6), Source (7), Form (8), Redaction (9), and Tradition Criticisms (10). Chapter 11 on Narrative Criticism and Gospel Genre rounds out Part 2. In addition to a Selected Bibliography (217-20), Subject and Scripture indexes (221-30) complete the book. It is this second part of the book that should give cause for concern to anyone who holds to the inerrancy of Scripture. On the positive side, Bock gives a brief but reasonable overview of the “history of the study of the historical Jesus” (an awkward phrase) in chapter 5, including a critique of “skeptical treatments of Jesus” (150-52). He sees his own work as being part of the Third Quest for the historical Jesus (152).

In his overviews of various methodologies, Bock criticizes what he sees as apparent fact accomplished of B.C. and A.D.
weakenesses in Historical (158-62), Form (182-85), Redaction (192-93) and Tradition Criticism (202-3).

On the negative side, Bock believes that he can use critical methodologies, minus their skeptical elements, and still hold to an inerrant Scripture. With Source Criticism, for example, he rejects the idea that the Synoptics are independent narratives originating from eyewitness testimony (172) in favor of Marcan priority and the existence of hypothetical Q (173-78). He skirts around the major problem for this view, namely, that there is no credible external evidence for anything other than Matthaean priority in the composition of the Gospels (165-67). Nor is there any evidence in the text of the De Concensu Evangelistarum to show that Augustine of Hippo believed in a literary dependence relationship between the Synoptics, especially in anything remotely like the form in which it is held by most moderns. At the very most, Augustine is saying that the later Gospel writers were aware of what their colleagues had written earlier (De Conc. Evang., 1.2.4). Bock further maintains that conservative scholars hold literary dependence views of the Synoptics "without any desire to deny or challenge the inspiration of the text" (179). But without any intent to do so, it is still possible to deny in a de facto manner the inerrancy of Scripture. Unintended consequences can be just as harmful as, or even more so than, intended ones. One need search no further than Genesis 3 to see this, but I would refer the reader to chapters 8-10 of R. L. Thomas and F. D. Farnell's (eds.) The Jesus Crisis (Kregel, 1998) to see some of the (surely unintended) consequences when evangelical scholars adopt critical methodologies in Gospel studies.

Bock's discussion of Form Criticism (185-87) illustrates the dilemma faced by evangelical practitioners of critical methodology. By eliminating the anti-supernatural biases of the method as practiced by most Form critics, he is left with little more than nomenclature for certain types of incidents or sayings in the Synoptic accounts. That seems rather pointless, especially since wide disagreement exists among Form critics as to classification of forms. If, on the other hand, he were to use the method whole-heartedly, he would be forced to deny the historicity of portions of Gospel narratives.

In his treatment of Redaction Criticism, Bock examines several examples of how the method works. In one, he deals with Jesus' baptism, where Matthew (3:17) records the voice from heaven as saying "This is my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," while Mark (1:11) and Luke (3:22) have "You are my Beloved Son; with You I am well pleased." The two different statements harmonize easily if they were both spoken on the same occasion, the one indicating how God the Father directly addressed and affirmed His delight in His Son and the other (Matthew's text) recording the testimony the Father gave of His Son to John the Baptist and (possibly) other bystanders (cf. W. Hendriksen, Exposition of the Gospel of Matthew, Grand Rapids, Baker, 1973, 215). Bock, however, maintains that Matthew changed the direct address in order to "highlight its historical significance. . . . In other words, Matthew redacted the tradition to stress that here was an event
where God marked out and identified his anointed one as this one, by what he did. Both renderings are accurate historically and summarize what the content of the utterance was but with slightly different purposes. If this view of redaction is right, then Matthew gives us the vox, while Mark and Luke give us the verba” (194-95 [emphasis in the original]). The problem with such a treatment of the sayings is that both renderings are emphatically not accurate, unless both statements were made. No amount of appeal to the distinction between “vox” (i.e., the general tenor of an individual’s remarks) and “verba” (i.e., the precise words spoken) can justify such inaccuracy, unless one is willing to concede that in order to make his “theological point” Matthew has misled his readers. For in actuality, God said one thing, but Matthew records Him as saying another. It is difficult to believe that the apostles and early Christians were more interested in knowing someone’s understanding or interpretation—even an apostolic “someone”—of what God meant than the precise words spoken by God. Why is it so hard to accept that God actually spoke both to His Son and about Him on the same occasion?

In addition, Bock’s study has several minor flaws. An individual from the Roman “middle class” is an equites, not an “equite.” The English adjective of this Latin noun is “equestrian” (48, with n. 4). The author is inconsistent in citing primary sources, when for the complex details of history from Alexander the Great to Antiochus Epiphanes there is not a single reference to an ancient work for seven paragraphs (86-88). If the material is mostly based on a secondary source, it needs to be referenced. The Roman senator Cassius, who fought against Octavian at Philippi in 42, was definitely not the same person as Crassus, who with Pompey and Julius Caesar was a member of the first triumvirate in 59 B.C. and was killed fighting the Parthians at Carrhae in 53 B.C. (96). The map on page 99 is confusing since the shadings used to designate the territory of Philip and that of Archelaus are virtually indistinguishable. The Sea of Galilee is also known as the Sea of Tiberias, not Tiberius. The same is true of the town (111, with n. 17). Lastly, in these days of electronic data storage and retrieval, one is at a loss to understand why there should not be a complete bibliography.

In sum, this is both a useful and a disappointing book. It is useful in that it provides a brief but helpful survey of some detailed and complex literary, historical, cultural, and methodological material. The book is disappointing because it clearly demonstrates the inroads of negative critical methodologies into the ranks of even conservative evangelical scholarship on the Synoptic Gospels. In this respect the book is also disturbing.

This commentary, as well as others in this series, seeks to provide its readers with a user-friendly resource that will primarily help lay people who are teaching the Bible in their local churches or in individual and group Bible studies. After an introductory chapter that introduces the reader to the authorship of Isaiah (accepting one author rather than two or three), the history of that time period, and an overview of prophetic literature, Butler divides the book of Isaiah into 26 chapters, dealing with 1-4 chapters in each chapter. Each chapter of the commentary has ten components: a stimulating quotation, a summary statement for the chapters under consideration, an introductory illustration to catch the attention of the audience, a verse-by-verse commentary (albeit brief), an overview of principles and applications that arise from the passage at hand, life application, a suggested prayer, a consideration of details not covered by the commentary section (“Deeper Discoveries”) with attention to certain key words, phrases, and themes of the Bible, a teaching outline or plan, and several issues for discussion. A glossary of key terms and a brief bibliography conclude the volume.

Whether or not this volume in particular or this series in general will provide significant help to its readers is yet to be seen. The editor of the series and the author of each volume are pursuing a very commendable goal, providing an understandable treatment of each biblical book for lay people.


In 1978, Don DeYoung and John Whitcomb co-authored *The Moon: Its Creation, Form and Significance* [BMH Books]. “Since then,” Don DeYoung writes in his preface, “a wealth of new information has appeared concerning the moon and space” (12).

The authors adopted basically the format of DeYoung’s three earlier books, *Dinosaurs and Creation: Questions and Answers* (Baker, 2000), *Astronomy and the Bible: Questions and Answers* (Baker, 2000), and *Weather and the Bible: 100 Questions and Answers* (Baker, 1992). Sixty-two questions, spread out over five chapters, provide answers for the kinds of questions most readers have asked at one time or another.

Chapter one furnishes interesting tidbits of information on earth’s nearest neighbor, e.g., its size, its distance from earth, its orbit, how it causes earth’s ocean tides, and its surface features. Chapter two instructs on a variety of subjects pertinent to the moon’s history, such as, “Is moon dust an age indicator?” and “What lunar origin theory dominates today?” Having accepted without hesitation the accuracy and integrity of the Genesis creation account, the authors do not reject the fact of the moon’s creation, specifically on the fourth day of a six-day creation
week. Similarly, neither do they stretch “day” in the Genesis record beyond its normal, literal meaning. From the science side, the reader learns that creationists are the only ones apparently acknowledging the fallibility of radioisotope dating results, and recognizing that the interpretation of these results is enmeshed in evolutionary assumptions of an old universe (63).

