DISCERNING SYNOPTIC GOSPEL ORIGINS:
AN INDUCTIVE APPROACH
(Part Two)

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Extending an earlier simultaneous comparison of the three Synoptic Gospels to determine the probability of literary interdependence among them, this study continues the investigation by looking at the Gospels two at a time to evaluate the same probability. The use of OT citations by these Gospels furnishes a standard for ascertaining literary interdependence when it reflects a 79% average of identical-word agreement between two Gospels citing the same OT passage. Application of that standard to two Gospel accounts of the same episodes discloses that their average agreement is only 30%, far short of the 79% standard for literary interdependence. The low percentage of identical agreements is a strong argument against literary interdependence, ruling it out on an inductive basis. Literary interdependence is not only improbable, it is also not worthwhile because it creates a portrait of a Jesus whose historical image is unknowable because of embellishments imagined by recent evangelical NT scholars. The Jesus resulting from an approach of literary independence is not only inductively very probable, but it supports historically reliable accounts of His life in the Synoptic Gospels.

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This article is a continuation of one in the Spring 2004 issue of TMSJ.¹ That article was in two parts: “Percentage of Identical Words” in the fifty-eight sections of triple tradition as defined in the Burton and Goodspeed work, A Harmony of the Gospels in Greek (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947), and “Agreements of Two Gospels against a Third.” The former section of that article found that an average of only sixteen percent of the words per pericope were

identical and that such a small percentage hardly justifies an assumption of literary interdependence among the three Synoptic writers. The latter section observed that the agreements of two Synoptic Gospels against a third were of sufficient nature and quantity that literary interdependence of any kind could not have occurred.

In 2002 Professor Robert Stein gracefully responded to an oral presentation of that material. He questioned my technique in the first part of the essay by saying that I should have compared only two gospels at a time instead of all three ² and by questioning the exclusion of the near-identical words from the survey. ³ My presentation of 2002 explained why I excluded near-identical words, i.e., because building a theory on internal evidence is subjective in itself and an inclusion of hard-to-define near-identical words would make it even more subjective. Part Two of “Discerning Synoptic Gospel Origins: An Inductive Approach” will extend the study as he suggested in the area of his first criticism, that of testing two Gospels at a time rather than all three. In light of the danger of enhancing subjectivity, this study will continue to limit itself to identical words.

Professor Stein did not respond to the second part of my presentation which dealt with agreements of two Gospels against a third and the powerful witness of that evidence against any kind of literary interdependence.

After devoting a brief time to two-Gospel comparisons, the discussion will compare two portraits of Jesus “painted” by contemporary evangelicals, one by the assumption of literary interdependence and the other by the assumption of literary independence.

**Literary Interdependence: Probable or Improbable?**

**A Standard for Establishing Literary Interdependence**

Obviously, comparing the Synoptic Gospels to each other two-at-a-time instead of all three at once will increase the percentage of identical words encountered. A suitable criterion for determining how high a percentage is necessary to

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² Professor Stein’s words regarding the comparison of three Gospels together were these: “I do not understand why in investigating if Matthew and Mark have some literary relationship, i.e., if Mark used Matthew or vice versa or if they both used the same separate source, I do not understand how a comparison of Luke is involved in this” (Robert H. Stein, “Robert L. Thomas’ ‘An Inductive Approach to Discerning Origins of the Synoptic Gospels’: A Response” [paper presented at Toronto, Canada, November 2002] 1-2). Why he does not understand a rationale for comparing all three at once is mystifying in light of his earlier published statement, “[T]here is an obvious agreement in the wording of the individual accounts, or ‘pericopes,’ that these Gospels have in common,” in a context where “these Gospels” refers to all three Synoptics (Robert H. Stein, *Studying the Synoptic Gospels: Origin and Interpretation*, 2d ed. [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001] 29-30).

³ I furnished three reasons for excluding near agreements from the survey, the first of which was this: “First, the recognition that all conclusions based on internal grounds are subjective in nature. Considering agreements that are only near agreements opens the door for personal bias to intervene even more in such a study as this.” Professor Stein failed to acknowledge either of the three reasons and his own subjectivism in defining what constituted a “close agreement.”
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demonstrate literary interdependence is needed. Such a benchmark is available in one area where the Synoptic writers depended in a literary way on other written works of the biblical canon. That area is, of course, their use of the OT.

One method of measuring their policies in citing OT Scriptures is to compare each individual citation with its OT source. One informal study that compared all three Synoptics citations with their sources in the LXX concluded that an average of 85% of the words in the Synoptics were identical with the words of the LXX. Results of another type of study may be a bit more revealing, however, since writers may have cited the Hebrew OT instead of the LXX. Seventeen pericopes defined in the Burton and Goodspeed Harmony have parallel accounts of OT citations. A comparison of those accounts in two Gospels at a time—Matthew and Mark, Mark and Luke, and Matthew and Luke—to determine the extent of verbal agreements when two writers at a time are literally dependent on Scripture furnishes a gauge for determining whether the three writers were literally interdependent on each other. Chart #1 (page 31) shows the results of such a comparison. The Burton and Goodspeed section number is in the left column. For Matthew and Mark, the next three columns give the number of words in the OT quotation, the number of identical words in the two Gospels, and the percentage of identicals compared to the total. The next three columns do the same for Mark and Luke, with the final three columns giving figures for Matthew and Luke. The aggregate of total words, total identicals, and percentage appears below Chart #1 (page 31).

From the above figures, one can conclude that in their literary interdependence on the OT the Synoptic Gospel writers averaged 79% in using words identical with one another when copying from the LXX (or perhaps the Masoretic Text of the OT in some cases). Carrying that figure over to their alleged literary interdependence among themselves would lead to the assumption that their use of identical words with each other, two by two, should approximate about 79%. Such a frequency would show clearly the limited liberty the Gospel writers felt in altering another inspired document, if literary interdependence occurred.

Someone may object to comparing the writers’ use of one another with their use of the OT because of the high respect for the OT that prevailed in the first century. Yet no difference exists between books of the OT and the three Synoptic Gospels in that all are parts of the biblical canon. Some advocates of literary interdependence theorize that Synoptic writers used another Synoptic writer because they viewed the source document as inspired. In the interdependist mind, this distinguished the writers’ source as true in comparison with the many false Gospels in circulation in that day. They do not feel that the Lukan Prologue (Luke 1:1-4) implies that earlier accounts of Jesus’ life and words were inadequate and therefore

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uninspired and that Luke knew he was consulting an inspired work in his research. If interdependence advocates recognize that writers dependent on another Gospel or other Gospels were aware they were using an inspired book or books as literary sources, their usage of those inspired sources lies squarely in the same category as their usage of the OT.

Some scholar may shy away from equating a source Gospel with the OT, but that would raise questions about that scholar’s view of biblical inspiration. From the beginning of each NT book’s existence, the church recognized a canonical book’s inspiration because it came from an apostle or a prophet under the influence of an apostle. Surely the writers themselves would have been aware of that unique characteristic of their own works and the works of other canonical Gospel writers if they had used them in the writing of their own Gospels. If anyone of them used the work of another, surely he would have treated his source with the same respect he showed the OT. If he knew one or two of his sources to be head and shoulders above the rest, he would doubtless have handled it or them as inspired. In other words, his literary dependency on another Synoptic Gospel should demonstrate itself in an average of about a 79%-frequency of identical words.

**Applying the Benchmark to Literary Interdependence Theories**

**Double-tradition pericopes.** Burton and Goodspeed have twenty-nine sections of double tradition in the Synoptic Gospels. See Chart #2 (page 32) for a listing of these sections. As evident from Chart #3 (pages 33-34), seventeen double-tradition sections involve Matthew and Mark, seven involve Matthew and Luke, and five involve Mark and Luke. The seventeen sections of Matthew and Mark contain 4,910 words and 1,614 identical words, identical words comprising 32.87% of the

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3Would anyone suggest that Matthew and Mark were ignorant of Mark’s dependence on the apostle Peter when writing his Gospel, or that Luke and Mark were ignorant of the apostle Matthew’s direct knowledge of what Jesus said and did? Or, on the other hand, would anyone suggest that a Gospel writer knew the authority of his source-Gospel and did not care to respect that authority? Either possibility belies what is known of the high respect for apostolic authority in the ancient church.

4As a part of his 2002 response, Prof. Stein used the Feeding of the Five Thousand to illustrate the higher percentage obtained when comparing two Gospels at a time instead of three. Excluding the disputed, subjectively defined close agreements, he found 50% agreement between Matthew and Mark, 31% between Mark and Luke, and 25% between Matthew and Luke (see §78, Charts #5, #6, and #7, below, where the figures for the feeding of the 5,000 are substantially less than calculated by Prof. Stein: 44% for Matt-Mk, 25% for Mk-Lk, and 23% for Matt-Lk). All three of Stein’s figures fall far short of the 79% average identical agreements that the Synoptic writers have shown when literally dependent on inspired OT sources. Such is testimonial to their literary independence among themselves, because interdependence which involves an inspired source would show a much higher respect for the source text.
words in the section. The highest frequency of identicals is 63.13% in §135 and the lowest is 9.09% in §147. The seven sections of Matthew and Luke have 2,887 words, 706 of the words being identical or 24.46%. The highest figure of this group was 43.80% in §40 and the lowest was 0% in §165. In the five Mark-Luke pericopes there are 256 identicals and 726 total words or 32.26% frequency. The highest frequency within this group is 50.45% in §93 and the lowest is 22.22% in §25. See Chart #3 for a section by section analysis.

A combination of all the double-tradition pericopes yields 2,576 identicals and 8,523 total words, or 30% frequency.

**Triple-tradition pericopes.** Burton and Goodspeed divide the triple-tradition portions of the Synoptic Gospels into fifty-eight sections (see Chart #4, pages 35-36). The fifty-eight sections of Matthew-Mark parallels—see Chart #5 (pages 37-38) for these—contain 16,449 words of which 6,352 are identical with words in another Gospel. In other words, 39% of the words in Matthew-Mark sections of triple tradition are identical. The fifty-eight sections of Mark-Luke parallels—see Chart #6 (pages 39-40)—include 15,421 total words with 4,550 of them being identical with words in another Gospel. The resulting percentage in this case is 30. The fifty-eight sections of Matthew-Luke parallels—see Chart #7 (pages 41-42)—have 15,547 total words, including 3,541 that have identical counterparts in the other Gospel, or 23% of the total. The highest single-section percentage is in §156, where Mark and Luke record Jesus’ denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees. In this relatively brief section containing almost exclusively Jesus’ denunciation of the scribes and Pharisee, the percentage of identical words is 76%. Typically, the identical-word agreements are higher for Jesus’ words than for narrative sections of the Gospels.

The aggregate totals for triple tradition sections are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Total Words</th>
<th>Identical Words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Matthew-Mark</td>
<td>16,499</td>
<td>6,352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark-Luke</td>
<td>15,421</td>
<td>4,550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matthew-Luke</td>
<td>15,547</td>
<td>3,541</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The total words come to 47,467 with 14,442 identical words or 30% of the total words.

A combination of the double- and triple-traditions sections brings the total words to 55,990 with 17,018 of them being involved in identical-word combination. That too yields a percentage of 30% identical words.

**Observation #1.** The aggregate figure of 30% falls far short of the 79% accumulated by the Gospel writers in their literary dependence on the OT. Only one section of the 145 possible combinations of double tradition even approaches that percentage, and even that section falls short of the average of all the instances in
which two Gospel writers cite the same OT passage.\(^9\) In their use of the OT, they agree with one another far more often in using identical words than they do if, for instance, Matthew and Luke were using Mark as a source, as proposed in the Markan priority view of Gospel origins. The Matthew-Luke combination yields a percentage of only 23%. If literarily dependent on Mark, those two writers must have had a very low view of their source because of failure to represent it accurately. If that had been the case, Luke would have taken a dim view of Mark’s accuracy and would have used this dim view as a reason for writing another Gospel (cf. Luke 1:1-4). But Luke did not take such a dim view of another inspired document, as a proper understanding of Luke 1:1-4 dictates.\(^10\) He used no sources whose inspiration he respected, as evidenced by the low percentage of identical words in Mark-Luke, 32% in the double-tradition sections and 29% in the triple-tradition sections.

A similar phenomenon exists in relation to the Two-Gospel view of Gospel origins. If Mark and Luke used Matthew as a source, they certainly fell far below the percentage of identical words that they agree upon in their use of the OT, a figure is 85%.\(^11\) In triple-tradition sections, Mark and Luke agree on only 29% of the words as identical, when they were allegedly using Matthew as a source.\(^12\) That would indicate their lack of respect for Matthew’s inspiration, if they had used it as a source. The only rationale to explain such a low percentage of identical words is to accept that the two writers worked independently of each other and independently of Matthew as well. Here, then, is another indication that a proper understanding of Luke’s Prologue dictates that he used no inspired sources.

**Observation #2.** Aside from the 79% benchmark established in the Synoptic Gospel writers’ use of the OT, an average 30% agreement of identical forms is an extremely low figure on which to base a theory of literary interdependence. Exhibit #1 (pages 42-45) shows a typical section\(^13\) with approximately 30% agreement—the section has 29% of identical words in Matthew and Luke. A perusal of that section impresses one with the number of non-identical words rather than with the number of identicals, particularly in light of the fact that twenty of the identical words come from the citation of an OT passage by the two authors. Also, some of the identical words come in different word orders and in different grammatical relationships, making the scarcity of identical situations even more pronounced.

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\(^9\)The absence of even one instance in which a Gospel writer directly cites another Gospel the way the writers cite the OT is further evidence that no literary interdependence existed in the composition of the Synoptic Gospels.


\(^11\) See column 7 of Chart #1.

\(^12\) See Chart #6.

\(^13\) Full Gospel texts behind this study are available at <http://www.tms.edu/gospelcomp.asp>. 
Exhibit #2 (pages 46-47) shows another typical section, this time with 30% of the words identical in Mark and Luke. Again, the non-identical words far outnumber the identicals, giving the full impression that no literary interdependence prevailed in the writing of the two Gospels. Couple this with the many syntactical differences in the two passages, and the proof of no literary interdependence grows even stronger. The eyewitnesses of Christ’s ministry paid special attention in preserving the words of Christ, of which this section explaining a parable consists. Memorization of His words by listeners is more than ample to explain the agreement of as many words as have the same form.

The outcome of all the word-counting brings the inevitable conclusion that the theory of literary interdependence among the Synoptic writers is a myth that cannot be substantiated on an inductive basis. That the writers worked independently of each other offers far more coherence to explain the phenomena arising from the text itself. Only by selecting limited portions of the Synoptic Gospels to support a presupposed theory of interdependence can one come to any other conclusion. Only a strong interdependence presupposition cancels the results of a full inductive investigation such as this. Objectivity—i.e., freedom from presuppositions—is possible only by looking at the Synoptic Gospels as a whole rather than at selected passages. An objective approach—i.e., based on an inductive investigation—leads inevitably to the conclusion of literary independence.