Chapter three’s eleven questions direct attention to the purposes of the moon, taking the reader on a tour of how the moon determines Easter dates, affects seasons and the weather, plants and animals, protects from space collisions, etc. The reader is reminded of the precise occurrence of eclipses and their contribution to historical chronology, even confirming the accuracy of the chronological systems used by OT scribes (83). Chapter four deals with the moon in Scripture. Various options on how the moon stood still for Joshua’s “long-day” are briefly presented. In four and a half pages, the double revelation theory receives short shrift, as it should. The work acknowledges that these two distinct and fully authoritative revelations of God—in Scripture and in nature—operate with a heavy bias against the theologian and his interpretation of Scripture. Although the authors do not say it openly, the bias should flow the other way in this discussion, namely, if the prevailing theory does not fit with the biblical record, then it should be subjected to scrutiny. They correctly affirm that the Bible is competent to present the when, who, how, and why of creation, and that science alone is not competent to address the when and how of origins.

Chapter 5, “Answering the Critics,” carefully points out how essential the moon is for the earth’s stable existence and how holding to a creationist view does not stifle legitimate and earnest scientific research. Further, great distances in space do not of necessity demand a vast time-scale. The chapter proposes other viable explanations. That the moon will cease to exist at the end of the millennium (cf. Isa 60:19; Ps 72:7; Rev 20:11), frankly, presents a far more appealing closure of history under divine control than the bleak picture painted by evolution, which looks at a slow spiral away from earth until earth becomes completely unstable and arid, and unable to sustain life [69-70, 104].

Seventeen figures, four tables, an appendix describing the topography of the moon from two photographs, and a glossary of terms give the book just that extra bit of class. An index of figures and tables would certainly have been a useful addition.

The remarkable achievements in space exploration of the past decade have ignited further interest in the origins of the earth, moon, solar system, and galaxy. This book is timely, and checkablock with information. Our Created Moon is well worth having on the shelf as an instructive resource.

Since the publication of the *Encountering* series from Baker Books, publishers seemingly have been tripping over themselves to produce high quality color, graphic, and visually oriented Bible surveys and helps. This present volume represents a new series from Holman Publishers into that genre.

The work, as noted in its preface, uses the new *Holman Christian Standard Bible* (Holman, 2000) for biblical text references and draws on the considerable graphic resources from the archives of *The Biblical Illustrator*, a regular periodical production of the Southern Baptist Convention. The work presents a sweeping overview of biblical history in the Old and New Testament eras, what the author calls “metanarrative” (2). It also has an adequate overview of the inter-testamental period. He notes that “building the Kingdom” is the theme of the entire Bible (3).

The clear strength of the volume is its highly detailed maps and charts (all in full color) and the excellent pictures throughout. It uses high quality paper, and is remarkably low-priced. Frequent “sidebars” give a paragraph or two of additional information on specific issues, individuals, or groups. The text is brief, often too brief even for *metanarrative*. A prologue of only seven pages (covering Genesis 1–11), seven chapters, and an epilogue (dealing with Revelation 21–22 as a summation of biblical history) cover the totality of biblical history.

The text itself is broadly evangelical and conservative in nature and generally avoids controversial issues. The author mentions creation options of “old earth” and “young earth” only in passing (4) and rather cavalierly gives the impression that it is an unimportant subject to the totality of what he calls the “Kingdom Story” (ibid.). He does present an early dating for the Exodus (24) but without any conviction or explanation as to why this might be an important interpretative issue. He presents an A.D. 30 crucifixion, but again without any mention of additional options (19ff.) or the issues involved. The author presents a section on Revelation 20 and the millennial kingdom, but rather oddly consigns both the amillennial and premillennial views as taking the passage (esp. 20:4-6, as he ignores entirely vs. 1-3 and the binding of Satan) as figurative (280). He presents a solution for the passage that he calls “promillennialism,” in which no real chronological significance can be derived and which is intended to present comfort for the readers because of God’s victory (ibid.).

In the introduction the author does not mention his intended audience or a specific need this work is designed to fill. It certainly can be recommended, despite the above-mentioned flaws, as a general overview of the Bible. Its best use would perhaps be in a Sunday School setting. It is much too brief and anemic for a college-level text and certainly of no particular value at the seminary level.

Swanson, Seminary Librarian.

This is the third volume of a proposed five-volume English edition of the Evangelisches Kirchenlexikon (Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986-97). The goal of this series, according to the publisher’s press release, is to “portray[s] Christianity in its widest ecumenical context.”

This reviewer has previously commented on the first two volumes of this set (TMSJ 11/1 [Spring 2000]:124-26, and TMSJ 13/1 [Spring 2002]:124-25), and will not repeat the general comments on formatting and style other than to say that this set represents a paradigm of how a reference work should be designed. The only additional observation would be to hope that as this series is completed that the publishers will include a comprehensive index of the entire set in the last volume.

The content of this volume mirrors the general selection criteria of the previous volumes, and because of its European origination, those articles typically represent a European bordering on Euro-centric viewpoint to the subject matter. For example, the entry on “Justification” (90-99) is so dominated by discussions of Lutheran concepts on the issue that it provides almost no discussion of theological constructs more familiar to those in America, where Lutheranism has never been a dominating force. In dealing with specific books of the Bible and biblical events or personalities, the authors take a decidedly liberal and text-critical approach in their conclusions. For example, the entry for Noah (763-64) refers to him as a “widely attested legendary figure from primeval history of unknown pre-Israelite origin.”

Some articles are interesting and quite helpful, particularly “North American Theology” (774-82) and the entries for “Martin Luther” (345-48) and “Luther’s Theology” (370-74).

This volume, as with the previous, is really designed for the seminary and university library. Their price of $100 per volume puts them out of reach of the average college or seminary professor and particularly out of reach of most pastors. The “broadly ecumenical” nature of the articles really means that conservative scholarship is ignored, with Christianity and the church largely presented as a socio-economic phenomenon rather than “the pillar and support of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15).


Glynn, who studied at Moody Bible Institute and Dallas Theological Seminary, has revised this work in updated stages since 1992. To some extent, he bases his ratings of works on his reading plus opinions of leaders in seminaries and Bible colleges. The lists help especially lecturers at critical, academic, advanced levels, and to some extent pastors who do thorough research and lean heavily on...
liberal works.

Some commend Glynn for his meticulous lists. Endorsements on the back cover come from faculty members of several schools, i.e., Darrell Bock, Daniel Block, John Walton, Haddon Robinson, George Knight III, Eugene Merrill, and Dennis Swanson.

Some strengths are evident. First, sections list studies for building a biblical/theological library or on where to find material. Besides book by book lists of the Bible, Glynn classifies OT and NT introductions, surveys, theologies, background research, ancient Near East history, dictionaries, general references, Hebrew and Greek specialties, hermeneutics, systematic theology, church history, computer resources, and Websites. By covering topical books as well as commentaries, he offers a plethora of help.

An asset before each work is a letter key tabbing the author’s stance, e.g., L/cr means liberal/critical; E/cr equals evangelical/critical, E is evangelical. User friendliness occurs in frequent, often substantial footnote tips about works in process. A fourth contribution is in Glynn’s consensus of specialists’ scholarly ratings in technical and semi-technical works, most worthwhile expository studies, or special studies on Bible books or topics.

Faculty members, students, pastors, and others also need to be aware of what many will call weaknesses. A listing strong for technical detail palatable to specialists in complex studies can offer far less practical help for diligent students and pastors who seek not only accuracy but evangelical, wise practicality to assist cutting-edge ministry.

First, the work seems to image a philosophy of thrusting to the fore mostly recent works that some, believed to be experts, see on the “cutting edge” of current scholarship. Yet, older works, especially evangelical, may have vast, good detail to help lecturers, students, and pastors. Many such works are absent or relegated to lower ratings. A great number in ministry want works, new or old, to help them preach, teach, and otherwise lead those in real-life school or church work.

Second, annotations occur only now and then, and usually are terse, telling little except in generalities. Third, liberal works are often given a heavy place. In many cases, these are the majority of listings. This can pose a roadblock for some, even many seminary-trained students in church positions, who study deeply but value primarily evangelical help. Many liberal works, while helpful on some details, also reason against reliability of biblical details. This can make some works less dependable when one uses his time wisely and gets the best input for ministry of the truth where the rubber meets the road. Far more annotations would help, if they would give concrete, candid comments alerting users about what to expect in a given work. This very real service would provide much more help.

The present listing is often thin on widely-used evangelical commentaries where many vouch that they find help. An example is William Hendriksen on NT books. Many of the competently studious find that such commentaries wrestle with many problems in passages. At the same time, the current guide is noticeably weak...
(even if no bias was intended) in not listing many premillennial works on OT prophetic books. Amillennial listings are abundant. This recurs in the Book of Revelation (cf. the “exposition” part, 175-76). Some annotations list firmly amillennial works as “premillennial,” such as by Simon Kistemaker. Glynn does, in his “technical” list, have Robert Thomas’s two premillennial volumes on the Revelation. On the same Master’s Seminary faculty where Thomas teaches is Larry Pettegrew, whose work on the Holy Spirit appears on Luke/Acts (139).