Two Portraits of Jesus

Why is the issue of interdependence versus independence important? The importance lies in a choice of which Jesus the Synoptic Gospels teach about. Among evangelicals, literary interdependence leads to one portrait of Jesus—a vague one at that—and literary independence leads to another. Depending on their view of Synoptic Gospel origins, contemporary evangelicals paint two portraits of Jesus that are quite different from each other. Of course, if one moves outside evangelicalism into Jesus Seminar circles, he encounters a third portrait of Jesus that is even more vague than that of an interdependent evangelical portrait and quite different from both evangelical pictures. This discussion, however, will concentrate on the two evangelical portraits only.

Review of Recent History

About seven years ago, several of us wrote about evangelicals who dehistoricize the Gospels at various points. The outcry from some evangelicals named in the work was great, but their claims of being misrepresented in the book

14See Robert L. Thomas and F. David Farnell, eds., The Jesus Crisis: The Inroads of Historical Criticism into Evangelical Scholarship (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998).
remain unsupported through even one citation of a factual error in the work. Those are men who lean heavily on a theory of literary interdependence.

As a general rule, their Jesus did not preach the Sermon on the Mount as recorded in Matthew 5–7. At most, He preached parts of it on several different occasions. That part of Jesus’ portrait ultimately results from their theory of literary interdependence among the Synoptic Gospels writers. For the independence view, the portrait of Jesus has Him preaching the entire Sermon on the Mount on a single occasion the way Matthew says He did.

In a similar vein, the interdependence portrait of Jesus has Him commissioning the Twelve in Matthew 10 with only part of what Matthew records there. Matthew’s selections from other parts of Jesus’ ministry comprise the rest of Matthew 10. The independence portrait of Jesus has Him commissioning the Twelve with the entirety of what Matthew records in chapter 10.

The Jesus of interdependence did not group the parables of Matthew 13 and Mark 4 as readers of those two Gospels are led to believe. Rather, He spoke them on separate occasions with the grouping being attributed to the writers of Matthew and Mark. That portrait differs from the Jesus of independence, who was capable of delivering such a series of parables on a single occasion.

The Jesus of interdependence did not deliver the Olivet Discourse of Matthew 24–25, Mark 13, and Luke 21 as it appears in the three Gospels. That sermon results from the common literary practice in ancient times of creating composite speeches. On the other hand, the independence Jesus personally formulated and delivered the Discourse just as recorded in the three Synoptic passages.

Interdependence in several noteworthy cases does not allow that Jesus

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spoke the exception clauses in Matt 5:32 and 19:9. Since Matthew had Mark as his source in these instances, interdependence advocates reason, Matthew must have added the exception clauses to his account. That means that the Jesus of interdependence never spoke the words. Independence, however, has no problem with allowing that Matthew is historically accurate in recording the exception clauses as from Jesus lips. That approach does not reduce the biographical data in the text as interdependence does because it is not obligated to explain why or how a Gospel writer altered material from another Gospel while using it as a source.

Because of interdependence, its advocates must conjecture that Matthew altered Mark’s record of Jesus’ dialogue with the rich man (Matt 19:16-17; Mark 10:17-18). Some say he did it to solve a Christological problem, others that he wanted to shift the emphasis of the conversation. Whatever the reason for the change, the fact remains that the Jesus of interdependence never spoke the words as given in Matthew. In contrast, the Jesus of independence allows that both accounts of the dialogue are historically accurate. Each Gospel records a different part of the conversation, so no need exists to reconcile the wording in the two passages.

Interdependence compels its adherents to present a picture of the Pharisees that is radically different from the way Jesus described them. Jesus denounced the group for their hypocrisy on a number of occasions, particularly in Matt 23:13-36, but interdependence characterizes the Pharisees as part of “a movement of righteousness.” Independence is under no such pressure. It accepts the character of the Pharisees just as Jesus described them. It does not condone the idea that Matthew was reading back into the life of Jesus his own surroundings at the time he wrote his Gospel.

Interdependentists cannot endorse historical accuracy in the genealogies of Matthew and Luke. Because of supposed evidence elsewhere that the Gospel writers freely embellished their sources, they assume that the same has occurred in their

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22E.g., Kelly Osborne, “Impact of Historical Criticism on Gospel Interpretation: A Test Case,” Jesus Crisis 297-300.

recording of Jesus’ lineage. Those of independent persuasion differ conspicuously on this point. They take the genealogies to be historically accurate in every detail when giving Jesus’ physical ancestry on His mother’s side and His legal ancestry on His father’s side.

In at least one case, an interdependence advocate understands Matt 2:1-12 to be following the same tradition—presumably found in Q—as Luke 2:8-20 followed when describing Jesus’ birth. That assumption utterly destroys the historical worth of the Matthew account, reasoning that Matthew transforms the adoration of local Jewish shepherds into adoration by Gentile Magi from foreign regions. Again, such an explanation rests on a foregone conclusion that literary collaboration must explain the origin of the Synoptic Gospels. At the other extreme, independence takes the birth narratives in both Gospels to be historically valid in every detail. It does not force the writers into an embellishing mold that detracts from the factuality of their accounts.

Interdependence imposes criteria on the beatitudes of Matt 5:3-12 that reduce the number of them spoken by Jesus to less than the nine that the text says came from His lips. Various evangelical writers have suggested three, four, and eight as the numbers Jesus Himself actually spoke. The Christian community or Matthew added the rest and, therefore, the rest are not from Jesus, historically speaking. Conversely, independence has no difficulty in verifying that Jesus spoke all nine of the beatitudes as part of the Sermon on the Mount. Those of this persuasion need not theorize that Matthew and Luke were drawing upon the same source—a source such as Q—necessitating the conclusion that Matthew’s account is in some respects unhistorical.

An interdependence approach offers a very fuzzy picture of events surrounding the resurrection of Christ. When the women arrived at the tomb, how many there were, and their identities need not be specified because redactional factors entered into the choice of all three items so that the four accounts (including the Gospel of John) need not be harmonized with each other. Paul added Jesus’ appearance to the five hundred (1 Cor 15:7) for apologetic purposes. Since all the episodes are a combination of actual events with redactional additions and changes

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26Gundry, Matthew 26-27, 651 n. 25.

27E.g., Hagner, Matthew 1-13 90; Guelich, Sermon on the Mount 117-18; Gundry, Matthew 67-70.


29Ibid. 227, 229.
by the writers, a reader comes away with only a general idea of what transpired. Independence yields far different results. When freed from the drastic implications of literary interdependence, the various descriptions of resurrection events can stand as historically accurate accounts that are harmonizable with one another.30

In 2000 I wrote about “Historical Criticism and the Great Commission.”31 In studying various evangelical commentaries and writings, I learned, to my surprise, how much evangelical interdependence theories had butchered Matt 28:18-20. Whether or not Jesus claimed all authority in heaven and in earth (28:18) is in doubt. Whether He told His disciples to take the gospel to all nations (28:19a) is questionable. Whether or not He told His disciples to baptize is open to dispute (28:19b). Whether or not He prescribed the use of the trinitarian formula in baptism is quite uncertain (28:19c). On these four issues, evangelical interdependentists stand remarkably close to non-evangelical scholars and in direct contrast with evangelicalism of fifty years ago, ancient church leaders, and orthodox post-Reformation scholars. Independence does not handle the Great Commission that way. It accepts it as historically accurate in every respect and endorses the church’s obedience to Jesus’ direct commands.

The Jesus of interdependence is far different from the Jesus of independence.

New Voices for Interdependence

Since the release of The Jesus Crisis, more evangelical works on the Synoptic Gospels have appeared. A brief review of three typical recent releases, each dealing with a Synoptic Gospel, yields further insight into the consequences of interdependence in constructing a portrait of Jesus.

The Gospel of Luke

Joel Green classifies the genre of Luke as narrative or more specifically, as historiographical narrative.32 Regarding narrative genre, he writes,

As interesting and consequential as greater precision in genre identification might be, though in terms of our task of ‘reading the Gospel of Luke,’ this area has become problematized in recent years by the growing recognition that, from the standpoint of our reading of narrative, the line separating historical narrative and nonhistorical cannot be sustained. This is not because historical narrative makes no historical claims (or has no historical referent outside of the text), but because the narrative representation of history is always inherently ‘partial’—both in the sense of its selectivity and in the sense of its

orientation to a hermeneutical vantage point. Historiography—in terms of temporal and causal relations—inevitably provides more, and less, than ‘what actually happened.’

Since he classifies Luke as narrative, Green by these words acknowledges that it is impossible to separate “historical narrative and nonhistorical” and that “the narrative representation of history is always inherently ‘partial.’ . . .” Because of its partial nature, “[h]istoriography . . . inevitably provides more, and less, than ‘what actually happened.’ It never presents what actually happened. Stated another way, a reader cannot glean exact historical facts from the Gospel of Luke because of “Luke’s orientation to a hermeneutical vantage point.”


The census is mentioned repeatedly by Luke (vv. 1, 2, 3, 5) and is therefore of obvious significance. Unfortunately, the details to which Luke alludes are problematical from an historical point of view. From a narratological point of view, it is significant that one reference to the census (2:2) appears in a narrative aside. This evidence suggests the narrator’s desire to locate these events in a context familiar to the reader (cf. Acts 5:37). Whatever historians are able to make of Luke’s reference here. Luke’s ideal audience would likely have grasped the associations Luke draws between the birth of Jesus and this major event under Quirinius without being familiar enough with the issues of historical chronology to quarrel with the narrator.

In other words, the reference to Quirinius is historically inaccurate, but it serves Luke’s narratological purpose by locating the events in a context his readers knew about. The historical error is inconsequential because the narrator accomplishes his persuasive purpose. The immediate readers did not know enough to catch the historical inaccuracy, allowing Luke to incorporate the error in order to achieve his persuasive goal.

According to this perspective, one must compare Luke’s writings with secular writings of the time so as to ascertain “varying levels of precision the sort of history-writing Luke-Acts most approximates.” This means that “by representing historical events and movements in a narrative framework, Luke has provided them with an interpretation that must of necessity escape the historian concerned primarily with the scientific verification of particular events.” As Green continues,

This form of historicism will not be concerned fundamentally with ‘what really happened,’ as though such a ‘History with a capital H’ were available to us or even

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33Ibid., 2 [emphasis in the original].
34Ibid., 124-15.
36Ibid., 11.
possible to construct. Instead, it is concerned with (1) how Luke has “ordered” (1:3) events in order to serve a particular teleology and (2) how Luke’s model readers will have heard and been shaped by the episodes of which he has given an account as well as by his narrative understood as a whole.\textsuperscript{37}

Luke put his own “spin” on actual events to the point it is impossible to discern from his Gospel “what really happened.” Choosing between two competing interests as writers of history must, Luke chose narrative—the attempt to set events within a coherent, meaningful series, the presentation of which accords privilege to causation and teleology—over veracity—the attempt to depict events that actually happened.\textsuperscript{38} One can therefore only classify Luke’s writings as “generally accurate”\textsuperscript{39} from a historical perspective.

Though he does not belabor the point, Green works under the assumption of literary interdependence, following the theory that Luke was dependent on Mark.\textsuperscript{40} Ultimately, interdependence is to some degree responsible for the historical errors he finds in Luke’s narrative.

Regarding Mary’s question in Luke 1:34—“How can this be, since I am a virgin?”—Green writes,

With her query, Mary repeats for us information already available from the narrator (1:27). What her question does not account for fully, however, is the information that she was betrothed to Joseph. As such, and since Joseph is “of the house of David,” it might have been evident how she would conceive and bear a son of David to whom God could give the throne. What is more natural than for a betrothed virgin to expect to conceive and bear a child in the near future? On the one hand, her question plays a vital theological role, for it accents the fact that she is still a virgin. On the other hand, the point of her question is rhetorical, inviting further information from the angel.\textsuperscript{41}

His point seems to be that Mary never asked the question, but that Luke has inserted it into his narrative to make a theological point and for rhetorical reasons.

Green’s comment on the beatitudes and woes of Luke 6:20-26 appears to take these parts of Jesus’ sermon as an insertion also: “In several instances, in fact, one recognizes an exact linguistic correspondence between the wording of the

\textsuperscript{37}Ibid., 12.
\textsuperscript{38}Ibid., 15.
\textsuperscript{39}Ibid., 16 [emphasis added]. One of Green’s statements is of particular interest: “After all, history—as ‘bare facts’—may be a necessary ground of faith, but ‘facts’ are hardly a sufficient ground, nor do they necessarily assist us in our articulation of the nature of faith” (ibid., 20). He acknowledges that history as “bare facts” as a necessary ground of faith, but is quite emphatic that Luke does not give those bare facts. If we cannot get them from Luke, where are they to be found?
\textsuperscript{40}Ibid., 15.
beatiudes and woes, leaving no doubt as to the care of the construction of this text.” Only Luke, not Jesus, could have exercised “care of the construction of this text.” The written text did not come from Jesus.

Regarding Luke’s travel narrative (Luke 9:51–19:48), Green comments, “[T]he Lukan data signal clearly the onset of the journey, but thereafter provide very little by way of structuring a discernible journey itinerary. Indeed, what Luke does provide by way of travel notices are generally nondescriptive and may seem convoluted.” Though Luke presents it as a single journey, Green doubts the sequence of events as recounted in the Gospel. This aligns with his insistence that Luke’s order of presentation is not chronological, but is rather dictated by persuasive effectiveness:

Ordering, in fact, is one of the primary means by which the reception of a story is conditioned, so that adherence to strict chronological sequence is the exception. Instead, a narrator may omit an element that belongs in a series only to recall it at some other point in the story. Other interruptions to the chronology of the story are possible—e.g., an event might enter the story prematurely, hints or announcements regarding the future might be given, events happening at the same time might be elaborated in parallel fashion, and so on.

Thus, another element of historical accuracy in the portrait of Jesus falls by the wayside.