As in anyone’s list, rating top sources (as Glynn does with boldface) will be as debatable as picking a national NCAA college football champ for Division I by BCS methods or by coaches’ and writers’ polls. This reviewer agrees in some cases with Glynn’s preferences, but disagrees in many when he weighs which works proved most helpful for his own seminary and church teaching or for commending candidly to students and pastors. In Daniel, for example, some technical works that often lead into a fog and away from a natural premillennial perspective that makes sense (e.g., Dan. 7:14ff.; 9:24-27; 11:36ff.) draw Glynn’s high ratings (cf. John Goldingay, Ernest Lucas). At least the “exposition” section there has a bold-face rating on Stephen Miller’s premillennial effort, while Leon Wood’s detailed work gets no boldface for a more worthy place. Many theological students this reviewer has worked with during more than forty years, even sharp men, would have difficulty knowing what to make of the book’s frequently thin help toward exalting truth and not error. One seminary-trained scholar, a widely-appreciated writer of many books, sent this reviewer his copy of Glynn, not wanting it back because of disgust at what he felt was an overall direction against an evangelical position.

This tool lumps devotional commentaries in with “exposition.” It leaves out numerous works, old and new, that assist students and pastors while helping professors keep their feet in a practical world where laypeople also live.

For Glynn’s listings on many areas and his effort to include both liberal and evangelical writings, some will be grateful. His system of titles is meticulous. The heavy barrage of liberal thinking, and the vast lack of sufficient annotations to guide in weighing works, leaves a mixed state as to value. To readers in quest of current technical literature, or expositions that some in academic roles rate highly, the work will be highly regarded. This reviewer’s fear is that to a vast number of students, pastors, and teachers in Christian schools, the tool falls short of frequent and adequate comments that would foster a firm, discerning, evangelical stance.


An upfront, candid response explains the curtness of this review: it is a disappointing book. Period. Godfrey takes a fresh look at Genesis 1–2 by way of
a covenantal reading, but offers to his target audience [thoughtful Christians and not specialists] nothing more than the framework hypothesis and what other theories which ‘elasticize’ the text have already offered. What makes it so hard to accept the plain, clear meaning of the text? Why is creation in six twenty-four hour days so unacceptably? It is even more disturbing when this is done by one who affirms the text as having been inspired by God and as being part of the inerrant revelation given through Moses. Instead, supposedly, the discernible chiasma, various patterns, triads, complex use of seven, ten, and three, and the different perspectives provided by Genesis 1 and 2, all indicate that the creation account has multiple elements around which to structure any study. Again, the work stresses that days are not to be focused upon.

That the creation account tells of God is acknowledged. That it informs of God giving order and assigning function to what He made is also admitted. That it tells of the time duration for creation is definitely not acknowledged. Instead, the Genesis account presents a model of God working, of the setting up of a weekly rhythm for human life, and of telling about the appearance and meaning of creation for God’s image-bearer. It is not an encyclopedia of history or science but a covenant revelation of the character of the creation that God made for man. One must come to the account trusting and confident that this is God’s Word written by Moses as part of the inerrant revelation of God, who would teach the reader. One must read very carefully and thoughtfully.

Godfrey accuses those who hold to the notion of twenty-four-hour days of various flaws in treating the text and in defining day. All accusations are patently baseless, and one is also deliberately misleading—the days of creation are not the focus of attention and contribute nothing to the time-duration of God’s creative activity. He makes the astounding proposal that Day One and Day Four refer to the same creative act of God, but from a different perspective. So, no chronology and sequence, but then later he affirms chronology and sequence in the week. The seminal articles by Gerhard Hasel and David Tsumura were simply overlooked. Why?

The limited bibliography is to be expected of what is at best a genre of “reflective musings.” Calmly, Godfrey insists that the interpretation offered has followed John Calvin’s method of literal, historical-grammatical interpretation with the result that the responsible exegesis done should be tolerable in conservative Protestant circles. When the reading is finished, however, the question lingers: Was this really a responsible treatment of the text? This reviewer thinks not. That is best left as the final word.

A new lexical reference volume based on an English-Bible text while delving into the underlying Hebrew and Greek foundations has been a need for some time. *Vine’s Expository Dictionary* (Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell, 1900) is dated, and attempts to update it have been unsatisfactory. This current work, edited by a longtime professor at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, seeks to fill in that gap, but with mixed results.


The format of the work is a standard two-column reference style. The article authors are named and occasionally there are bibliographies for the entries (although most of the bibliographic references seem out of sync with the intended audience). The work lacks any indexes, except a listing of abbreviations. An index listing all the articles would have been particularly helpful, and the lack of a Scripture index (especially for a work that has a particular English version as its basis) is especially detrimental to the overall usefulness. The work includes a generally helpful use of “see” references scattered throughout the entry points, but has a surprising lack of “see also” references at the end of different articles. The articles range in length from a few paragraphs to several pages.

Though many articles contain helpful and useful insights and the careful reader can derive benefit from this volume, quite a few problematic entries, especially for evangelicals, are also present. To detail the articles of this work in the short space of a review is impossible. A couple of examples will suffice. The article on “numbers [in the Bible]” leaves the impression that all numbers in the Bible have a deeper or symbolic meaning. At this point the article is critical even of the NRSV rendering, where, commenting on Revelation 21:16, the author states, “[T]he dimensions of the city are foursquare, its length the same as its width,” at twelve
thousand stadia (Rev 21:16; NRSV’s ‘fifteen hundred miles’ obscures the use of the symbolic number twelve thousand), and the city walls at one hundred forty-four cubits (21:17); twelve squared reinforce the point that the city is complete and perfect” (348). It seems more precise to say that the city is complete and perfect because it is God’s city and “God Himself shall be among them” (21:3). Interestingly, though the author devotes some space to the number of the Beast, 666 (Rev 13:18, which he categorically declares to represent Nero Caesar), he has no discussion of the “1,000 years” of Revelation 20.

One additional example is noteworthy. When looking for “inspired or inspiration” (e.g., 2 Tim 3:16) one finds a “see” reference pointing to the entry for “prophet.” That rather disappointing article has no mention of 1 Pet 1:20-21, and the mention of 2 Tim 3:16, besides implicitly denying Pauline authorship, reduces inspiration to the insipid “salvational reliability” construct of liberalism. “Because Scripture is ‘God-breathed,’ it is a reliable source of teaching and instruction in the godly life” (409). That Donald K. McKim, a long-time opponent of both inerrancy and the evangelical view of inspiration, was the publisher’s editor for this work (viii) comes as no great surprise.

As the title suggests, the articles are more theological than lexical in nature, but some articles have excellent lexical notations. This feature is a key aspect in separating the volume from a more lexically based work, in that it presents meanings through the lens of a particular theological viewpoint. It therefore is not a tool for those who want to engage in independent Bible study. It cannot be recommended for the Christian in need of a personal Bible study tool; despite its age, Vine’s still surpasses this disappointing volume.


Robert Gundry, professor emeritus of New Testament and Greek at Westmont College in Santa Barbara, California, has produced this 4th edition of his NT Survey [see *TMSJ*, 1995, 101-2 for a review of the 3d edition]. He describes the changes from the 1994 edition: “[T]he present, fourth edition includes then an updating of bibliographies, the upgrading of maps and pictures, and the pronunciation of important terms . . . as well as the already mentioned sidebars and other features” (xvi). In short, the author and publisher have sought to develop a volume that reflects the basic format of *Encountering the New Testament* by W. Elwell and R. Yarbrough [see *TMSJ*, 1999, 291-93].

The essential text of the 3d edition is largely unchanged in this new edition. Gundry is not now as precise in his demographic statistics (26), has added material on literacy during the NT era (26-27), and has written a new section on honor and
Each chapter’s text now concludes with a newly written summary section that reviews the chapter’s discussion. The chapters now begin with a separate page devoted to an overview and restated study goals for the reader. Each chapter concludes with new boxes including people, places, and terms to remember, which are usually in bold print in the chapter text, new material probing how much the student has learned, and added questions for further discussion. New background material, quotations from biblical and extra-biblical sources, and interpretive discussions appear in colored sidebars around the basic text. The maps, charts, and pictures are in color and much sharper than in the previous editions. At the first occurrence of a term in the text and in a glossary at the end of the volume, the author has also included a new pronunciation guide based on The HarperCollins Bible Pronunciation Guide, edited by William O. Walker, Jr. (xvi). Such changes are all designed to enhance the learning experience for the beginning student of the NT (xv).

This 4th edition has the same strengths and weaknesses of the 3d edition. Gundry’s commitment to orthodox doctrine concerning the person and work of Jesus and his defense of a conservative understanding of authorship and dating of the NT documents are commendable. However, his advocacy of a measured use of source, form, and redaction criticism in Gospel study and his whole-hearted commitment to Markan priority mar his presentation, particularly for the beginning NT student. In comparing Gundry’s present volume with that of Elwell and Yarborough, one notes that Gundry has the more substantial discussion and is the stronger text of the two. However, the beginning NT student should also learn from the fine older NT surveys of Tenney and Gromacki to supplement Gundry’s discussions on the Gospels.


Kenneth Kitchen, the Brunner Professor of Egyptology (emeritus) at the University of Liverpool, England, has written numerous helpful journal articles, essays, and books that deal with Egyptology, the ancient Near East, and biblical history. In the face of a large portion of modern scholarship that dismisses the credibility of the biblical presentation of history or that is too willing to revise that history, Kitchen gathers together “an unprecedented range of historical data from the ancient Near East—the Bible’s own world—and uses it to soundly reassess both the biblical record and the critics who condemn it” (flyleaf).

In the first chapter Kitchen lays the groundwork for the layout and methodology of the volume. In many ways, he is responding to biblical scholars who dismiss the historical credibility of the OT and date the composition of the OT to no earlier than the Hellenistic period. He defines “reliability” as “a quest into finding
out what may be authentic (or otherwise) in the content and formats of the books of
the Hebrew Bible” (3). As he deals with the various periods of biblical history, he
utilizes two kinds of evidence: explicit/direct (Ancient Near East [ANE] annals that
mention Israelite kings) and implicit/indirect (e.g., ANE treaties) (4). He divides OT
history into 7 segments: primeval proto-history, the patriarchs, Egyptian sojourn and
exodus, settlement in Canaan, united monarchy, divided monarchy, and exile and
return. Interestingly, he begins with segment #6, the united monarchy period, the
segment that has the most abundant external, non-biblical sources available for it.
After giving some attention to the period of exile and return, Kitchen addresses
the last 5 sections, beginning with the fifth (united monarchy) and working back to the
earliest period (primeval proto-history), periods which have progressively less
external, non-biblical data to consider. Kitchen provides thirty-seven tables
scattered throughout the body of the volume, as well as fifty figures/maps toward the
end of the book. His endnotes take up almost one hundred and fifty pages, and he
finishes the book with helpful subject and Scripture reference indexes.

For a book of this size, only select sections can receive attention in a limited
review. He provides an insightful overview of OT chronology, especially as it
relates to the divided monarchy (22-31) and provides some chrononological
principles (507-8, n. 66). He gives only brief attention to the Tel Dan Stela (36-37).
He provides an overview of various explanations for large numbers that do not
accept them at face value and seems to favor the one that deals with the meaning of
the Hebrew word 'eleph (264-65). He does not mention any proponents who accept
those large numbers at face value. On pages 307-12 he addresses the question of the
date of the Exodus. As he has done in other publications, he advocates a late-date
view, placing the Exodus in the 13th century B.C. (rather than the 15th century).
He provides helpful insights on the interpretation of Exod 6:3 (commonly cited as
evidence for a distinct “J” source) (329-30) and addresses the question of the
existence of camels and Philistines in the patriarchal period (338-40). He presents
a cutting critique of minimalists as related to all periods of Israel’s history (450-84).
In vintage-Kitchen style, he writes with vivid and humorous language, often with a

On the one hand, Kitchen has once again provided an outstanding volume
for people who are committed to the reliability of the OT. He has gathered a wealth
of information that demonstrates the shoddy scholarship of minimalism and that
supports the reliability of the OT. On the other hand, the volume does not flow
smoothly. It appears to have been pieced together with insufficient attention given
to internal coherence. Even though Kitchen takes some positions that may not find
acceptance at TMS (e.g., date of the Exodus, large numbers), his volume is sure to
provide great help to anyone interested in understanding the wealth of information
inside and outside the OT that supports the reliability of the Scriptures.

The late Thomas Lea was the sole author of the first edition of *The New Testament: Its Background and Message* when it was published in 1996. With his death, the publisher commissioned David Black, professor of NT and Greek at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, to update the book (xvii). Except for expansions of a few discussions, updated bibliographies, and the addition of maps, the text remains unchanged from the 1st edition (xviii). Sadly, the footnotes are moved from the bottom of the page to endnotes in this new edition. The volume is designed to be used in teaching NT survey to beginning college and seminary classes. It seeks to strike a balance between the critical background issues and the specific content of each NT book (1).

The text is divided into five parts. The first part introduces the background to the NT (5-82). Chapters on the political, cultural, and religious background are repeated from the first edition. The fourth chapter on the canon, text, and genre of the NT contains a rewritten section on textual criticism. Black has spelled out more precisely the principles and practice of NT textual criticism (77-78). The second part of the work discusses Jesus and the Gospels (83-278). After a chapter introducing the life of Jesus comes a chapter on the Synoptic problem. Black has changed Lea’s “the best solution to the Synoptic problem stems from a theory of interdependence” to “the most widely held solution to the Synoptic problem stems from a theory of interdependence” (120). Black, after discussing the Markan priority theory, admits that it contradicts the statements of the early church fathers (122). He concludes, “No overarching hypothesis is possible in solving the synoptic problem” (126). He devotes one chapter to the background and outlines of the Gospels, followed by four chapters that survey the content of the life of Christ using the paragraph numbering from *A Harmony of the Gospels* by A. T. Robertson.

The final three parts are little changed from the first edition. Part three discusses the growth of the early church in Acts (279-329). Part four covers the epistles of Paul (331-491). After a chapter that overviews Paul’s life, his letters are presented in chronological order, beginning with Galatians. Part five includes chapters on Hebrews, the General Epistles, and Revelation (493-605). Elements of truth are seen in each of the interpretive approaches of Revelation, preterist, idealist, historicist, and futurist (586-87). The work renders no firm decision concerning the meaning of the millennium. A helpful glossary of important terms enhances the value of the book for the beginning student (637-44).

*The New Testament: Its Background and Message* is a good introductory survey from a broadly evangelical perspective. The volume is a solid, more inexpensive alternative to Gundry (reviewed above in this issue of *TMSJ*) if one can live without the pictures and color of Gundry’s work.

One of the most important and interesting personalities in extra-biblical history of the New Testament era is Flavius Josephus (ca. A.D. 37-100). This work is a new and expanded edition of the author’s 1992 work under the same title. The author brings significant academic credentials to this undertaking. He is widely regarded as a leader among living Josephan scholars, and is the general editor of the multi-volume *Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary* (Brill, 2000-), a new English edition of the works of Josephus.

This new edition is well designed and includes a new series of charts and maps that are helpful in sorting out the various personalities and groups, particularly the House of Herod (151) and especially the Hasmonean Dynasty (201). Mason has written an overview and a lucid and detailed introduction that deals with a quite complicated corpus of work from a singularly unique individual. As the author notes, “Although Josephus is widely known, his writings seem bewildering and impenetrable on a first approach” (297). This work is well indexed (particularly the index of Josephus’ works cited) and provides excellent bibliographic references.

The work has several excellent sections, particularly a discussion of the relationship between Luke-Acts and Josephus (251-95). Mason holds out the possibility that Luke used Jospehus as one of his sources for information, although, of course, this would put the writing of Luke-Acts into the period around A.D. 90. He does not consider that the converse is possible, that Josephus used Luke-Acts as a source. Other important sections are the discussions of Josephan references to NT personalities and his detailed discussion of the testimony flavianum, the testimony of Josephus to the person of Christ (*Ant*. 18.63-64; pages 225-36 in this text). His chapter on “Who’s Who in the New Testament World” (147-211) is also a thorough and well-conceived overview.

The major flaw in the work from an epistemological viewpoint is that the author regards the works of Josephus to be of an equal historical value and reliability as the Scriptures, and often seems to regard Josephus as perhaps more reliable. This, of course, will be a distraction to those committed to an inspired and inerrant Scripture; however, that should not dissuade a serious student of the NT from acquiring and using this excellent introduction to great profit.