The Gospel of Matthew

Craig Keener provides another recent example of an evangelical interdependence portrait of Jesus in his commentary on the Gospel of Matthew. He frequently expresses his view of Matthew’s and Luke’s dependence on Mark and Q. He even offers statistical evidence of Matthew’s dependence on Mark, though his statistics are open to question. He concurs with Witherington in citing the following:

As Witherington puts it (1994: 214), Matthew takes over more than 90% of his Markan source (606 out of 661 Markan verses), while Luke takes over only a little over 50%. The difference in degree of word for word appropriation of Mark in pericopes and sayings that Matthew and Luke take over is minimal. Luke uses about 53% of Mark’s exact words in the material culled from that source, while the First Evangelist uses about 51% of Mark’s exact words of the 606 verses he appropriates. This means that Luke and

Ibid., 265.
Ibid., 398.
Ibid., 43 n. 50.
E.g., ibid., 2-3, 10, 13, 43, 44, 136, 164, 313 n. 9, 374, 413, 611.
Discerning Synoptic Gospel Origins: An Inductive Approach (Part Two)

the First Evangelist are about equally likely to preserve the exact wording of their source, and they do so about half the time.47

How Witherington arrived at his statistics is unstated, because he offers no evidence of an inductive study, nor does he offer any documentation to substantiate his statistics.48 In light of statistics cited in Charts #5 and #6 of the present study, his figures of Matthew taking over 90% of Mark’s verses and Luke taking over 50% of Mark’s verses are highly inflated. The inductive study cited earlier found Matthew agreeing with Mark’s words only 39% of the time and Luke only 29%. With verbal agreement that low, how can one say that Matthew took over 606 of the 661 Markan verses and Luke appropriated a little over 50%. By the same token, how can anyone say that Luke took 53% of Mark’s words and Matthew took 51% in pericopes and sayings? Both figures exaggerate the identities in wording of the three Synoptic Gospels. His statement, “The difference in degree of word for word appropriation of Mark in pericopes and sayings that Matthew and Luke take over is minimal,” is ludicrous.

Where does Keener’s assumption of literary interdependence lead him? He answers with several summary statements:

Because ancient biography normally included some level of historical intention, historical questions are relevant in evaluating the degree to which Matthew was able to achieve the intention his genre implies. This does not require us to demand a narrow precision regarding details, a precision foreign to ancient literature, but to evaluate the general fidelity of substance.49

The Gospel writers’ contemporaries, such as Josephus, noticeably exercised a degree of both freedom and fidelity in their handling of biblical history . . . , and one would expect the Gospels to represent the same mixture, albeit not necessarily in the same degree of each.50

In some cases, Matthew may have been following rhetorical practices of speech-in-character and historical verisimilitude, making Jesus fit what was known about him in general (e.g., as a Jewish teacher, he should have introduced parables with the sorts of formulas used by Jewish teachers; he may have used ‘kingdom of heaven’); and, given Matthew’s proximity to Jesus’ situation, his guesses are more apt to be correct than ours. In other cases, however, I am reasonably sure that Matthew has re-Judaized Jesus based on solid traditions available to him. Some of these may be more Palestinian (e.g., 27:51-

48Witherington, Jesus the Sage 214.
49Keener, Gospel of Matthew 2-3.
50Ibid., 12-13.
53) but not necessarily more historical than Mark. . . .

A reader of Matthew cannot expect “narrow precision” when it comes to historical issues, but can only expect a “general fidelity of substance.” Like Josephus, Matthew exercised “a degree of both freedom and fidelity” in handling biblical history. Matthew’s “guesses” about events and sayings are better than ours, but not more historical than Mark. “General fidelity,” “freedom” in handling history, “guesses”—is this the best we can expect from Matthew’s Gospel?

If Keener’s observation that “[s]cholars from across the theological spectrum thus acknowledge that Jewish and Christian sources alike both preserved and adapted earlier tradition . . . .” how is a reader to distinguish what parts have been preserved and what parts adapted? Presumably, the “preserved” portions are accurate history, but the “adapted” portions are not.

How does Keener’s approach play out in the text of the Gospel of Matthew? He attributes the organized discourses of Jesus, not to Jesus, but to the author of the book—he attributes authorship to a Matthean school, not Matthew. His words are, “One need only read afresh Jesus’ sayings in many Matthean discourses to see that they represent collections of isolated sayings or groups of sayings that Matthew [i.e., ‘a Matthean school’] has arranged as topically as possible, often even without literally adequate explanatory transitions.”

Regarding Jesus’ genealogy, Keener’s opinion is, “The best alternative to harmonizing the lists is to suggest that Matthew emphasizes the nature of Jesus’ lineage as royalty rather than trying to formulate a biologically precise list (contrast possibly Luke), to which he did not have access.” He later adds, “Just as Matthew traces Jesus’ line from David’s royal house via Solomon (cf. 12:42; contrast Lk 3:31), by subtle midrashic allusions he connects Jesus to priestly and prophetic threads in Israel’s history.” In other words, “subtle midrashic allusions” interrupt Matthew’s genealogy so that it does not trace Jesus’ lineage through either Joseph or Mary.

Regarding Jesus’ temptation, Keener does not see it as a historically accurate sequence:

At bare minimum historically, Jesus undoubtedly sometimes felt tempted, sometimes sought to get alone to pray, and probably would have fasted before starting his public ministry. . . . Whether the Q narrative represents a ‘mythological’ elaboration of such an experience (so Sanders 1993:117) may hinge partly on how one defines ‘mythological

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51Ibid., 13.
52Ibid., 40.
53Ibid., 31, 162.
54Ibid., 75-76.
55Ibid., 76-77.
elaboration.’ At the very least this narrative, like much of Q, is probably early, perhaps less than two decades after the events it depicts.56

The same is true of the length of the temptation: ‘Since he used ‘twelve’ symbolically in calling disciples, Jesus may well have also used ‘forty’ days to refer to Israel’s forty years in the desert . . . or Moses’ forty-day fast there (Ex 24:18; 34:28; Deut 9:9, 11, 18, 25; 10:10 . . .).’57

Keener thinks that needs of Matthew’s own generation determined the content of the first Gospel more than historical interests. His words about the mission of the Twelve in Matthew 10 reflect this:

Yet Matthew provides these instructions not merely as a matter of historical interest—had Matthew’s interest been merely historical he would not have rearranged this section so thoroughly to be relevant to his communities—but as a living message to his own audience.

Thus he includes some material strictly irrelevant to the first mission but which his community would recognize as particularly relevant in their own day, including prosecution before synagogue and pagan courts (10:17-18). Likewise, Matthew 11:1 does not actually report the disciples’ mission (contrast Mk 6:12-13) because for Matthew the mission must continue in his own generation. Summoning his community to greater commitment to the Gentile mission, he provides instructions for those who would go forth to evangelize, and in more general ways for the churches that send them.58

The fact that Matthew “includes some material strictly irrelevant” to the historical occasion of Jesus’ actions means that Keener sees a good portion of Matthew 10 as unhistorical.

Illustrations of how an assumption of literary interdependence forces Keener to label portions of Matthew’s Gospel as unhistorical abound. Literary independence, on the other hand, takes the Gospel as precisely on target in accurately representing historical events and sayings of Jesus during His incarnation.

The Gospel of Mark

R. T. France has produced another recent evangelical commentary, one dealing with the Gospel of Mark.59 France’s view of literary interdependence is much looser that those of Green and Keener, but his comments here and there reflect that he does at times resort to the same direct literary interdependence. He

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56Ibid., 136.
57Ibid.
58Ibid., 313.
distinguishes himself from many evangelical scholars with the following statement of his position:

The third is the view, promoted by E. P. Sanders and developed by J. A. T. Robinson among others, that both the two-source theory and the Griesbach Hypothesis (as well as other similarly ‘neat’ solutions to the Synoptic Problem) are a good deal too simple and that the process by which our NT gospels were formed is likely to have been more complex and fluid than a matter of simple literary dependence of one writer on another. It is this third strand of thinking that I find most persuasive.\(^{60}\)

Simple literary dependence is not ample to explain the phenomena, he says. He adds, “I would thus lay greater emphasis on the ‘priority’ of Mark than Robinson’s cautious words suggest, but would agree with him that this priority is not to be construed in terms of a simple linear dependence which entails that Mark’s version of a given tradition must always be understood to be the starting point.”\(^{61}\) France clarifies further: “[T]hese brief comments on the Synoptic Problem may help to explain why at times my comments may seem to treat the synoptic versions of a given tradition as parallel rather than derivative.”\(^{62}\) By those last two comments, one would surmise that he sees the writers sometimes working independently of each other and sometimes interdependently.

In the broad picture, however, he concurs with the Markan-priority theory:

Mark’s situation was, according to church tradition, rather different, in that he had direct access to one major oral source of Jesus tradition, that teaching of Peter, and his recording of that tradition clearly provided Matthew and Luke with the most significant single component in their collections. In that sense, I would continue to maintain the priority of Mark and the likelihood that Matthew and Luke depended on him rather than vice versa.\(^{63}\)

Two observations arise from such statements: (1) France endorses Markan priority with the theory that Matthew and Luke depended on Mark in a literary way, but outlines no objective means for determining in what places they did so and in what places they worked independently of Mark. (2) To his credit, France criticizes modern scholarship for downplaying the importance of early church tradition,\(^{64}\) and

\(^{60}\)Ibid., 43.

\(^{61}\)Ibid., 45.

\(^{62}\)Ibid., 44.

\(^{63}\)Ibid., 41. His words are, “I have concentrated on Hengel’s arguments not because they are unanswerably right (though I think they have the better of it in terms of historical method) but because they illustrate how questionable modern critical reconstructions of gospel origins, with their almost axiomatic dismissal of early church tradition as not worthy of serious consideration, may prove to be when examined in the light of historical realism.”
accepts the tradition of Mark writing under the influence of Peter. Yet to his
discredit, he dismisses unanimous early-church advocacy of Matthean priority and
literary independence in deference to nineteenth- and twentieth-century [i.e.,
Enlightenment] scholarship and its theory of literary relationships among the
Synoptics. Such a “mixed bag” of assumptions leads to a downplaying of the
importance of history in Mark’s Gospel, if not an outright dismissal of its historicity.

Theology over History. France cannot follow the example of other
scholars who form theories of theological embellishment on the basis of how
Matthew or Luke changed their source Mark, because with the theory of Markan
priority, Mark’s sources are unavailable to compare. Therefore, set on the
interdependentist assumption that Gospel writers had a theological ax to grind,
France resorts to means other than Mark’s use of a source in detecting the
theological points Mark tries to make for his community. One of his means is a
fixation on finding theological significance in geographical locations referred to in
Mark’s Gospel. Two examples illustrate this.

(1) One example is the significance he finds in Mark’s references to
ἐρημός (erēmos, “wilderness,” “desert”). He writes,

In view of the fact that the noun ἡ ἐρημός (hē erēmos) does not occur at all in the rest
of Mark’s gospel [i.e., besides the prologue], it seems that Mark is going to some lengths
to make sure that the reader of his prologue notices its special location and draws the
appropriate conclusions. . . .

At the very least, it marks a distinctive location. . . .

For the wilderness was a place of hope, of new beginnings.56

He acknowledges that ἐρημός (erēmos) was a specific geographical location, but
beyond that, it had a special meaning for Mark and his readers. In Mark’s prologue
it meant “a place of hope, a place of new beginnings.” Because of this theological
meaning, the historical fact of John the Baptist’s ministry in that location falls into
the background or perhaps disappears when France adds,

So when Mark emphasises the wilderness location in 1:2-13, it is not only to signal that
this part of the gospel operates on a different level from the story of real-life involvement
which will follow, but also that the wilderness is itself a symbol of hope and fulfilment.
Marxsen makes the point vividly: ἐν τῇ ἐρημῷ (en tē erēmos, “in the wilderness”) qualifies the Baptist as the fuller of OT predictive prophecy. Put in exaggerated form,
the Baptist would still be the one who appears ‘in the wilderness’ even if he had never
been there in all his life. . . . There is a larger-than-life dimension to these verses,

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56Ibid. To quote France, “One other aspect of tradition which may have an effect on exegesis
belongs not to the tradition of the early church but to that of nineteenth- and twentieth-century
scholarship: the theory of the literary relationships of the three Synoptic Gospels which is presupposed.”

57Ibid., 56 [transliteration added].
prophetic texts, the presence and activity of the Spirit of God, the opening of heaven and the divine voice, and the tableau of cosmic conflict set out in vv. 12-13. And all this takes place on a separate stage from the main drama, in the wilderness, the place of eschatological hope.67

What Mark 1:2-13 records differs from “real-life involvement.” John would be in the wilderness even if he had never been there. Even the baptism of Jesus in 1:12-13 occurs “on a separate stage, in the wilderness, the place of eschatological hope.” At the very least, France downplays the historicity of the text and perhaps even questions its relevance so that he may upstage the theological importance of “the wilderness.”

The subjectivity of his conclusion about the theological significance of “the wilderness” is quite obvious, though he labors his case extensively. Two other redactionists reach a conclusion quite opposite to that of France. Lane finds “the wilderness” to be reminiscent of the place where Jesus endured temptation at the hands of Satan.68 Brooks agrees with Lane that “wilderness” suggests some kind of spiritual testing.69 Who is correct? Theologically speaking, is “the wilderness” a place of hope and victory or a place of testing? Probably neither is correct. “The wilderness” was an actual geographical location where historical events in the Synoptic Gospels took place. It had nothing to do with a theological or applicational topic used to downplay the historical factuality of Mark’s Gospel.

(2) A second example is the theological emphasis Mark allegedly intended in the use of Galilee, the road to Jerusalem, and Jerusalem. France’s outlines Mark’s narrative as follows:

I mentioned above the apparently artificial scheme of Mark’s narrative in that the geographical setting of the successive phases of the story (Act One in Galilee and surrounding regions, Act Two on the road to Jerusalem, Act Three in Jerusalem) is likely to be a drastic simplification of Jesus’ actual historical movements.70

Because of “Mark’s geographical symbolism,” the author concludes that the “historical and sociological difference between Galilee and Jerusalem is important as background to the interpretation of some gospel incidents . . .”.71 He expands

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67Ibid., 58 [transliteration and translation added]. France later adds, “But we do not have the information to allow us to discover the exact location, and Mark was more interested in the symbolic significance of the ἔρημος than in its geographical definition” (ibid., 65), and “I stated above that temptation is not the main focus of Mk. 1:12-13. The most striking feature in the words used is the repetition εἰς τὴν ἔρημον (v. 12), ἐν τῇ ἔρημῳ (v. 13)” (ibid., 83).
68W. L. Lane, Commentary on the Gospel of Mark, NIDNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1974) 81.
70France, Gospel of Mark 33.
71Ibid., 34.
upon the symbolism:

[T]he Galilee/Jerusalem schema of Mark’s narrative derives not only from historical observation but also ... from a symbolic value which he has built onto the two locations. ... [I]n broad terms Act One, set in and around Galilee, is a story of open proclamation and response, with committed disciples and enthusiastic crowds, while Act Three, in Jerusalem, is a dismal story of conflict, rejection, and death. And in between is Act Two, the journey from Galilee to Jerusalem, which begins with the warning of rejection and suffering in Jerusalem and develops into a determined march towards death. ... It is the Jerusalem establishment who in the end will effectively suppress the Galilean prophet and disband his group of Galilean supporters. ... Jesus ... can look ... to the two pointers forward again to Galilee which light up the gloom of the Jerusalem climax (14:28; 16:7) [and] suggest that it is from Galilee that the renewed mission is to be launched. ... 72

France winds up his introductory word about this symbolism by writing,

The distinctiveness of this as a Marcan theme is illustrated by the different ways in which Matthew and Luke seem to have reacted to it. Both adopt the same artificial narrative outline, but it appears that the symbolism with which Mark has invested it was congenial to Matthew but not to Luke, in that whereas Matthew has if anything intensified the symbolic significance of the contrast between Galilee and Jerusalem to the detriment of the latter (see his additional material in 4:12-16; 21:10-11; 28:11-20), Luke already in his gospel and much more in Acts clearly depicts Jerusalem as the church’s true home. 73

France’s symbolic “attachments” indicate that, for the most part, in embellishments of Mark along with Matthew, Galilee was peopled by heroes and Jerusalem by villains. But in Luke’s writings no such connotations applied. Such “geographical symbolism” has Jerusalem at two opposite poles. In one case it represents the “good guys” (Luke); in the other it is the enemies.

Two such opposite positions reflects the subjectivism of allegorizing geographical locations. Most probably, when Mark wrote about Galilee and Jerusalem, he intended his readers to comprehend his references to two geographical areas. To read into his words more than that is to undercut the historical relevance of his Gospel.

Mark’s Exaggerations. At times, France attributes exaggeration to Mark. One example comes while Jesus was in Capernaum and reads, “And the whole city was gathered at the door” (Mark 1:33). France comments,

There is no doubt an element of exaggeration in the phrase δή τη πόλις (hoē he polis, “the whole city”), as in the πάντας (pantas, “all”) of the previous verse. In view of the

72Ibid., 34-35.
73Ibid., 35.
close proximity of the houses excavated at Capernaum, the number who could be
gathered physically πρὸς τὴν θύραν (pros tēn thuran, “at the door”) on any one
occasion would be relatively limited.74

In choosing between historical accuracy of the inspired text and the accuracy of
archaeological findings, the author chooses the latter over the former. His passing
comment about πάντας (pontas, “all”) in Mark 1:32 attributes another exaggeration
to Mark: “They were bringing to Him all the sick and the demon-possessed ones.”

To attribute hyperbolic language to Mark in these two instances is ill-advised,
because “at the door” is a relative expression. It could include a wide area
outside the door, the doorway being the focal point of the crowd’s attention. Also,
the transport of “all” the sick and demon-possessed does not necessarily cover a
wider area than Capernaum, nor does it necessitate that they all arrived at their
destination.

After an account of Jesus’ healing of a leper and the leper’s disobedience
in spreading the news of his healing, Mark indicates that Jesus “was no longer able
to enter a town openly (φανερῶς, phanerōs)” (Mark 1:45). France seems to
question the historical accuracy of Mark’s account at this point:

εἰς πόλιν (eis polin) is probably general, ‘into any town’, rather than specific ‘into
Capernaum’ (the only πόλιν [polis, “town”] so far mentioned), though the latter was of
course affected, as 2:1-2 will show. The fact that the next few pericopes will be set in
town suggests either that Mark was consciously exaggerating, or that he does not intend
the episodes to be taken as being in chronological sequence (though 2:1 does suggest that
Jesus’ return to Capernaum had not been φανερῶς [phanerōs, “openly”]).75

At this point, France postulates either another exaggeration or a dislocation in
chronological sequence. Neither of those is necessary because, as he admits, Jesus’
returning to the town of Capernaum immediately after Mark has written that He
could no longer enter a town is explainable. His re-entry into Capernaum was not
“openly,” as Mark 2:1 hints, but was done quietly without attracting wide attention.
The crowd gathered in 2:2 only after hearing that Jesus was in the house. Mark’s
account is perfectly in accord with historical fact.

France also questions the literalness of the forty days that Jesus was in the
wilderness being tempted by the devil:

τεσσαράκοντα ἡμέρας (tessarakonta hēmeras, “forty days”) need be no more than a
[sic] idiomatic expression for a long but limited period, and is so used elsewhere in the
Bible (e.g., Gn. 7:4 etc; Nu. 13:25; 1 Sa. 17:16; Jon. 3:4; Acts 1:3). . . . In Mark this is
less obvious, but the close collocation with πειραζόμενος (peirazomenos, “being
tempted”) and the specific mention of animals (see below), together with the strong focus

74Ibid., 109 [transliteration and translation added].
75Ibid., 120-21 [transliteration and translation added].
on the ἐρήμος (erēmos, “wilderness,” “desert”) throughout the prologue, indicate that he, too, saw the τεσσαράκοντα ἡμέρας (tessarakonta hēmeras, “forty days”) as an echo of the period of Israel’s wilderness experience.\(^76\)

It was “a long but limited period,” not forty days, he says. The “forty days” come from Israel’s wilderness experience.

**Interdependence: Is It Probable or Worthwhile?**

The earlier part of this article examined the case for interdependence via an inductive examination of the Synoptic Gospels. That examination demonstrated that an inductive case for literary interdependence is nonexistent. Literary interdependence is at best an assumption—an ill-founded one at that—but it has profound implications in deriving a portrait of Jesus from the Synoptic Gospels.

In light of information given above and supplied elsewhere, interdependence offers the following portrait. The lineage of the evangelical interdependent Jesus is in doubt, with embellishments to His genealogies leaving both His physical and legal lineage open to question. The narrative about the birth of John the Baptist is in question.\(^77\) Jesus’ mother never asked the angel about how she would conceive a Son as Luke says she did in Luke 1:34.\(^78\) The Magi never asked Herod about “the king of the Jews” as Matthew 2:2 says they did. Circumstances of Jesus’ baptism are questionable, whether He ever heard the voice from heaven and saw the dove descending on Him.\(^79\) The duration of His temptation in the wilderness is unknown. Jesus’ movements between Galilee and Jerusalem are uncertain because of the symbolism conveyed in those place names. His activities in the wilderness are vague because of the symbolism involved in the writers’ use of “the wilderness.” Jesus never promised forgiveness of sins to the paralytic of Mark 2 (cf. 2:10).\(^80\) Regarding the “patch” of Mark 2:21 = Luke 5:36, did the interdependence Jesus teach the impossibility of mending the deficiency of Judaism with a Christian patch, the impossibility of trying to graft something Christian on to Judaism, or neither? No one can tell.\(^81\) Did Jesus actually preach to Jewish crowds or were those crowds merely a symbol for Gentile Christians? Interdependence says you cannot tell.\(^82\) The interdependence Jesus was incapable of delivering the Sermon on the Mount, the

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\(^{76}\)Ibid., 85 [transliteration and translation added].

\(^{77}\)Thomas and Farnell, *Jesus Crisis* 322.

\(^{78}\)Ibid., 326.

\(^{79}\)Ibid., 320.

\(^{80}\)Ibid., 319.

\(^{81}\)Ibid., 323-24.

\(^{82}\)Ibid., 325.
commissioning of the Twelve, the parables of Matthew 13 and Mark 4, and the Olivet Discourse as the Synoptists said He did. Jesus never gave the “exception” clauses of Matthew 5 and 19. Matthew’s account of Jesus’ conversation with the rich young man in Matthew 19 is distorted. The Pharisees were a good bit more righteous than the Synoptists’ negative picture of their opposition to Jesus indicates. Jesus did not utter the nine beatitudes as recorded in Matthew 5. The details surrounding Jesus’ resurrection are very muddy because of the redactional elaborations of the Gospel writers. The interdependist Jesus did not give the Great Commission of Matt 28:18-20. His words were later interpolations and additions of the Christian community and the Gospel writer. Remember, this is the portrait painted by evangelical interdependence, not by The Jesus Seminar.

In conspicuous contrast to the vague portrait of interdependence, the picture furnished by independence offers a Jesus who is well-defined and clear-cut. His genealogies, the description of events behind John the Baptist’s birth, and the questions asked by His mother are historically accurate. The Magi were real people who met with Herod. Jesus’ baptism and temptation occurred in real life just as the Gospels describe the events. The Gospels’ recordings of place names are historically and geographically accurate. Jesus actually spoke the words of Mark 2:10, 2:21, and Luke 5:36, as He did the words of His major discourses, including all nine beatitudes. He did speak to Jewish crowds. The three Synoptic Gospels record His conversation with the rich young man accurately, just as it occurred. The Pharisees were predominantly unwholesome just as the Gospels portray them. The written records of events surrounding Jesus’ resurrection are precisely accurate in every detail. Jesus did give the Great Commission as recorded in Matt 28:18-20.

In answer to both questions, Is interdependence probable or worthwhile?, the answer is a resounding “no.” For one thing, it has no basis in an inductive examination of the Synoptic Gospel texts. Beyond that, it leads to a distorted portrait of who Jesus really is and what He really said and did.

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83Currently, a group of evangelical scholars under the auspices of the Institute of Biblical Research “Jesus Group,” is meeting regularly “to engage in a fresh assessment of the historicity and significance of ten key events in the life of Jesus” (http://www.bible.org/docs/theology/christ/thejesusgroup/ib-jesusgroup.htm, 9/24/03). With the leadership of co-convenors Darrell L. Bock and Robert L. Webb, they are sometimes assigning ratings “assessing the possibility or probability of an event or a detail within it . . . as a way of expression what can be demonstrated historically” (ibid.). Though disclaiming any similarity to the Jesus Seminar, these evangelicals are engaging in the same type of critical study of the Gospels as that nonevangelical group, as I have written earlier: “Outspoken evangelical critics have engaged in the same type of dehistoricizing activity as the Jesus-Seminar people with whom they differ. If they were to organize among themselves their own evangelical ‘Jesus Seminar,’ the following is a sampling of the issues they would vote on . . . ” (Thomas and Farnell, Jesus Crisis 14-15). Now, in fact, they have so organized, a possibility also alluded to by Carson (D. A. Carson, “Five Gospels, No Christ,” Christianity Today 38/5 [April 25, 1994]:30).
Chart #1

Identical words from OT Quotations in Pairs of Synoptic Gospels

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<td>Totals</td>
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Total words: 611 + 253 + 367 = 1,231
Total identicals: 474 + 253 + 288 = 976
Aggregate percentage: 79%
### Chart #2

**Burton-Goodspeed Double-Tradition Pericopes**

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<tr>
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<th>Mark</th>
<th>Luke</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22. Call of the Four</td>
<td>4:18-22</td>
<td>1:16-20</td>
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<tr>
<td>33. Fame of Jesus</td>
<td>12:15-21</td>
<td>3:7-12</td>
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<td>34. Choosing the Twelve</td>
<td></td>
<td>3:13-19</td>
<td>6:12-19</td>
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<td>35. Character and Duties of Disciples</td>
<td>5:1-16</td>
<td>6:20-26</td>
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<tr>
<td>37. Righteousness of the Kingdom and the Teaching of the Synagogue</td>
<td>5:21-48</td>
<td>6:27-36</td>
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<td>45. The Centurion’s Servant</td>
<td>8:5-13</td>
<td>7:1-10</td>
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<td>47. Message from John the Baptist</td>
<td>1:1-20</td>
<td>7:18-35</td>
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<td>55. On the Use of Parables</td>
<td>4:21-25</td>
<td>8:16-18</td>
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<td>58. The Mustard Seed</td>
<td>13:31, 32</td>
<td>4:30-32</td>
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<td>60. Jesus’ Custom of Speaking in Parables</td>
<td>13:34, 35</td>
<td>4:33, 34</td>
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<td>13:54-58</td>
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<td>79. Walking on the Sea</td>
<td>14:23b-36</td>
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<td>7:31-37</td>
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<td>83. Feeding of the 4,000</td>
<td>15:32-39</td>
<td>8:1-10</td>
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<tr>
<td>84. Demanding a Sign from Heaven</td>
<td>16:1-12</td>
<td>8:11-21</td>
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<td>94. On Offenses</td>
<td>18:6-10</td>
<td>9:42-50</td>
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<td>24:45-51</td>
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<td>171. Anointing of Jesus</td>
<td>26:6-13</td>
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**Table of Identical Words in Burton-Goodspeed Double-Tradition Sections**

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### Mark-Luke

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<td>§55</td>
<td>133</td>
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<td>§93</td>
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<td>56</td>
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A combination of all the double-tradition pericopes yields 2,576 identicals and 8,523 total words, or 30% frequency.

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The Master's Seminary Journal
### Chart #4

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

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<th>§ Number</th>
<th>Section Title</th>
<th>Matt.</th>
<th>Mark</th>
<th>Luke</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>§18</td>
<td>The Baptist of Jesus</td>
<td>3:13-17</td>
<td>1:9-11</td>
<td>3:21-22</td>
</tr>
<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>
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<tr>
<td>§21</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>
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<tr>
<td>§22</td>
<td>The Healing of a Leper</td>
<td>8:1-4</td>
<td>1:40-45</td>
<td>5:12-16</td>
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<tr>
<td>§23</td>
<td>The Healing of a Paralytic</td>
<td>9:1-8</td>
<td>2:1-12</td>
<td>5:17-26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§28</td>
<td>The Kindred of Jesus</td>
<td>12:46-50</td>
<td>3:31-35</td>
<td>8:19-21</td>
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<tr>
<td>§29</td>
<td>Parables by the Sea</td>
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<td>4:1-9</td>
<td>8:4-8</td>
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<td>The Reason for the Parables</td>
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<td>4:10-12</td>
<td>8:9, 10</td>
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<td>Explanation of the Parable of the Soils</td>
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<td>4:13-20</td>
<td>8:11-15</td>
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<td>§32</td>
<td>The Stilling of the Tempest</td>
<td>8:18-27</td>
<td>4:35-41</td>
<td>8:22-25</td>
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<td>§33</td>
<td>The Gerasene Demoniac</td>
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<td>5:1-20</td>
<td>8:26-39</td>
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<td>Jairus’ Daughter Raised; Others Healed</td>
<td>9:18-34</td>
<td>5:21-43</td>
<td>8:40-56</td>
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<td>§35</td>
<td>The Sending Forth of the Apostles</td>
<td>9:35–10:4</td>
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<td>Instructions for the Journey</td>
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<td>6:8-11</td>
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<td>§37</td>
<td>The Departure of Jesus and the Disciples</td>
<td>11:1</td>
<td>6:12, 13</td>
<td>9:6</td>
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<td>§38</td>
<td>The Death of John the Baptist</td>
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<td>6:14-29</td>
<td>9:7-9</td>
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<tr>
<td>§39</td>
<td>The Feeding of the Five Thousand</td>
<td>14:13-23a</td>
<td>6:30-46</td>
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<td>Peter’s Confession</td>
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<td>8:27-30</td>
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<td>Jesus Foretells His Death</td>
<td>16:21-28</td>
<td>8:31-9:1</td>
<td>9:22-27</td>
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<td>§43</td>
<td>The Epileptic Boy</td>
<td>17:14-20</td>
<td>9:14-29</td>
<td>9:37-43a</td>
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<td>§44</td>
<td>Jesus Again Foretells His Death</td>
<td>17:22,23</td>
<td>9:30-32</td>
<td>9:43b-45</td>
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<tr>
<td>§46</td>
<td>The Departure from Galilee</td>
<td>19:1, 2</td>
<td>10:1</td>
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<td>§ Number</td>
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<td>Mark</td>
<td>Luke</td>
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<td>§139</td>
<td>Prediction of the Crucifixion</td>
<td>20:17-19</td>
<td>10:32-34</td>
<td>18:31-34</td>
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<tr>
<td>§141</td>
<td>Bartimaeus Healed</td>
<td>20:29-34</td>
<td>10:46-52</td>
<td>18:35-43</td>
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<tr>
<td>§146</td>
<td>The Cleansing of the Temple</td>
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<td>11:15-19</td>
<td>19:45-48</td>
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<td>§150</td>
<td>The Unfaithful Husbandmen</td>
<td>21:33-46</td>
<td>12:1-12</td>
<td>20:9-19</td>
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<td>§155</td>
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<td>22:41-46</td>
<td>12:35-37</td>
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<td>§156</td>
<td>Denunciation of the Scribes and Pharisees</td>
<td>23:1-12</td>
<td>12:38-40</td>
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<td>§160</td>
<td>Prediction of the Temple’s Destruction</td>
<td>24:1,2</td>
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<td>§161</td>
<td>Beginning of the Olivet Discourse</td>
<td>24:3-14</td>
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<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>
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<td>Plot of Judas and the Rulers</td>
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<td>14:10, 11</td>
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<td>§175</td>
<td>The Betrayal and Arrest</td>
<td>26:47-56</td>
<td>14:43-52</td>
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<td>§176</td>
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### Chart #5
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Exhibit #1

150. THE UNFAITHFUL HUSBANDMEN (Matt-Lk Identicals)

Matt 21:33-46

Luke 20:9-19

vAllhôn parabolhên ajkousate.