This is a reprint of a 1905 work originally issued by Bible & Tract Warehouse, Bristol, England. One of the men most famous in church history for showing that God answers prayers gives detail on hundreds of instances occurring at the five orphan houses and the schools he founded in 1835-1836 and directed until he died in 1898. Many accounts of Müller’s prayers and answers have drawn from this, his own record, although he had published portions of his life from the 1830s forward, and his Life of Trust in 1860. He also had given updates at other times to keep in touch with people and help them see how to trust God.

A. T. Pierson, an American pastor and friend of Müller, wrote the official biography of Müller shortly after his death (New York: James Nisbet & Co., 1898). He too drew from the 1860 and other works, and from talks with Müller, and later his successors in the work. Since then, Müller has been one of the most frequent subjects in Christian book titles about examples in Christian history. This is fitting, for on its cover John Piper calls the present work, “A veritable orchard of faith-building fruit.” Müller, shortly after his conversion in 1825, resolved by God’s gracious help to show that God answers prayers when His children ask in faith. The book recounts cases of prayer privately or in a group when the orphanage work was penniless or near that, and of how God supplied on time. God used a great variety of situations among His people, rich and poor, to contribute amounts big and small. Müller never saw God fail, and cites examples from careful daily records. These underscore the importance of relying on the Lord, patience, humility, contributors’ love for the Lord, purity, and expecting without doubting God. The entries reflect wide diversity in others’ sacrificial giving, growth in grace, and acting to the glory of God.

This book, much longer than devotional works dependent on Müller’s records, has stimulating features. It shows various ways God used to supply the needs of orphans as well as a biblical missions school that Müller founded, and the needs Müller saw for foreign missions, poor believers and unbelievers, and needy relatives. It also has scores of lessons about stewardship, laying up treasures in heaven, and details about Müller’s two godly wives Mary (1830—1870) and Susannah (1871—1894), and a daughter and a son (who died young) of the first marriage. The book also contains Müller’s high tributes for their godliness and service delivered at each of his wives’ funerals. It includes several pages of pictures, e.g., Müller, his first and second wives, other leaders, orphans.

Through daily short meditations over three to six months, a sincere believer can profit most and be challenged to all-out Christian living by this lengthy work. Readers will see how one’s own life can make a difference in this world. Müller’s sincerity and sterling quality stirs a fire in hearts. He ever exalts God, counsels meditation in God’s Word as a catalyst to prayer, and encourages others to find answers that way. Some of his key Bible verses are Prov 3:5-6, 3:9-10, 16:3, Mark 9:24, Luke 6:38, and 2 Cor 9:6.

Pierson’s tribute in the final pages of the 1905 edition appears near the end, followed by a subject index. One thing some might like is a history of the orphanage
work after Müller. The book’s price, like some other reprints, is steep. But a sacrifice to have access to the book will be repaid many times. Piper did not exaggerate. Serious Christians can find searching probes of their motives, fresh impetus to trust, and nourishment because of God’s faithfulness when they pray.


Jacob Neusner is an amazingly prolific author and editor who specializes in Judaic studies. He has written or edited nearly a hundred works, many of which are important studies and reference sources for biblical scholars.

This work is not really new, nor does it represent current scholarship. As the title suggests, it is a thematic compilation of articles from The Jewish Encyclopedia. In fact the articles come from the first edition of The Jewish Encyclopedia, edited by Isadore Singer (New York: Funk and Wagnall, 1901-1906). The editor has extracted the articles on the significant individual rabbis of ancient times and placed them together into a single collection. He has a useful preface in which he presents an overview of rabbinic studies and their place in the larger context of NT studies.

The articles are exact copies of the original entries, including the bibliographies, and this presents a problem for the researcher. Though the authors of the original articles are identified by means of their initials, one would need access to the original work to determine who those authors were. The same goes for the abbreviations used in the bibliographic citations. The abbreviation conventions in many cases have changed since 1901 and the sources, which are often obscure, would be almost impossible to identify without access to the original encyclopedia. The work has no indexes or other helps to connect the reader to the original edition, and the original pagination is not included.

Except for the helpful articles on the rabbinic schools connected with the NT (particularly Hillel, 192-99, and Gamaliel I, 151-53), and interesting historical and biographical tidbits, this volume has little to offer the student. It is purely a secondary source, unsuitable for scholarly citation (besides representing research that is nearly 120 years old). Since the original text of the entire Jewish Encyclopedia is in the public domain and is available on the Internet (www.jewishencyclopedia.com)—even the original print edition is not difficult to locate in most libraries—why this volume was produced is a mystery.

There is much to like about this book. The author, Dr. John Piper, is the well-known pastor of the Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis. Many of his previous books have dealt one way or another with the doctrine of God. This book takes up the doctrine of salvation, in particular the doctrine of justification by faith. Even more specifically, the book deals with the imputation of divine righteousness to the Christian’s account in God’s act of justification.

Piper presents somewhat of a testimony in the first chapter explaining why a busy pastor such as he is would want to get involved in a theological controversy. In one of his quotable statements, Piper declares,

I think we have enough churches being planted by means of music, drama, creative scheduling, sprightly narrative, and marketing savvy. And there are too few that are God-centered, truth-treasuring, Bible-saturated, Christ-exalting, cross-focused, Spirit-dependent, prayer-soaked, soul-winning, justice-pursuing congregations with a wartime mindset ready to lay down their lives for the salvation of the nations and the neighborhoods (33).

His point in the chapter is that doctrine, particularly the doctrine of justification by faith, impacts every area of a godly church.

In the second chapter, Piper explains the theological issue. Some theologians are proposing that Christians should abandon the doctrine of the imputation of the righteousness of God in justification. At salvation, the sinner is pardoned, and his sins are imputed to Christ. But, according to these theologians, nothing in Scripture teaches that there is any imputation of divine righteousness in the act of justification.

Piper graciously, but firmly, focuses his argument against the writings of Robert Gundry, scholar-in-residence at Westmont College, mainly because Gundry seems to be “one of the most courageous and straightforward and explicit and clearheaded” among those challenging the doctrine of the imputation of righteousness in justification. Gundry also believes that faith, instead of being the means of receiving the imputed righteousness of Christ, is itself the Christian’s righteousness “by God’s decision to impute it to be so” (48).

Piper devotes chapter three to an exegetical defense of the Reformation teaching that “in the New Testament justification does involve a positive imputation of divine righteousness to believers, . . . and this righteousness does not ‘consist of faith,’ but is received by faith . . . ” (53). This chapter is over one-half the length of the book, and demonstrates clarity of thought and exegetical excellence, especially in the exposition of key sections in the book of Romans where Piper has been preaching recently. Overall, Piper presents a brilliant defense of imputation of divine righteousness.

Only one exegetical thread is not tied tightly. Piper takes a few pages to defend the idea that the righteousness imputed at the moment of salvation is Christ’s life of perfect “active obedience” to the Father. Thus, according to Piper’s view, Christ’s death is not enough. The death merely pays the penalty for sin, while the
merit earned by His life of obedience gains the right to eternal life for the believer.

Though this reviewer certainly affirms the truth and importance of Christ’s perfect obedience, the doctrine of imputed active obedience seems questionable biblically and theologically. In the first place, the Scriptural support is not strong. Up to this point in his book, Piper’s exegesis is nearly impeccable, clarifying Scripture directly, point by point. In the section on the imputed active obedience of Christ, however, Piper relies considerably more on what he thinks Scripture implies. This is not all wrong, of course, because correct theology sometimes is based on inferences and implications. But the Scriptures that Piper uses to defend active obedience are certainly liable to more than one interpretation. He even admits, quoting Charles Hodge, that “Paul never expressly states that the righteousness of Christ is reckoned to believers” (81, #26). Scripture instead consistently teaches that it is the righteousness of God that is imputed to the believer’s account (2 Cor 5:21; Rom 3:21-22) through union with Christ. The act of obedience by which many were made righteous is Christ’s death on the cross (Rom 5:19).

Second, the doctrine of the imputed active obedience of Christ is questionable theologically in that it is so regularly associated with covenant theology. It is almost always connected to the covenant of works. Adam failed in the covenant of works, goes the argument, so Christ had to recapitulate Adam’s work (for example, see A. A. Hodge, The Atonement [Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board, 1867] 254ff.).

Of course, it is true that Christ lived a perfectly righteous life, and His perfect righteousness is not disconnected from the atonement. He qualified Himself as the God-man to die the substitutionary death on the cross by living a life without sin. “God made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf...” (2 Cor 5:21). Also, unless Christ had perfectly fulfilled the old covenant, He would not have been qualified to be the mediator of the new covenant (Rom 10:4; Heb 9:13-14) and the believer’s high priest (Heb 5:9-10). By being in union with Christ (a doctrine that Piper rightfully emphasizes), we received divine righteousness.