[Hrxtô de; pro;" toûn laon]

[Amprwpo;" h;v oijkodespovth]

[Amprwpo;" ti]

o{ stî ejfuvteusen ajmpelw'na

o{ stî ejfuvteusen ajmpelw'na.

kai; fragmoûn aútôv1/ perievôhken

croûvntî ilkanouv1/.

kai; ejxevdeto aútôv gewrgoi1/.

kai; ajpedhvmhsen.

kai; ajpedhvmhsen.

34 o{ te de; h;ggisen of kairo;2

10 kai; kairw/3

tw'n karpo'w'n.

ajpevsteilen

ajpevsteilen

labei'n

labei'n

tou;" karpoû' aútôv'.

ajpo; tou; karpoû'

tou; ajmpelw'no" dvwsouin autw/;:

35 kai; labovnte" of gewrgoi;

of de; gewrgoi; ejxapevsteilan

tou;" dvoulou" aútôv'

aujto'n

11 kai; prosevqeto

e{teron pevmyai dvoulon:

of de; kajkeînon

deivrante" kai; ajtimavasantë

ejxapevsteilan kenovn.

12 kai; prosevqeto trîvton pevmyai:

of de; kai; tou'ton traumativsantë ejxevbalon.

a'llou" dvoulou"
Pleivona" tw'n prwrtwv,  
kai; ejpoivhsan aujtoiv" wjsantw".

37 uj tetor de; ajpevsteilen  
pro" aujtoiv" ton uljvov aujtoiv"  
levgwn,  
ijentrphvstontai ton uljvov mou.

38 oj de; geurgoi;  
ijdovnte" ton uljvov  
iu pon eujautoi".

Ou|v ton" ejstin oj klhronomvi";  
deute ejpoiktevwnmen aujtoiv  
kai; sejwmen than klhronomivn an aujtoiv".

39 kai; labovnte" aujtoiv  
ejxevbalon  
i suxw ton' ajmpelw'no"  
kai; ajpevktmen.

40 oj{t an ou\'n e\lkh/  
oj kuviar" tou' ajmpelw'no".  
tiv poivseiv tornado geurgoi" ejkerivnoi"  
levgousin aujtoiv".

Kakou" kakoi ajpolevsei aujtoiv",  
kai; ton ajmpelw'na ejkdusivetai  
a[|lhoi" geurgoi".  
oj{t imei ajpodwssousin aujtw"/ touv" karpou";  
ejn ton' kairoi" aujtw".

42 levgei aujtoi" oj j\lhosu".  
Oujdevpote  
ajnevmwte ejn tai" grafai".

43 eijpen de; oj kuviar" tou' ajmpelw'no".  
Tiv poivseiv geurgoi;  
ajpevsteilen ton uljvov mou ton ajgaptovn;  
i\sw" tou\'ton ejntrphvstontai.

13 eijpen de; oj kuviar" tou' ajmpelw'no".  
Ou|v ton" ejstin oj klhronomvi";  
ajpodkivmen aujtoiv.

41 levgousin aujtoiv".  
Kakou" kakoi ajpolevsei aujtoiv",  
kai; ton ajmpelw'na ejkdusivetai.

44 The Master's Seminary Journal
Livçon o'j aipededokivmasan oji
oijkodomou'nte" ou | to" eigenlvgq ejj" kefalhh
gwniva": para; kurvou ejevneto au{th,
ka; e\stin quamasth; ejn ofqalmoi" hJmw'n
43 dia; tou'to levw ulmi'n o\{i
ti
ajqhvsetai aif \ljmw'n h] basileva tou' qeou' kai;
dosqhvsetai e\jene poio\'nti tou'; karpou""
aujh".
44 Kai; ol peswn
epi; ton livqon tou'xon
sumqlashvsetai:
ej o\{i d\ a\'n pevd/,
likhvysei aujtvn.
45 Kai; ajkouvsante"
oj ajrcierei"" kai; oij Farisa'i'o
ra;" parabola;" aujtou' e\jnwsan
o\{i per\; aujtwn levgei:
46 kai; zhtou'nte" aujto'n
krath'sai
ejofbhvqhsan tou' o\{c\'o\",
ejpei; ejj" profhvrhnu aujto'n e\\'on.

435 total words with 124 identicals = 29%
Exhibit #2
54. EXPLANATION OF THE PARABLE OF THE SOILS
Mark 4:13-20
Luke 8:11-15
Kai; legei aujtoin'.
Ou| to| tou| th| n parabolh;
[Estin de; au| th| h| parabolh;
thin parabolh| n| tau| thn,
kai; pw| "| pawsa| ta| "| parabola| "| gnw| vsesqe
14 ou| to| i| dev e| i| jsin oj| para
th| n oldon
o| {pou speivretai oj| lo| go",
ka| o| tan akouvsaswin
eujhu;| "| e| retai oj| Satana"
ka| ai| rei| ton| lo| go| ton| e| jsparmevnnon ej| aughtv
16 kai; ou| to| i| ejsin
o| l| e| i| jsin| ta| petrwv| dh
speivmenoi,
o| l| o| {tan akouvsaswin| ton| lo| go
eujhu;| "| meta; carp| "
la| bavnuswin aujtvn,
17 kai; ou| i| e| i| jsin| il| v| zan
ep| ejautov"
a| lla; provskairoiv e| i| jsin:
ei| ta| genomevnh| q| livyev
h| dwg| m| ou| g| dia;| ton| lo| go
eujhu;| "| skandalivzontai.
18 kai; a| lo| i| e| i| jsin oj
ej|"| ta| "| akavnya| "| speivmenoi:
o| l| to| i| e| i| jsin
ou| l| to| i| e| i| jsin
ou| l| ton| lo| go| akouvsasnte",
o| l| akouvsasnte",
19 kai; aj| qe| irimmnv| tou| ajw| no"
kai; uj| p| po; merimmw| n
Mark 4:13-20

καὶ ἐφαρμόζεται ὁ πλοῦτος καὶ ἡ δοξὴν τοῦ λόγου καὶ ἁπάντα ἔχειμαι καὶ ἡ ἐν αὐτῷ ἁπάντα παραάγεται καὶ ἀμείνασται.

Luke 8:11-15

καὶ ἧτοι τὰ ἀστέρια τῶν ἄστρων καὶ τὰ ἀνθρώπινα πνεύματα, ἥτοι τὰ ἄστρα τῆς φύσεως καὶ τὰ ἀνθρώπινα πνεύματα, ἥτοι τὰ ἀστέρια τῶν ἀστρών καὶ τὰ ἀνθρώπινα πνεύματα.

74 identicals out of 250 words = 30%
JESUS AS STORY TELLER:
LITERARY PERSPECTIVES ON THE PARABLES

Simon J. Kistemaker

Several literary features of Jesus’ parables are noteworthy. In some respects Matthew’s recorded parables differ from Luke’s in presenting colorless sketches. Luke’s parables, on the other hand, are vivid and full of color. Parables in both Gospels, however, are characterized by contrasts. All the parables demonstrate artistry in their unity, coherence, balance, contrast, recurrence, and symmetry. Jesus’ repetition of similar parables on separate occasions illustrates His goal of giving emphasis by way of repetition. By using open-ended parables, Jesus drew His listeners into real-life situations and presented them with the need for a decision on their parts. Allegory in Jesus’ parables brought people into familiar surroundings and highlighted the mercy of God toward sinners. All in all, the parables of Jesus were in a category all their own and were quite distinct from other parabolic teachings in their timelessness and universality.

* * * * *

Many have appreciated Jesus’ parables, but all too often specific literary techniques of those parables have gone unnoticed. Attention to those techniques helps to explain why these masterpieces are unparalleled down through the ages in their impact on the world of humanity.

Characteristics

The parables of Jesus appear only in the three Synoptic Gospels, not in the Gospel of John. The Gospel of Mark features merely six parables and of these six only one is peculiar to Mark, namely, the parable of the seed growing secretly (Mark 4:26-29). While Matthew presents ten parables that are peculiar to him, Luke has a total of sixteen. From the storehouse of Jesus’ parables, Matthew has selected those that he presents in black and white sketches. For instance, the pearl merchant is an ordinary person who fails to come to life. By contrast, the parables Luke has selected sparkle in their crispness, are vivid in the portrayal of life, and are colorful in design. In these parables the people talk, as in the case of the rich man who,

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reaping a bumper crop, built bigger and better barns (Luke 12). Even in the parable of the lost sheep recorded by both Matthew and Luke, this difference is obvious. Upon finding the lost sheep, the shepherd, filled with joy, returns home and calls together his friends and neighbors and says, “Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep” (Luke 15:6). Matthew merely records that the man is happy (Matt 18:13). It almost seems as if Matthew is taking his pictures on film that is black-and-white while Luke uses color.¹

Matthew’s style is to present contrast, that is, five virgins are wise and five are foolish. The king forgives his indebted servant who owes him a tremendous sum of money, but this servant refuses to show mercy to a fellow servant whose debt to him is minuscule. A farmer sows wheat but his enemy scatters weeds in that same field. Some workers in the vineyard grumble about their wages, while others are thankful and rejoice because of their master’s generosity. The children in the marketplace are either glad or sad, and the fisherman’s catch yields fish that are both good and bad.

The parables Luke has chosen also feature contrast. Take for example the parable of the Good Samaritan. The contrast is one of the Jewish clergy of priest and Levite over against a Samaritan. The nameless rich man who suffers in hell is contrasted to Lazarus who occupies a place next to father Abraham in heaven. The picture of the Pharisee who relates his deeds in boastful prayer on the temple grounds is in stark contrast to that of the tax collector who utters the cry, “God, have mercy on me, a sinner.”

Artistry

The parables Jesus told are unique in structure and design. They exhibit artistry with respect to unity, coherence, balance, contrast, recurrence, and symmetry.² To illustrate, take the parable of the lost son that consists of two parts. The first half describes the younger son, the second half his older brother. Although the first part forms a complete unit, yet it needs the second part to finish the story. This parable has unity, for the father is the unifying figure who welcomes home both the prodigal son and his brother. He is evenhanded. He runs toward his wayward son and embraces him. He also leaves the house filled with merriment to invite the older son to participate in the joy of welcoming his brother who was dead but is alive again, was lost but has been found.

The parable also has coherence which becomes evident in the opening line of the lost son parable: “There was a man who had two sons.” The two successive parts (Luke 15:11-24 and 25-32) in sequence reveal an inner coherence. The one does not function without the other. Actually Jesus devotes equal attention to all three characters in the parable: the father, the younger son, and his brother. And with a few strokes of his brush He vividly paints the moving scene of the squandering young man, the punctilious older son, and the even-handed father.


Next, the recurrence of the same phrases and clauses predominates in the parable of the lost son. The young man comes to his senses in a pigpen and formulates his thoughts as to how he is going to address his father: “Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son, make me like one of your hired men” (Luke 15:18-19). When he meets his father, he utters the exact same words with the exception of the clause, “make me like one of your hired men.” He could not utter these words after the father embraced and accepted him as his son. The phrases kill the fattened calf, dead and is alive again, and lost and is found appear at the end of the first part and emerge again at the end of the second part.

The symmetry in this parable is striking indeed as is evident in the inverted sequence of the son who left, squandered his goods, was rejected, repented, was accepted, received goods, and was restored.3

**Emphasis**

Some parables highlight only two persons or groups. They are the two builders: one built his house on the rock, the other on sand. The one son told his father that he would not work in the vineyard but later changed his mind and worked. The other son said he would work but never did. The generous landowner is placed over against the grumbling workmen. The five foolish virgins are a contrast to the five wise virgins.

Other parables include three people: the king, the debtor, and fellow servant (Matthew 18); the priest, the Levite, and the Samaritan (Luke 10); the father, the younger son, and his brother (Luke 15); the servant who received five talents, his companion who received two, and the lazy servant who received only one talent (Matthew 25). The emphasis in these parables falls on the last one who is portrayed as an example that must be either followed or avoided.4

Then Matthew and Luke have the so-called double parables that differ in respect to setting, time, and audience. Jesus told the wedding banquet parable a few days before His death (Matthew 22), but He delivered the great supper parable as an after-dinner speech in the home of a prominent Pharisee (Luke 14). He educated His disciples with the parable of the lost sheep (Matthew 18) and repeated it when He addressed Pharisees and teachers of the law (Luke 15). Jesus taught the parable of the talents in the context of eschatology (Matthew 25), but He told the story of the pounds or minas on the way to Jerusalem where He celebrated His last Passover feast (Luke 19). Teaching orally by way of repetition, Jesus was at liberty to use the same material at different occasions. His method of repeating the same material exhibits emphasis. In fact, the Hebrew verb יָדַע (lmd) means to teach and conveys the inherent meaning of to repeat, exercise, or become accustomed to. In other words, the implication is to teach by repetition.


4Compare A. M. Hunter, “Interpreting the Parables. I. The Interpreter and the Parables. The Centrality of the Kingdom,” Interpretation 14 (1960):71-76. Also see Bernard Brandon Scott, Hear then the Parable: A Commentary on the Parables of Jesus (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989) 272.
Reality

Some of Jesus’ parables seem to have a conclusion that is open-ended as in the case of the parable of the lost son. We are not told whether the older son stayed outside or entered the home to join the festive gathering. The immoral woman who anointed Jesus feet went home in peace because her sins were forgiven. We do not know whether Simon the Pharisee acted on Jesus’ words and confessed his sin (Luke 7). But these omissions reveal the express purpose of the parables, namely, to confront the reader with hidden sin that must be uncovered to bring him or her to repentance. Jesus engages His listeners by proposing a hypothetical situation or asking them questions at the outset of a parable: “Suppose one of you” (Luke 11:5; 14:28; 15:4; and 17:7); “Suppose a woman” (Luke 15:8); “Which of you fathers?” (Matt 7:9; Luke 11:11); and others.⁵

Jesus’ teaching method involves the hearers or readers in the context of the parables. It removes them from their comfort zones and places them in the story to become active participants. The hearers of the parable of the lost son are the Pharisees and teachers of the law who are portrayed by the older son. They are invited to come and participate in the joy of the forgiven son who personifies the tax collectors and moral outcasts. But if they refuse to come, they in effect are the ones who are lost and dead.

All ten virgins fell asleep, but when the bridegroom came and the procession started, only the five wise virgins entered the banquet room. After buying oil to replenish their lamps, the five foolish knocked on the door but were refused entrance. They were not accused of falling asleep but of failing to make adequate preparations for an appointed task.⁶ The lesson of the parable is that a person’s intended or unintended neglect makes him or her unfit for Christ’s service. In the end, this person is excluded from God’s kingdom. Hence, the ending of a parable often seeks to bring people to repentance.

Take the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10) in which the intended message is to love the neighbor as oneself. It is a call to show mercy to people who lie wounded alongside the Jericho road of human suffering. The concept neighbor is not limited to friends and acquaintances, but includes people who are deprived of essential needs, including food and clothing. Jesus’ message to the teacher of the law, “Go and do likewise,” is echoed by James who wrote in his epistle, “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says” (James 1:22).

Allegory

The examples Jesus used in telling His parables are true to life and people relate to them without any difficulty. He relates stories of events that could have happened in the daily lives of the people of that day. Anyone could readily identify with the roles people filled, work that they did, relations that were broken and restored, losses they sustained and happiness they experienced. These parables have no exaggerations, with the exception of the story of the official who had to pay the

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⁶Kistemaker, *Parables* 117.
king an amount of 10,000 talents. But notice that Josephus records the story of King Herod the Great who had to pay Caesar the annual revenue of 900 talents from his kingdom.\(^7\) By comparison, the financial officer responsible for Asia Minor would have had to pay Rome at least ten times as much. In addition, note that the word *debt* (Greek δανείον, daneion) appears in this parable, which is somewhat incongruous because the paying of revenues does not constitute a debt, but a postponement of these payments definitely incurs debt. I interpret the word *debt* to mean that the financial officer had fallen behind in his payments, had asked the king to give him additional time, which was granted, and then gradually, year after year, the official amassed a debt he was unable to pay. In short, the exaggeration of 10,000 talents is based on fact and not on fiction. Nonetheless, the message of this segment of the parable is that God shows incredible mercy toward those indebted to him.

The conclusion must be drawn that Jesus’ parables cannot be described as allegories and placed in the same category as John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* or the *Narnia* tales of C. S. Lewis. If we say that certain characters represent someone else, we admit that there are allegorical elements in the parables.\(^8\) Thus, in the parable of the lost son, the father represents God, the spendthrift son signifies the tax collectors and prostitutes of his day, and the older brother characterizes the Pharisees and teachers of the law. The parable of the wedding banquet associates the king with God and his son with Jesus; the guests who refuse to come are the Pharisees and chief priests, and the common people taken off the streets are God’s chosen people who obey him. Interpreting the parables of the sower and the weeds, respectively, Jesus shows the disciples what the components mean: e.g., the sower is the Son of man, the seed is the Word of God, the enemy is the devil, and the harvesters are the angels. Jesus provided an explanation for these two parables, but the rest of them lack interpretation. This points to the conclusion that “the occasional explicit interpretations of parables in the Gospels are additional exceptions to Jesus’ usual practice, and that they too are not be taken as normative.”\(^9\) In brief, when we mention allegorical elements, we admit that we employ the term only in a restrictive sense of an exceptional case and not as a consistent rule.

**Other Sources of Parables**

In addition to the well-known parable about the poor man’s ewe lamb (2 Sam 12:1-4) told by the prophet Nathan in the presence of King David, a number of Old Testament parables are in story form. They are the parable of the trees (Judg 9:8-15), the song of the vineyard (Isa 5:1-7) the story of the two eagles and the vine

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\(^7\)Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.11.4 [318-20]. In *Antiquities*, 12.4.4 [176] he writes that Joseph son of Tobias offered to collect 8,000 talents in taxes for King Ptolemy from Cycosyria, Phoenicia, Judea and Samaria. Scott (Parables 274 n.25) takes the amount of 10,000 as an exaggeration and should not be taken literally.


\(^9\)Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables* 17.
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(Ezek 17:2-10), and others.

Jesus was fully acquainted with the Scriptures and had taken note of OT parables to create His own genre. That both the Hebrew Bible and Hellenistic literature lack such a genre is a fact.¹⁰

Numerous rabbinic parables have been collected, but they date from a time that is more than a century after Jesus’ ministry.¹¹ The Dead Sea Scrolls contain at least one parable that is older than or contemporaneous with those of Jesus.

Did rabbis in Jesus’ days teach by means of parables? Craig A. Evans answers this question by writing, “It seems wisest to assume that at least some of the rabbis who taught during the time of Jesus made use of the parables as well.”¹² Perhaps rabbinic scholars of later centuries took note of Jesus’ parables. Although both Jesus and the rabbis have a similar background rooted in the OT and traditions, they have differences.¹³ One of them is that the rabbinic parables are applications of the Law and interpretations of scriptural passages, while Jesus’ parables set forth the theme of God’s forgiving love as an extension and further development of God’s revelation. For instance, the love of God the Father is depicted in the father of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32). Jesus highlights God’s grace and generosity in the parable of the vineyard, whose owner deals with his hired men like no other employer ever had (Matt 20:1-16).

Especially in the Gospel of Matthew and to a lesser extent in those parables of Mark and Luke, the theme of the kingdom of heaven or God is prominent. Matthew has at least ten parables that are labeled kingdom parables. He uses the introductory phrase “the kingdom of heaven is like” for these parables: wheat and weeds, mustard seed, yeast, hidden treasure, pearl, fishnet, unforgiving servant, workers in the vineyard, wedding banquet, and ten virgins. The parable of the talents may be added as a follow-up to the preceding one of the ten virgins. And last, the parable of the sower is placed in the context of “the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 13:11). Even though the theme of king and kingdom appears in rabbinic parables, the Gospel of Matthew develops this theme. It reveals that the kingdom of light has broken into the kingdom of darkness and has demonstrated the liberating power of the Son of God. These aspects are absent in the rabbinic parables. Those of Jesus are placed in a given context; rabbinic parables are not and stand by themselves.

¹⁰Consult Scott, Parables 63.

¹¹Klyne R. Snodgrass, “From Allegorizing to Allegorizing,” in The Challenge of Jesus’ Parables, ed. Richard N. Longenecker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000) 18. He notes that about 1,500 rabbinic parables have been collected. See also Brad H. Young, Jesus and His Jewish Parables (New York: Paulist, 1989); Clemens Thoma and Michael Wyschogrod, eds., Parable and Story in Judaism and Christianity (New York: Paulist, 1989); Harvey K. McArthur and Robert M. Johnston, They Also Taught in Parables (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990).

¹²Craig A. Evans, “Parables in Early Judaism” in The Challenge of Jesus’ Parables 51 [emphasis in the original].

¹³James Breech in Jesus and Postmodernism (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989) points to the results of a study of Hellenistic and Greco-Roman periods with respect to parables. He notes that “Jesus’ parables were dissimilar from all those extant to three hundred years before his time and three hundred years after him” (25).
Still other aspects illustrate a difference between the parables of Jesus and those of the rabbis. First, as the Son of God, Jesus expanded and developed God’s revelation. The parables of Jesus are part of good news of salvation and therefore part of God’s Word. This cannot be said of the parables the rabbis taught. Next, in His parables Jesus revealed God’s plan of redeeming His people from the power of Satan. The father of the lost son twice mentions the joy of knowing that his son who was spiritually dead was alive again (Luke 15:24 and 32). The rabbinic parables lack this feature. Third, the parables of Jesus stress the great themes of the kingdom of God. They are the love, grace, and mercy of God toward sinners who went astray. Jesus’ parables teach that God reaches out to them and displays His loving kindness and compassion.

Jesus taught new truths as the messenger commissioned to make known God’s will and Word (John 3:34). He taught His parables to impart the message of salvation in a clear and understandable manner. In the parables, the common people met Jesus as the Son of God who on His own authority brought the message of God’s redeeming love.

Jesus’ parables are inspired; and therefore have divine authority. They are characterized by the breath of God (Θεόπνευστος, theopneustos, 2 Tim 3:16), that is, they are inspired by God. Rabbinic parables fall short of divine inspiration. What can be said of them is that they feature interpretations of a biblical text or applications of Israel’s tradition. But they fail to inspire the people who read or hear these parables. And as a consequence they are generally unknown.

**Conclusion**

The kingdom parables in the Synoptic Gospels always display comparisons. The introductory phrase that Jesus uses is, “The kingdom of heaven is like.” Hence, the kingdom of heaven is compared to a man, a mustard seed, yeast, a treasure, or a pearl. That is, A (God’s kingdom) is compared to B (people or objects). But the question is, “How is B compared to C (the hearers and readers)?” What is the hidden meaning the hearer and reader must discover? This is called the third of comparison, which can be readily seen in the Good Samaritan parable where Jesus told the teacher of the law, “Go and do likewise.”

Many of Jesus’ parables conclude with an element of surprise. For example, the poor, the lame, and the blind are the guests at the great supper; all the workers in the vineyard receive the same wage; and the tax collector goes home justified. A dishonest steward is commended; a widow receives justice; a shepherd finds his lost sheep and a woman her coin.

The parables Jesus taught are timeless and universal. Throughout the centuries they have addressed and continue to address people of all ages, nationalities, and races. In their crispness, they sparkle; they are novel, pertinent, and always exhibit inherent power.

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14Hultgren, *Parables of Jesus* 10.
THE DUAL STATUS OF ISRAEL IN ROMANS 11:28

Matt Waymeyer*

Three major views of the identity of “all Israel” in Rom 11:26 have concluded that “all Israel” refers to the church, to the elect remnant of believing Jews during the present age, and to the ethnic nation of Israel. Romans 11:28 is an often neglected verse that helps in determining which of the views is correct, because the pronoun “they” in v. 28 refers to the same people as the “all Israel” of v. 26. Since context requires that the pronoun “you” in v. 28 refers to Gentiles, the “enemies” and the “they” of v. 28 must be ethnic Jews, thereby eliminating the possibility of “all Israel” being the church. The two clauses in v. 28 describe what is true of ethnic Israel at the same time, not one condition prior to Israel’s salvation and another subsequent to that salvation. That eliminates the view that “all Israel” depicts an elect remnant of believing Jews, because they could hardly be enemies according to the gospel after becoming believers. The view that “all Israel” is the ethnic nation of Israel has v. 28 speaking of Israel’s dual status: simultaneously they are enemies according to the gospel and beloved because of the fathers. In her current rejection of Christ, the nation still enjoys the irrevocable corporate election by God. That identification of “all Israel” is therefore correct.

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The role of the nation Israel in the redemptive plan of God is a significant issue, and one that has received much attention through the years. A fundamental question in the discussion involves the future of Israel and whether or not she has a future. According to Herman Ridderbos, “The church ... as the people of the New Covenant has taken the place of Israel, and national Israel is nothing other than the empty shell from which the pearl has been removed and which has lost its function in the history of redemption.”¹ In similar fashion, Bruce K. Waltke asserts that “national Israel and its law have been permanently replaced by the church and the

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¹Herman Ridderbos, Paul: An Outline of His Theology (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) 354–55.
New Covenant.”

Is this true? Did Israel permanently forfeit her privileged status by rejecting the Messiah and the gospel? Or is she still God’s chosen nation? Put another way, Is there yet a future hope for the nation of Israel in the redemptive plan of God?

THREE VIEWS OF ROMANS 11:26A

At the forefront of the discussion stands the Apostle Paul’s declaration in Rom 11:26a: “And thus all Israel will be saved.” As interpreters have considered this verse, three main views have emerged regarding the identity of the “all Israel” that will be saved: (1) “all Israel” is the church, consisting of both Jews and Gentiles who are saved throughout the present age; (2) “all Israel” is the elect remnant of believing Jews within the ethnic nation of Israel, which is saved throughout the present age; and (3) “all Israel” refers to the ethnic nation of Israel, which will be saved at the end of the present age.

View 1: “All Israel” Is the Church

The first view is that the “all Israel” of Rom 11:26 consists of both Jews and Gentiles who together constitute the church of Jesus of Christ. In other words, “all Israel” equals the church, which is the Israel of God. According to this interpretation, even though a partial hardening has come upon ethnic Israel, a remnant of believing Jews is still being saved throughout the present age. At the same time, Gentiles also are being grafted in among the Jews as they turn to Christ and are saved. In the end, the full number of those who are saved, “coming in from both the Jewish and the Gentile communities, will constitute the final Israel of God.” In this manner, Paul writes in Rom 11:26, all the Israel of God will be saved.

According to this view, Rom 11:26 consists of “a typically Pauline

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2Bruce K. Waltke, “Kingdom Promises as Spiritual,” in Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments, ed. John S. Feinberg (Westchester, Ill.: Crossway, 1988) 274. According to Waltke, “no clear passage teaches the restoration of national Israel,” and “the Jewish nation no longer has a place as the special people of God” because “that place has been taken by the Christian community which fulfills God’s purposes for Israel” (ibid., 274–75) [emphasis in the original].