Still, the discussion on the imputed active obedience of Christ is only a small part of the book, and many readers will agree with Piper’s understanding. Overall, the book is highly recommended.


The author appraises a view held chiefly by such writers as Marvin Rosenthal and Robert van Kampen from the early 1990s forward. Rosenthal wrote *The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990). One can see also van Kampen’s *The Sign*, 2d or Expanded Ed. (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway
Van Kampen and Roger Best did *The Sign, a Personal Study Guide* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 1994, and in the mid-1990s van Kampen added the 93-page *The Prewrath Rapture Position Explained Plain & Simple* (Grand Haven, Mich: Sola Scriptura, n.d.). Showers is lucid and specific on what he sees as flaws in a pre-wrath view that Christ will rapture His church about three-fourths of the way through the future seven-year tribulation period, shortly before Christ’s Second Advent. The view Showers rejects sees the early years of that seven-year period as not being part of the “day of the Lord” and not yet part of God’s work in wrath. That view posits that Christ will take out His church just before the final part of the seven-years, then God will bring wrath on earth, as if no divine wrath was exercised in the period before that. Showers himself is pretribulation.

The author received a Th.M. at Dallas Theological Seminary and a Th.D. at Grace Theological Seminary. He has been a long-time staff member of the Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry. He also has taught at Moody Bible Institute, Lancaster School of the Bible, and Philadelphia College of the Bible. Other published works by Showers are *Liberty and Love in Life with Christ, What on Earth is God Doing?, The New Nature, There Really is a Difference* (this compares covenant theology with dispensational belief), and *Maranatha, Our Lord, Come*, a definitive effort on a pretribulational rapture.

The present ten chapters deal with pre-wrath logic on the word “tribulation,” also “the Great Tribulation,” and how seal judgments (Revelation 6–8) fit in. Further, Showers probes how the seals relate to the Second Advent, how Matthew 24 fits in, and the great multitude (Rev 7:9ff.). In addition, he examines in detail how to place the day of the Lord into the future picture, and how 2 Thessalonians 2 correlates. Then he argues the imminent coming of Christ.

Showers is well-organized, giving pre-wrath ideas first in each chapter, then his critique. Reasons he pits against a pre-wrath scheme are numbered and argued in detail. The book adduces evidence that “tribulation” occurs not only in the second half of the seven years but in the first half, all of the seven years forming a unit of “the seventieth seven [of years]” in Dan 9:27. As Showers does this in his Chapter 1, he cites rabbinic statements (14) and Christ’s teaching linking, as Showers reasons, Israel’s birth pangs of difficulty with tribulation in Matt 24:4-8 (15-17). Showers argues that the “beginning” of birth pangs in the first half of the seven years suggests further birth pangs to make up the rest of the tribulation, the latter in the second part of the seven years. Showers rejects the pre-wrath view idea that the Great Tribulation (seen as the second half of the seven years) will be “cut short” by reduction in length (cf. Matt 24:22; Mark 13:20) (20-31). One of his explanations is that Jesus in Mark 13:20 means that God in His eternal plan will cut the second half short in the sense of terminating it after God has fulfilled His predicted length for it, not shortening the length from what was predicted.

Showers argues against the pre-wrath view that the great multitude is the church, raptured to heaven between the sixth and seventh seals at a pre-wrath time (cf. 140). Pre-wrath reasoning is that being in white robes, standing before God’s
The Master’s Seminary Journal

throne, and wielding palm branches shows that these people are in resurrection bodies. Showers counters that even the saints under the altar (Rev 6:9-11) are in white raiment, and these have not yet been resurrected. He also reasons against the multitude being the church and OT saints because John, a member of the church, did not recognize who the multitude was and had to ask (150). In his view the multitude are, rather, saints during the Great Tribulation (151).


Study of this reviewer leads toward favoring a pretribulational orientation, as does Showers. A pre-wrath stance, although held by earnest men thinking that they have proper insight, does not explain details as consistently and persuasively in correlating a total view. Showers’ effort is one of the better pretribulational appraisals of the pre-wrath view. It may benefit some who have not been sure or who have felt the pre-wrath logic is better, and will help those already committed to a pretribulational view. It will also help those of other positions to see problems in a pre-wrath correlation, and to see ways to defend a pretribulational view.


Dave Tomlinson is not happy with mainline evangelicalism—not because it is moving too close to liberalism, but because it is much too conservative. Tomlinson is the vicar of St. Luke’s Anglican Church in North London and the former leader of Holy Joe’s, an unconventional church group that meets in a London pub. He believes that post-evangelicalism is the best position for ministry in a post-modern age. The book is written in a popular style with side-bar observations from seven other commentators. It is a new American edition of a book previously written for the United Kingdom.

To begin with, the doctrinal position of post-evangelicalism has been changed from evangelicalism and fundamentalism. As far as the Bible is concerned, the doctrine of inerrancy is a “pointless diversion” because “none of the original autographs exist” and “the Bible makes no such claim for itself” (110). The author
repeats the tired old accusation that inerrancy is a modern (as opposed to postmodern) rationalist response to unbelieving rationalism (110). He believes that the proper way to approach Scripture is not to take it literally, but to dialogue with the Bible. Revelation, he says, is primarily personal rather than propositional. Since the entire Bible is “human word, subject to the strains, weaknesses, and errors of any human product” (113), Bible students should understand that the Bible is only the word of God “in that it is the symbolic location of divine revelation” (114).

Obviously, post-evangelical bibliography is nothing new, but simply Barthianism dressed up in evangelical clothes.

Post-evangelicals still believe that people are saved through the cross of Christ. But wait—it is not that Christ died in the sinner’s place. The doctrine of the substitutionary atonement “makes God seem fickle, vengeful, and morally underhanded” (101). So Tomlinson suggests that Christ’s death on the cross demonstrated “God’s love, which always forgives, rather than through a once-for-all event of forgiveness. What is changed, then, is not God’s attitude toward us, but our attitude toward him” (101).

Of course, this is not a new theory of the atonement. Horace Bushnell, one of the leading American liberals of the nineteenth century, taught the moral influence theory, as did nineteenth-century German liberals such as Schleiermacher and Ritschl. The Princeton theologians—Charles Hodge and his colleagues—opposed this view with great vigor. Scripture rejects the moral influence theory in such passages as John 3:36; Rom 1:18 and 3:23-25; Eph 5:2; Heb 9:14; and 1 John 4:10, to name a few.

In regard to truth, “Post-evangelicals have moved away from the certainty that characterizes evangelicalism to a more provisional symbolic understanding of truth” (93). They seek truth “in symbols, ambiguities, and situational judgments” (94). Ultimately, “our tentative and imperfect doctrinal deliverances matter little to God . . .” (69). Certainly our “creedal affirmations do not impress God” (70). One wonders what Athanasius would say to that.

And what impact does this have on how Christians are to live? Well, the chapter entitled “Positively Worldly” will give a hint. “Post-evangelicals also look at secular culture more positively as a place where God is also graciously at work. In part, this is because they have a more hopeful view of the human condition than most evangelicals” (124).

On the other hand, post-evangelicals believe that far too many American middle-class values are inherent in evangelicalism. So, for example, post-evangelicals believe that a couple living together, as long as they have committed themselves to each other, need not go through a marriage ceremony. Living together without a marriage certificate “has become an accepted social norm.” After all, “Scripture nowhere insists on a specific ceremonial model for entering into marriage” (48). Post evangelicals also “have no reservations about ‘house husbands,’ if that’s what both partners agree upon, and they see no reason why men should be in charge. Family roles are negotiable” (52).
So, what can be said about this book? There is nothing to learn theologically from it. Tomlinson says that while "post-evangelical does mean something different than evangelical, it does not mean liberal. I would deeply regret a post-evangelical drift toward liberalism" (69). Yet his doctrinal views represent a liberal theory of the atonement and the neo-orthodox view of the Bible.

Positively, the book is helpful in understanding how postmodernism has impacted society in general and evangelicalism in particular. Tomlinson also rightly cautions evangelicals about exchanging biblical values for middle-class values. Moreover, he provides an occasional insight for evangelizing and ministering in the twenty-first century. Tomlinson clearly has a burden to minister to people.

Above all else, however, this book is valuable as a warning against what will happen to evangelicalism and fundamentalism if their adherents do not energetically, practically, accurately, and yes, sensitively, teach and preach true biblical doctrine.