4Robertson, The Israel of God 188. Robertson’s view in The Israel of God is a departure from his previous position that “all Israel” refers to all the elect people within the ethnic community of Israel (see O. Palmer Robertson, “Is There a Distinctive Future for Ethnic Israel in Romans 11?,” in Perspectives on Evangelical Theology, ed. Kenneth S. Kantzer and Stanley N. Gundry [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979] 209–27).
polemical redefinition"5 of Israel in which the word “Israel” no longer refers to the ethnic nation. As Irons explains, “Paul has literally redefined the term ‘Israel’ to refer to the New Testament church by arguing that God’s irrevocable promises to Israel are fulfilled by means of the salvation of both Jew and Gentile in the church age.”6 In this way, then, “all Israel” in Rom 11:26 refers to all the elect of God, whether Jew or Gentile, who are saved throughout the present age.

**View 2: “All Israel” Is the Remnant**

The second view is that “all Israel” in Rom 11:26 refers to all the elect Jews within the ethnic nation of Israel.7 In other words, “all Israel” is the believing remnant which is saved throughout the present age. According to this position, the hardening of the nation Israel is only partial, and God will continue to save a remnant from among the Jews until the end of the present age. The designation “all Israel,” then, refers to the totality of that believing remnant of ethnic Jews,8 and Rom 11:26 affirms “that there will always be a remnant of believing Jews until the end of time.”9

According to this view, the mystery alluded to in Rom 11:25 is not the fact of the remnant’s salvation, but rather the manner in which God saves them.10 As described earlier in Romans 11, God has purposed to use the salvation of Gentiles to arouse the Jews to jealousy that some of them might also turn to Christ and be saved. This He will continue to do throughout the present age, and in this manner—Paul writes in Rom 11:26—all the elect Jews within ethnic Israel will be saved.

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5Wright, The Climax of the Covenant 250.

6Irons, “Paul’s Theology of Israel’s Future” 102.


8In the words of Berkhoff, “all Israel” is a designation “of the whole number of the elect out of the ancient covenant people” (Berkhoff, Systematic Theology 699). In similar fashion, Hoeksema states that the term “denotes the fullness of the elect Jews in the new dispensation” (Hoeksema, Reformed Dogmatics 793).

9Merkle, Romans 11 and the Future of Ethnic Israel” 721.

10Ibid., 719; Strimple, “Amillennialism” 116.
View 3: “All Israel” Is the Nation

The third view is that “all Israel” in Rom 11:26 refers to the entire ethnic nation of Israel. According to this interpretation, the current partial hardening of Israel will persist until the end of the present age, when the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. At that time, the divine hardening will be removed, and in this manner—Paul writes in Rom 11:26—the ethnic nation of Israel as a whole will turn to Christ and be saved.

According to proponents of view 3, this eschatological salvation of the nation of Israel is rooted in the Lord’s faithfulness to fulfill the covenantal promises He made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In other words, although the majority of Israel is currently the object of God’s rejection, He will not forsake His people but has pledged, in accordance with his covenantal love, to grant them salvation at the end of the present age.

The difference in interpretation, then, is clear: Does “all Israel” in Rom 11:26 refer to (1) Jews and Gentiles who make up the church and are saved throughout the present age, (2) the elect remnant of believing Jews within ethnic Israel who are saved throughout the present age, or (3) the ethnic nation of Israel itself as the object of salvation?

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12Schreiner, Romans 626–27.

13Ibid., 627. Among those who hold this third view, there is disagreement regarding the precise meaning of the designation “all Israel.” Some believe it refers to the nation as a collective whole, not including every single Israelite (e.g., Moo, The Epistle to the Romans 722–24; Morris, The Epistle to the Romans 420–21; Hodge, Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans 374; Cranfield, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary 576–77); and others believe it refers to every single Israelite alive at the time of that salvation (e.g., Hoehner, “Israel in Romans 9–11” 155–56; James Kristian Brackett, “Paul’s Use of the Old Testament in Romans 9–11” [Th.M. thesis, The Master’s Seminary, Sun Valley, Calif., 1998] 153–55).
The Dual Status of Israel in Romans 11:28

which will be saved at the end of the present age?

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In other words, is “all Israel” the church, the remnant, or the nation?

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ROMANS 11:28

As interpreters have wrestled with this question, various aspects of the context of Romans 11 have received much attention. For example, proponents of all three views have examined Paul’s question in v. 1a and the answer he provides in vv. 1b-10; Paul’s second question in v. 11a and the answer he provides in vv. 11b-24; Paul’s use of μυστήριον (mystērion, “mystery”) in v. 25; Paul’s use of ἀχρίς (achris, “until”) in v. 25; Paul’s use of καὶ οὕτως (kai houôs, “and thus”) at the beginning of v. 26; and the implications of Paul’s OT quotations in vv. 26b and 27. Each of these issues is significant in determining the identity of the “all Israel” of Rom 11:26.

One verse in the immediate context, however, has direct bearing on the identity of “all Israel” in Rom 11:26 and yet has not received the amount of attention it deserves. That verse is Rom 11:28. The purpose of this article is to examine Rom 11:28 and to determine its contribution to the debate over the identity of “all Israel.”

In Rom 11:28, Paul writes, “From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for the sake of you, but from the standpoint of God’s choice they are beloved because of the fathers” (writer’s personal translation, κατὰ μὲν τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἔχθροι δι’ ὑμᾶς, κατὰ δὲ τὴν ἐκλογὴν ἀγαπητοὶ διὰ τοὺς πατέρας, kata men to euangelion echthroi di' hymas, kata de en eklogen agapetoi dia tous paterais). In this verse, Paul begins what may be viewed as a small, detached paragraph in which he grounds and elaborates his prediction of the salvation of “all Israel” two verses earlier. 14 Although v. 28 begins with asyndeton and is not formally connected with the previous context, an implicit connection is forged by the need to supply the subject of v. 28—“they” in the translation above—from v. 27. 15 In other words, “they” is not in the original and must be supplied. The antecedent of the supplied “they” in v. 28 is “them” (αὐτοῖς, autois) in v. 27, which refers back to “Jacob” (Ἰακώβ, Jakōb) in v. 26b, which in turn refers back to “all Israel” (πᾶς Ἰσραήλ, pas Israel) in v. 26a. This is significant because it indicates that the group of individuals described in v. 28 is the same group designated by the term “all Israel” in v. 26. Put another way, Paul’s words in v. 28 describe the “all Israel” of v. 26 and

14Moo, The Epistle to the Romans 729. Verses 28–29 form a paragraph, as do vv. 30–32, and the two paragraphs function together, as Cranfield writes, to “draw out” and “sum up” the “implications of the preceding verses” (Cranfield, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary 579).

15Moo, The Epistle to the Romans 730.
help to establish its identity.

For this reason, it is imperative to determine which of the three proposed identities of “all Israel” in v. 26—the church, the remnant, or the nation—is most accurately described in v. 28. Rightly understood, does Rom 11:28 describe the church, the remnant, or the nation?

Romans 11:28 and View 1

In considering whether or not Rom 11:28 can be understood to describe the church, two difficulties arise for view 1. First, the supplied subject of v. 28 (“they”) is set in contrast to Gentiles (“you”) in this verse and therefore must refer exclusively to ethnic Jews. In the first clause of v. 28, the people in question are described as “enemies for the sake of you” (ἐχθροὶ διʹ ὑμᾶς, echthroi diʹ hymas). Because Paul uses the second person to refer exclusively to Gentiles throughout 11:11–32, his use of the pronoun hymas (“you”) in v. 28 must also refer to Gentiles, and the “enemies” must therefore refer to ethnic Jews. In other words, the idea of the first half of v. 28 is this: “From the standpoint of the gospel they [ethnic Jews] are enemies for the sake of you [Gentiles].” The “all Israel” of v. 26, in turn, must also be exclusively Jewish, which precludes the interpretation that equates “all Israel” with the church, for the church obviously contains Gentiles.

This distinction between Jews and Gentiles is the same one Paul has been maintaining throughout the chapter. In fact, his point in the first half of v. 28 is a general summary of statements made earlier in Romans 11. In v. 11 Paul writes that Israel’s transgression was the means by which salvation came to the Gentiles; in v. 12 he writes that Israel’s transgression and failure resulted in riches for the Gentiles; in v. 15 he writes that Israel’s rejection resulted in the reconciliation of Gentiles; and here in v. 28 Paul sums up these ideas by stating that those unbelievers who comprise the ethnic nation of Israel are enemies of God “for the sake of”—or “with a view to

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16 Schreiner, Romans 615. Schreiner here borrows from Hafemann, who writes, “Rom 11:28 is especially important in this regard since it makes clear that the Israel of 11:26 must be ethnic Israel, since it is clearly ethnic Israelites who are ‘enemies for the sake of the Gentiles’ in 11:28a ...” (Scott Hafemann, “The Salvation of Israel in Romans 11:25–32: A Response to Krister Stendahl,” Ex Auditu 4 [1988]:53).

17 Paul’s use of the second person in reference to Gentiles as distinguished from Jews can be seen in the following second-person pronouns and second-person verbs throughout this section: ὑμῖν in v. 13; σοὶ in v. 17; κατασκευάσατο in v. 18; σοῦ in v. 18; σε in v. 18; ἔρεξεν in v. 19; σοῦ in v. 20; ἐπετίθησα in v. 20; ἐπέκειν in v. 20; σοῦ in v. 21; σε in v. 22; ἐπιμένεις in v. 22; σοῦ in v. 22; ὑμᾶς in v. 25; ὑμέις in v. 30; ἠπέστησεν in v. 30; ἠλέηθησεν in v. 30; ὑμεῖς in v. 31. Every time Paul uses the second person, he does so in reference to Gentiles, and his use of ὑμᾶς in v. 28 is no exception. In contrast, he consistently uses the third person to refer to ethnic Jews: ἔπτασαν in v. 11; πέσωσαν in v. 11; αὐτῶν in v. 11; αὐτοῖς in v. 11; αὐτῶν in v. 12; αὐτόν in v. 12; αὐτών in v. 14; αὐτῶν in v. 15; αὐτοῖς in v. 17; ἔκλεισθησαν in v. 20; κάκεινοι in v. 23; ἐπιμένωσαν in v. 23; ἐγκεντροθῆκαν in v. 23; αὐτοῖς in v. 23; αὐτοῖς in v. 27; αὐτῶν in v. 27; τούτων in v. 30; ἠπέστησαν in v. 31; αὐτοί in v. 31; and ἐλεηθῶσαν in v. 31.
the advantage of— the Gentiles. Again, the individuals described in v. 28 must be exclusively Jewish, and therefore so must the “all Israel” of v. 26. This simply will not allow for the interpretation proposed by proponents of view 1, which sees “all Israel” as including Gentiles.

The second reason that v. 28 poses a problem for view 1 is that the two clauses in this verse simply cannot be said to describe the church. The place to begin in considering v. 28 is the unmistakably parallel structure of its two clauses:

\[
\text{kata men to euangelion} \quad \text{echthroi} \quad \text{di' hymas}
\]

“according to the gospel” “enemies” “for the sake of you”

\[
\text{kata de en eklogen} \quad \text{agapetoi} \quad \text{dia tous pateras}
\]

“according to election” “beloved” “because of the fathers”

The basic meaning of these two clauses is that on one hand the individuals who comprise the “all Israel” of v. 26 are enemies of God, and yet on the other hand they are beloved by Him. From the standpoint of their rejection of the gospel, they are His enemies, and this for the sake of the Gentiles. But from the standpoint of God’s election of them, they are beloved by Him, and this because of God’s promises to the Jewish patriarchs (“the fathers”). This is what has been called the “dual status” of Israel, for it sets forth two apparently contradictory descriptions of the people, and yet both descriptions are simultaneously true of them.

Put simply, it is difficult—if not impossible—to understand these two clauses as describing the church. In what sense can those in the Body of Christ be described as the “enemies” of God? Paul says in v. 28 that these individuals are enemies from the standpoint of the gospel (kata to euangelion), but it is specifically because of the gospel and their reception of it that believers are not God’s enemies.

Some proponents of view 1 interpret v. 28 as a description of ethnic Jews. The dilemma for these interpreters is that they must do one of two things to maintain their position. Either they must deny that the supplied subject of v. 28 ultimately

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19 Paul reiterates the concept again in vv. 30–31 where, in both verses, he says that the disobedience of the Jews led to mercy for the Gentiles.
20 Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* 729. In similar fashion, Dunn refers to it as the “double status” of Israel (Dunn, *Romans 9–16* 693).
21 This is indicated by Paul’s use of the correlative conjunctions μεν … δε, which express the idea: “On the one hand … but on the other hand” (see Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996] 672).
refers back to the “all Israel” of v. 26, or they must contend that the “all Israel” of v. 26 includes Gentiles even though it specifically excludes them when it is described in v. 28. Neither of these two options is defensible.

Other proponents of view 1 interpret v. 28 as a description of the church. For these interpreters, the two insurmountable problems described above remain. First, the contrast in v. 28 between the subject of the sentence and the second-person pronoun úμαζ— which must refer to Gentiles—indicates that the subject is exclusively Jewish. Second, it is not possible to describe the church as consisting of individuals who are enemies of God. Rom 11:28, in other words, precludes view 1 as an interpretive possibility.

Romans 11:28 and View 2

Because Rom 11:28 indicates that the “all Israel” of Rom 11:26 is exclusively Jewish, view 2—which sees “all Israel” as the Jewish remnant—begins as a distinct possibility. Adding further support, some proponents of view 2 believe Rom 11:28 specifically points to the remnant interpretation of “all Israel,” insisting that the verse describes those who were once God’s enemies but who are now beloved by Him. For example, according to Lenski, Rom 11:28 is a fitting description of the elect remnant within the nation of Israel—those who were at first “enemies” (εχθροι) because of their personal hostility to the gospel are described as “beloved” (αγαπητοι) when regarded according to God’s election of them. In similar fashion, Hendriksen notes, “these ‘enemies’ and these ‘beloved ones’ are the same people, namely, the elect. At first they were hostile to the gospel, but later on, because of the wonderful manifestation of God’s mercy … they become friends.” In other words, the first clause describes the elect prior to their conversion, while the second describes them after. Hendriksen explains:

23Such a denial would require that the antecedent of the supplied “they” in v. 28 is not “them” (αυτοις) in v. 27a, “Jacob” (Ἰακώβ) in v. 26b, or “all Israel” (πᾶς Ἰσραήλ) in v. 26a, but rather “Israel” (Ἰσραήλ) in v. 25. To say that the subject of v. 28 refers to “Israel” in v. 25 rather than these closer antecedents seems more than a bit arbitrary.

24Karl Barth, The Epistle to the Romans, trans. Edwyn C. Hoskyns (New York: Oxford University, 1950) 418–19. This also appears to be the position of Irons (“Paul’s Theology of Israel’s Future” 121), although it is difficult to be certain.

25Barth interprets v. 28 as a description of individuals who, though once vessels of God’s wrath, become vessels of His mercy (Barth, The Epistle to the Romans 419). The problem with this interpretation is that Paul’s use of the correlative conjunctions μεν and δὲ indicate that these individuals are simultaneously “enemies” (ἐχθροι) and “beloved” (αγαπητοι). This point will be addressed further in the discussion of view 2 below.