Reviewed by Keith Essex, Assistant Professor of Bible Exposition.

These two volumes come from the pens of well-known British evangelical scholars who have sought to provide beginning students in a university, theological college, or seminary with textbooks as a basis for introductory courses in the NT. Each volume is a textbook for a one-semester course with a mixture of lecture and seminar-based discussion (vol. 1, ix). Each chapter of both volumes contains the basic text material with supplementary information in boxes (lecture content), with shaded boxes throughout that introduce the reader/student to issues and research topics (the basis for seminar discussion). The chapters conclude with issues for today that encourage students to make contemporary application of the NT material, suggested essay topics, and give direction for further reading with the recommended works having a definite British flavor. Both volumes include helpful glossaries that give brief definitions of terms relevant to NT study (vol. 1, 301-2; vol. 2, 329-31).

The first volume on the Gospels and Acts by Wenham and Walton is divided into five sections. The first section provides the second-temple history and religious perspective of Judaism as a background for the Gospels (1-44). Though the material is generally useful, the authors strongly suggest that John the Baptist lived for a time in and had ties to the Qumran community (5, 145), a purely speculative viewpoint. The second section tackles the issues of the genre, origins, and interpretation of the Gospels (45-123). Walton views the Gospels as reflecting
in some ways a Greek ‘biography,’ but also is in some senses being a unique genre. After introducing the student to Gospel criticism, he opts for Markan priority. He concludes, “Most scholars still use source-, form- and redaction-critical tools in studying the synoptic Gospels, but without necessarily accepting the historical skepticism which some of the originators of these tools held” (79). According to Walton, those critical tools can help interpret the Gospels better.

The main figure of Jesus Himself is the focus of the third section (125-87). After surveying the scholarly study of Jesus over the past 150 years, Wenham outlines what can be known of Jesus from historical study. Though his conclusions are generally conservative, he gives a hint of skepticism concerning biblical inerrancy when he states, “However, Luke is clearly writing with a historical interest, whether or not he is accurate at this particular point” (144). A chapter on the teaching of Jesus opines that He saw Himself as the true Israel and King/Messiah who both brought the Kingdom now and will also do so in the future. A study of each Gospel, beginning with Mark, comprises the fourth section (189-264). Discussions of the structure, key themes, background and purpose, and authorship and date of each Gospel are in this section. The authors are hesitant to affirm Matthean or Johannine authorship for their respective books. The final section considers the contents, organization, themes, and contemporary debates about Acts (265-300).

The second volume on the Epistles and Revelation has four sections. Sections one and three were penned by Travis, most of section two was written by Marshall with parts by Travis, and the fourth section was authored by Ian Paul. A summary of the Greco-Roman background to the NT appears in the first section (1-20). The second section deals with Paul and his letters (21-227). Marshall introduces his readers to ‘the new look on Paul’ as stated by E. P. Sanders and J. D. G. Dunn. However, he notes that this new ‘school’ of thought has not been universally accepted. He writes, “A growing number of scholars emphasize that for many Jewish sects the people as a whole had so failed to keep the law that they were now effectively outside the covenant and needed to find their way back in—usually by joining the particular sect and following its way of life. It should also be noted that Judaism was still a ‘legalistic’ religion in that keeping the law stood at the centre of it” (53). Thankfully, the chapters on the letters of Paul are written from the traditional evangelical theological perspective concerning ‘justification’ and ‘righteousness.’ Unfortunately, Marshall rejects the Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles. This section concludes with chapters on Paul, the missionary theologian, and the interpretation and authorship of the NT letters. Travis views the possibility of pseudepigraphic letter writing as an unsettled question at the present time (226).

Section three is devoted to the General Epistles (229-302). Travis does not state a firm conclusion concerning the authorship of 1 Peter and rejects Petrine authorship of 2 Peter. He also concludes that Jude was written between A.D. 50-60 and was used by the author of 2 Peter who wrote between 80-90. The final section
deals with the book of Revelation (303-28). Ian Paul thinks that the evidence both for and against Johannine authorship is “thin” (310). He views the book as metaphorical, with the first-century events being communicated by the author in metaphors that the contemporary reader can associate with features of the modern context.

These two volumes of Exploring the New Testament are valuable in orienting a beginning NT theological student to the issues he will face in his continuing studies. Although pointing the reader to the questions he will need to answer, however, the answers supplied are not always reliable. The authors show how evangelicals without a commitment to biblical inerrancy can and do make compromises when interacting with contemporary NT scholarship.


Michael Williams is associate professor of Systematic Theology at Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis. The purpose of his book is to analyze dispensationalism, and more specifically classic dispensationalism, through the theology of two of its best-known adherents, C. I. Scofield and Lewis Sperry Chafer. According to Williams, his book is a theological not an exegetical analysis.

For the dispensational reader, the book may come across as an anxious attempt to isolate classic dispensationalism to the fringes of Christianity. It has a few compliments, but for the most part, the author paints an ugly picture of dispensationalism, especially classic dispensationalism. True, most modern-day dispensationalists would not wish to try to defend everything that Scofield and Chafer taught. But there are still many concerns with this book.

A couple of questions arise in the area of historiography. In the first place, is it possible for a theological opponent of dispensationalism to give a fair critique of dispensationalism? Many dispensationalists believe that covenant theologians have a bad record in this regard. This book will not help the record.

Second, can a broad theological movement like dispensationalism be analyzed by focusing on only two early-twentieth-century proponents? Though directed first against Scofield and Chafer, and second against classic dispensationalists, Williams’ criticism does include all dispensationalists at times. For example, “Dispensationalism . . . comes dangerously close to the idea of election as license . . .” (127). Williams is correct in maintaining that Scofield and Chafer were two of the most influential promoters of classic dispensationalism, but dispensationalism is a not at all a creedal system. It seeks to be a biblicist theology, and nothing that Scofield and Chafer wrote has ever been a manual for all
dispensationalists or even all classic dispensationalists.

In chapter one, Williams introduces Scofield and Chafer to his readers. In a somewhat *ad hominem* attack, Williams implies that Scofield’s biographers are being hagiographical when they report that Scofield quit drinking alcoholic beverages immediately after his conversion. This is only standard revivalist rhetoric, according to Williams. Moreover, Williams claims that Scofield abandoned his wife and two daughters after his conversion (24, #17). It would have been fairer to mention Scofield’s side of the story, that his Roman Catholic wife wanted nothing to do with a serious born-again Christian and left him. Williams may also be stretching the readers’ credibility when he encourages them to read postmillennialist Loraine Boettner’s book for a “brief factual account of Scofield’s life” (24, #17).

Williams also tries to connect Scofield directly with John Nelson Darby and the Brethren (what is so bad about that?). In his reference Bible, all Scofield did, says Williams, was to formulate Darby and the Brethren (32). But this is much too narrow an interpretation. Williams should have at least mentioned the influence on Scofield of James Brookes and the Bible teachers associated with the Niagara Bible Conference. After his conversion, Scofield studied directly under James Brookes, the pastor of the influential Washington and Compton Presbyterian Church in St. Louis, Missouri. Scofield later fellowshipped with the teachers of the Niagara Bible Conference and served as a teacher there.

Charles Ryrie has also shown that Scofield’s dispensational arrangements are much closer to Isaac Watts than to Darby. Moreover, many of the notes in the Scofield Bible are merely standard orthodox definitions and explanations. He surely did not get them only from Darby. Williams is also unhappy with the influence of the Scofield Reference Bible, mentioning more than once that Scofield put his notes on the same page with the inspired Bible, as though that were the only study Bible to do so. As to style, Williams says that there is “a lifeless quality in Scofield’s work . . .” (32).

In chapter two, “Satan and the Satanic System,” Williams expounds his major thesis. He writes, “Throughout this study, we will notice an otherworldliness in the thought of both men that de-emphasizes and even demonizes the physical world” (46). This is the basis for the title of the book, “This World Is Not My Home.” Williams’ comes close to saying that classic dispensationalists were so heavenly minded that they were no earthly good. He speaks of classic dispensationalism in terms of dualism, Platonism, and Gnosticism because its adherents believe that even the good in society is still under the control of Satan. “Chafer’s understanding of Satan as an incompetent substitute for God comes perilously close to the creation myth of ancient gnosticism, in which the demiurge in clumsy imitation of the high deity fashions the material universe and inspires human culture” (49).

But after he argues this point, Williams is compelled to admit, “Yet to their credit, Scofield and Chafer were not saying that Christians are not to be doing anything in society. . . . Both affirmed the necessity of good government, moral
living, the proper education of children, and so on" (56-57). The author follows this approach more than once in the book. He argues what he thinks the implications of classic dispensational theology are, but then backs off and admits that Scofield and Chafer did not actually teach such things.

In chapter three, Williams critiques Scofield’s and Chafer’s view of the church: (1) that classic dispensationalists sublimated the church to the nation of Israel; and (2) that classic dispensationalists over-emphasized the mystical body of Christ to the neglect of the visible church. Some dispensationalists, including this reviewer, would agree with Williams that the local church was not always given its due in Scofield’s and Chafer’s writings. Nevertheless, as Williams is again compelled to admit, “Dispensationalists have always been very active in such activities as church-planting ministries and the erection of educational institutions to train leaders and workers for the church” (71). Moreover, Scofield was a pastor of a local church.

The author also believes that the classic dispensationalists’ stress on the body of Christ leads them to over-emphasize the idea that Christians are only strangers and pilgrims here on earth in the midst of a hopelessly evil social order that will be changed only by the eschatological kingdom. In a later chapter he argues that the classic dispensationalists’ pessimism about the present age comes not from the Bible, but from catastrophes and social upheavals (immigration problems, labor strikes, Darwinism, conspiracy theories) of the late nineteenth century (113). Of course, premillennialists of all kinds would disagree.

Williams is also unhappy with the doctrine of ecclesiastical separation that he believes classic dispensationalists learned from Darby (86). In one of the most amazing statements in the book, Williams writes that instead of fighting against liberalism, “separation from that which is judged a ruined work and the construction of counter institutions was the only action that was ideologically consistent with the classical dispensationalist understanding of history. Attempting to battle the modernist foe within the denominational seminary, and ultimately within the denomination itself would only result in corruption of one’s own allegiances. . . . The dispensationalist insistence upon separation rather than confrontation made it an unwilling though unconscious co-conspirator in the secularization of American society” (35).

The doctrine of ecclesiastical separation has to be judged on the basis of Scripture, of course. But Williams must not be familiar with the battles in the Baptist denomination in the 1920s and 1930s wherein conservatives, many of whom were dispensational and almost all premillennial, battled the liberals over the seminaries and colleges as well as the heart and soul of the denomination itself.

On the other hand, James Brookes, the father of dispensationalism in America and the teacher of C. I. Scofield, never left the Presbyterian denomination, but fiercely opposed the theological liberalism he found in it. He was in fact, the major opponent of Charles Briggs in the heresy trials of the 1890’s. Moreover, in the later struggles over Princeton Seminary and the Presbyterian denomination in the
north, those who eventually separated to form Westminster Seminary, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, and other colleges and seminaries were not dispensationalists, to say the least. It is impossible to maintain the point that Darby and the dispensationalists were the source of cowardly ecclesiastical separation.

There are some straw-man arguments in chapter four. For example, Williams believes that dispensationalists understand the future of Israel and the kingdom only in a political sense: “The salvation of Israel . . . is yet future for her deliverance is not of a metaphysical nature, as in the case of the church. It is, rather, political. Salvation for Israel is her yet future deliverance from her national enemies and oppressors” (98). This is only a half-truth, for dispensationalists believe that Israel’s future deliverance from her national enemies will be consummated only when there is a spiritual revival in the nation (Zechariah 12).

Also in this chapter, Williams critiques the classic dispensationalists’ scheme of dispensations. First, their view of the decree of God is a “particularly scholastic understanding of God and a radically deterministic view of history” (99). This is a switch. Covenant theologians usually criticize dispensationalists for not having a deterministic enough view of the decree. Williams especially dislikes the way the dispensations work their way out as “a drama of damnation” (102). Instead, biblical history is the unfolding of redemption, Williams says. And to say that God works all things for His own glory in human history is a “fundamentally flawed notion” (103). According to the author, such a view misses the biblical images of God as father, king, and shepherd. In fact, though believers are to be theocentrists, God “is an unabashed anthropocentrist” (103).

And what about the doctrine of the rapture? Williams believes that no one would ever have developed such a doctrine if it were not for dispensationalism. The reason dispensationalists devised it was to get the church out of the wicked world. “The social and ecclesiastical implications of pretribulationism were entirely negative for classical dispensationalism” (112).

Dispensationalists’ emphasis on Israel is the theme of chapter five. Once again, many dispensationalists would believe that Williams has some overstatements and straw-man arguments here. Williams should have at least footnoted his source when he wrote, “Scofield sought the restoration of the Jews to their covenanted homeland, not their conversion to Christianity. He did not chide the Jew for rejecting Christ but for rejecting Palestine. Classical dispensational concern for Israel concerned itself with Israel as a political entity rather than a community of faith” (121). Williams must not be aware of the Jewish evangelism ministries of Scofield’s close friend, A. C. Gaebelien, as well as other classic dispensationalists. Gaebelien, in fact, learned Yiddish and published a paper in Hebrew in order to evangelize Jews.

Williams goes so far as to say that because classic dispensationalists believe Christ offered a kingdom to Israel when He came to earth, “the purpose of the incarnation, then, was not soteriological, in any Christian sense at least, for classical dispensationalism” (130). Probably all classic dispensationalists would strongly
disagree with this accusation. A fair analysis ought at least to begin with one’s opponent being able to say, “Yes, that’s what I believe.”

Much of chapter six is taken up with detailing how Keswick theology is an inadequate theology of sanctification. But this really has nothing to do with the essence of classic dispensationalism. Many classic dispensationalists would agree with his evaluation. Williams also includes a lengthy section describing the attack of the liberals at the University of Chicago against dispensationalism. Another section on Schweitzer’s consistent eschatology follows. Williams says, “Both Schweitzer and the dispensationalists, consequently, spiritualized apocalyptic away into a program of otherworldliness for the church” (168). Of course, the author does admit that “the dispensationalist accepted the apocalyptic worldview of Jesus as true while Schweitzer rejected it” (168). These sections read like research that the author wanted to include in the book, but they make little impact on the development of his thesis.

In chapter seven there is another “birds of a feather flock together” argument. Williams says that the dispensationalists’ tendency to divide the Bible into dispensations closely parallels higher criticism (179). And in another straw-man argument, Williams writes that Chafer believed that OT Israelites were saved by keeping the Law of Moses (197). Of course, he has to concede later that “neither Scofield nor Chafer ever explicitly stated that Old Testament Jews were saved by keeping of the law” (206, also 207). In fact, Williams includes a quote from Chafer (208) where he explicitly denies believing in more than one way of salvation. Chafer says that there is a difference between testing faithfulness, of which there are more than one means, and salvation, of which there is only one way. But Williams believes, nonetheless, that Chafer’s theology implies more than one way of salvation.

Other overstatements and attacks include the following: For classic dispensationalists, “Jesus belongs to Israel; the church must settle for Paul and a hellenized Pauline Christ” (199); “The escapist hope of dispensationalism is clearly far closer to gnosticism than it is to the Apostle’s Creed” (200); “The doctrine of the rapture renders the resurrection utterly inoperable” (201); “The docetic Christ of classical dispensationalism rescues the believer from the creation of the Old Testament Creator God” (202); “Jesus Christ plays only a minor role in the eschatology of dispensationalism” [?!] (201).

The last chapter includes a section on hermeneutics in which Williams points out that Scofield tended to spiritualize the historical sections of the OT. This may be true of him, but of very few others, especially in the last fifty years. Williams himself argues for what he calls the typological interpretation of prophecy.

Williams concludes his work by returning to his thesis. Referencing Mark Noll, Williams says that dispensationalism “could not find a vision for Christian business, education, the arts, politics, or anything having to do with mankind’s public life” (222). And then an almost audacious statement: “Chafer’s dispensationalism simply could not tell one how to make their way in family life, political existence, economic affairs, or career decisions” (223). And finally, “The really pernicious
barb of all forms of Gnostic retreat is that they come across as sounding so pious, so serious about religion, while the reality is that the god conceived by the Gnostic believer is too small to be worthy of a human being’s devotion” (225).

It must be apparent by now that Williams is really upset with dispensationalism. But his analysis will not be helpful to many Christians. For one thing, the book is not exegetical, and the value and accuracy of any theological system is ultimately dependent on a correct exposition of Scripture. And for another thing, the book is not an analysis of classic dispensationalism as much as it is an analysis of what covenant theologians (or maybe just one covenant theologian) think two important dispensationalists must have meant by what they taught. For this reviewer who grew up in dispensational churches in the middle of the twentieth century, much of what Williams charges classic dispensationalists as believing sounds strangely unfamiliar.