26In this way, view 2 manages to escape at least one of the difficulties of view 1.

27Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistle 732–33. Commenting on Rom 11:29, Lenski writes, “Paul explains how Jews who are at first enemies of the gospel are yet allowed eventually to become beloved of God” (ibid., 734).

28Hendriksen, Romans 384. The only other possible explanation for proponents of view 2 is to say that Paul switches subject mid-verse—from the Jews who are God’s enemies in light of the gospel, to Jews who are beloved by God as elect members of the remnant—which is quite improbable (Moo, The Epistle to the Romans 731).
The same Jews who at one time had been enemies of the gospel had become friends, beloved of God and fellow-believers. This great change had been brought about because of the fact that these former enemies had been designed by God, in his eternal decree, to become friends.\footnote{Hendriksen, Romans 384.}

The difficulty with this understanding of Rom 11:28 (and therefore the difficulty with view 2 in general) is that the two clauses in this verse—κατὰ μεν τὸ εὐαγγέλιον εχθροὶ δι’ ἡμᾶς and κατὰ δὲ ἐκλογὴν ἀγαπητοὶ διὰ τῶν πατέρων—set forth two descriptions of Israel, and both descriptions are true of them at the same time. This is indicated by Paul’s use of the correlative conjunctions μεν … δὲ, which express the idea: “On the one hand … but on the other hand.”\footnote{See Wallace, Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics 672.} In other words, Paul’s use of the correlative conjunctions indicates that these individuals are simultaneously “enemies” and “beloved,” not enemies for a time and then later beloved.

Had Paul intended to refer to a people who were previously enemies but who are now beloved, he would not have used the combination “on the one hand … but on the other hand”). Instead, it would be more likely for him to have used the combination ποτὲ … νῦν (pote … nun, “formerly … now”) or ποτὲ … νῦν ὃς (pote … nun de, “formerly … but now”), for Paul often uses this combination to highlight the contrast between the pre-conversion past and the post-conversion present. For example:

Rom 11:30: “For just as you once [pote] were disobedient to God, but now [nun de] have been shown mercy because of their disobedience….”

Gal 1:23: “… but only, they kept hearing, ‘He who once [pote] persecuted us is now [nun] preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy.’”

Eph 2:11-13: “Therefore remember, that formerly [pote] you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called ‘Uncircumcision’ by the so-called ‘Circumcision,’ which is performed in the flesh by human hands—remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now [nun de] in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”

Eph 5:8a: “For you were formerly [pote] darkness, but now [nun de] you are light in the Lord.”

Col 1:21-22a: “And although you were formerly [pote] alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now [nun de] reconciled you in His fleshly body through death….”
Col 3:7-8: “... and in them you also once [pote] walked, when you were living in them. But now [nuni de] you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth.”

Phile 10-11: “I appeal to you for my child, whom I have begotten in my imprisonment, Onesimus, who formerly [pote] was useless to you, but now [nuni de] is useful both to you and to me.”

Other times, Paul employs a different combination to indicate the temporal contrast between the pre-conversion past and the post-conversion present. For example, in Rom 7:5-6, he uses the imperfect active indicative of ἐμεν (ἐμεν, “we were”) in combination with nuni de (“but now”):

Rom 7:5-6: “For while we were [ἐμεν] in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death. But now [nuni de] we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.”

Elsewhere he establishes the same temporal contrast with the combination of τότε (tote, “at that time”) and νῦν ὅτι (nun de, “but now”):

Gal 4:8-9: “However at that time [tote], when you did not know God, you were slaves to those which by nature are no gods. But now [nun de] that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again?”

In Rom 11:28, however, rather than using one of these (or a similar combination) to establish a contrast between the pre-conversion past and the post-conversion present of the individuals in question, Paul uses the correlative conjunctions men ... de to indicate two simultaneously existing states. Romans 11:28, therefore, cannot refer to individuals who were once enemies prior to their conversion but who are now beloved after their conversion—as view 2 says it does—and view 2 cannot be considered a plausible interpretation of the “all Israel” in Rom 11:26.

Footnotes:
31 This combination is used in 1 Peter 2:10 to set up the same contrast: “… for you once [ποτε] were not a people, but now [νῦν ὅτι] you are the people of God; you had not received [perfect passive participle of ἔλεησαι] mercy, but now [νῦν ὅτι] you have received [aorist passive participle of ἔλεησαι] mercy.”
32 This is similar to the way Peter establishes the same temporal contrast in 1 Pet 2:25: “For you were [ἐμεν, imperfect active indicative of εἰμέν] continually straying like sheep, but now [ἀλλὰ ... νῦν] you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls” (cf. Rom 6:17).
In contrast with the first two views, the dual status of “all Israel” as portrayed in Rom 11:28 fits perfectly with the interpretation of view 3, the view that sees “all Israel” as a reference to the nation of Israel as a whole. This can be seen by considering the first half of the dual status in v. 28a, the second half the dual status in v. 28b, and the ground of that status in v. 29.

The First Half of Israel’s Dual Status (v. 28a)

According to view 3, Israel presently exists in a state in which a majority of the nation of is hardened (Rom 11:25). This majority has rejected the Messiah, a rejection that is described in Romans 11 as a stumbling (ἐπτάσαν, eptaisan) in v. 11, “their transgression” (παραπτώματι αὐτῶν, paraptōmati autōn) in v. 11, “their transgression” (παράπτωμα, paraptōma) in v. 12, and “their rejection” (ἀπόβολη, apobolē) in v. 15. Paul describes this present state of hardening in the first clause of Rom 11:28, where he refers to the nation of Israel as God’s enemies—those who stand under His enmity and displeasure. They are enemies, Paul writes, “according to the gospel” (κατὰ μὲν τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, kata men to euangelion). The preposition κατὰ (kata) here indicates the norm or the standard “according to which a judgment is rendered” and therefore “defines the rule by which God’s relation to Israel is determined.” In other words, when regarded according to their rejection of the gospel, they are considered God’s enemies.

Paul continues this first clause and writes that they are enemies “for the sake of you” (Ďη’ ὑμᾶς, di’ hymas). The second-person pronoun here refers to Gentile believers, as it does throughout the chapter. Paul’s point is that Israel’s rejection of the gospel was not without benefit—it was “for the sake of” or “with a view to the

32That the present hardening of Israel is only partial and does not extend to every individual in the nation is argued in Rom 11:1-10 and stated explicitly in Rom 11:25.

33This rejection of Messiah and the salvation found in Him can also be seen earlier in Paul’s argument, specifically in Rom 9:30-33; 10:2-3, 19-21; 11:7-10.

34Schreiner, Romans 625. Although there has been some debate about whether the term ἐχθροὶ (“enemies”) should be understood passively (i.e., the Jews are objects of God’s hostility) or actively (the Jews are hostile to God), it should be taken passively, for it stands parallel to ἐγκαταστάσαν (“beloved”), which is passive (i.e., “loved by God”) (ibid.; Morris, The Epistle to the Romans 422; Mounce, Romans 225; Cranfield, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary 580). At the same time, as Schreiner notes, “Enmity by God necessarily implies that the people involved also hate God (cf. 9:30–10:21), for the idea that those who are God’s enemies loved God is inconceivable for Paul ...” (Schreiner, Romans 625).


37According to Moo, “Enemies according to the gospel’ succinctly summarizes the point that Paul has made in 9:30–10:21: through their failure to respond to the revelation of God’s righteousness in Christ, the heart of the gospel, Israel as a whole has failed to attain the eschatological salvation manifested in the gospel” (Moo, The Epistle to the Romans 730).
advantage of” the Gentiles. “All Israel,” in other words, is presently the enemy of God, but this rejection has led to the salvation of Gentiles (see Rom 11:11–12, 15). The unbelieving Jews that make up the nation of Israel, then, are enemies according to the gospel and for the sake of the Gentiles. This is the first half of Israel’s dual status.

The Second Half of Israel’s Dual Status (v. 28b)

At the same time, however, Paul writes that they are not only enemies of God, they are also beloved by Him. In the second clause in v. 28, the apostle again uses two prepositional phrases to explain Israel’s status. First he writes that they are beloved “according to election” (κατά δὲ τὴν ἐκλογὴν, kata de òen eklogèn). Here Paul uses the preposition kata in the same way he did in the first clause of the verse—to indicate the norm or the standard “according to which a judgment is rendered” and therefore to define “the rule by which God’s relation to Israel is determined.” The phrase “according to election” (kata de òen eklogèn), then, indicates that although they are considered enemies when regarded according to their rejection of the gospel, they are considered beloved when regarded according to God’s choice—His corporate election of Israel as His chosen nation. As Murray notes, the word “beloved” indicates “that God has not suspended or rescinded his relation to Israel as his chosen people in terms of the covenants made with the fathers.” Israel, although hardened and unbelieving, is still God’s chosen and beloved nation.

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39This, according to Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary* 581, is the meaning of the preposition δὲ in the first clause of v. 28.
42It is significant to recognize that “Paul is talking about the place of the nation in God’s plan, not the fate of individuals” (Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* 423). In other words, the apostle refers here in v. 28 not to the choice of specific individuals unto salvation, but rather to the choice of the nation as a corporate entity (see Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* 731–32, and John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968] 100–101). In the words of Schreiner, “The word ἐκλογή refers to the electing work of God by which he has chosen Israel to be his people” (Schreiner, *Romans* 625–26). In similar fashion, Cranfield writes, “By ‘election’ here is meant the election of the people as a whole (cf. v. 2), not that election which distinguishes within Israel (cf. vv. 5 and 7) and which is itself a pointer to the election of the people as a whole” (Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary* 580).
43Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* 101.
44As Morris writes, God “had not forgotten that Israel was his people; their refusal to accept the gospel did not alter the fact that he had chosen them to be in a special relationship to him” (Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* 423). Lenski, a proponent of view 2, objects to view 3’s interpretation of the “beloved” in Rom 11:28, writing, “Why is ‘beloved’ and this peculiar consideration of the fathers absent today, and why was it absent during all the past centuries? And where is ‘beloved’ used with reference to any persons but believers? No; the hardened mass is not ‘Israel’ …” (Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistle* 734). The answer to Lenski’s first two questions is that—as explained above—the “beloved” status of unbelieving Israel is not absent today. In answer to his third question, the entire nation of Israel was considered beloved by God in the OT, even though not every individual in the nation was a genuine believer. For example, in Deut 7:7–8, Moses writes, “The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were fewest of all
Paul emphasizes this point further with the second prepositional phrase in this clause—“because of the fathers” (διὰ τῶν πατέρας, dia tous pateras). The word “fathers” is a reference to the patriarchs of Israel—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—and more specifically to the covenant promises God made to them. As Morris writes, “Paul is appealing to the covenant God had made with Abraham and the promises he had made again and again to Abraham’s descendants.” The essence of this second clause, then, is that when regarded according to the standpoint of God’s corporate election of the nation, “all Israel” is beloved by God because of the covenant promises He made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

peoples, but because the Lord loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the Lord brought you out by a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.” This is the same love that Paul refers to in Rom 11:28 and is a love that continues to this day.

Although Paul’s use of the preposition διὰ in the second clause is parallel to his use of the same preposition in the first clause, the two uses of the preposition carry slightly different nuances (Dunn, Romans 9–16 684; Cranfield, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary 580). In the first clause διὰ has a final sense and means “for the sake of,” but in the second clause it has a causal sense and means “because of.” Put another way, the first use of the preposition looks forward and the second looks backward (ibid.).

The word is used the same way in Rom 9:5.

As Moo writes, “In saying that God’s love for Israel is ‘based on’ the patriarchs, Paul is not of course suggesting that the patriarchs have done anything to merit God’s love for themselves or their descendants. As Gal. 3 and Rom. 4 make clear, the significance of Abraham and the other patriarchs in the plan of salvation rests not on their own actions but on the gracious promises that God has made to them. So it is not because of the patriarchs in and of themselves that the Jews are still beloved; it is because of the promises God made to them. As it is by the standard of the gospel that the Jews are now judged to be enemies of God, so it is by the standard of ‘election’ that they are loved by God” (The Epistle to the Romans 731). In similar fashion, Mounce writes, “Paul was not supporting the idea that merit is passed on from the patriarchs to their descendants. But they were the ones who received his call (Gen 12:1–2; Deut 7:6–7), and it was to them that he first gave his gifts. And God’s gifts and call are irrevocable…. He does not change his mind regarding the nation he called and sustained with gracious acts of provision and protection” (Mounce, Romans 225–26).

Opponents of view 3 often claim that it undermines the unconditional nature of God’s sovereign election by affirming ethnicity is the basis for the salvation of Israel. This, however, is not the case. “Israel’s ancestry does not amount to a claim on God. God freely pledged to bestow his grace upon Israel as an expression of his lovingkindness” (Schreiner, Romans 627). In other words, “Israel is beloved because God is faithful to His own love, which in His sovereign freedom He bestowed upon the fathers on no other ground than His love, which knows no cause outside itself (cf. Deut. 7:7f)” (Cranfield, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary 581). The insights of Piper are helpful: “Since God’s free and unconstrained election of Israel from all the nations of the earth (Deut 7:6) embraced from the outset his intention to bless Israel for centuries in unique ways among the nations and in the last days to purify and save the whole people, his fulfillment of this intention is just as free from human constraints as the initial election of Abraham. We may infer from Rom 9:6ff that God has employed four thousand years of redemptive history to teach that he is free and not bound to save anyone because of his Jewishness nor to condemn anyone because of his non-Jewishness. Can he not at the end of the age, having demonstrated his freedom beyond the shadow of a doubt, bring his free and sovereign election of Israel to a climax by banishing ungodliness from Jacob and saving the whole people?” (John Piper, The Justification of God: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Romans 9:1-23, 2d ed. [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983] 27). Can He not, in other words, have mercy on whom He desires (Rom 9:14–18)?

Morris, The Epistle to the Romans 423.
The Ground of Israel’s Dual Status (v. 29)

To support his assertion that Israel is still beloved by God as His chosen nation, Paul provides in v. 29 a reason for his assertion in v. 28b.49 He writes: “For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable” ( ámbetamélēta γὰρ τὰ χαρίσματα καὶ η ἱ λήσις τοῦ θεοῦ, ametamelēta gar ta charismata kai hè kësis tou theou). Although Paul does not define what he means by “gifts” (ta charismata) in this context, it is likely that he uses the word to summarize those privileges of Israel enumerated in Rom 9:4–5.50 The “calling” (kësis) of God, however, is clear, for it “refers to the election according to which the Jews are beloved.”51 In other words, it refers to “God’s calling of Israel to be His special people, to stand in a special relation to Himself, and to fulfill a special function in history.”52

Paul’s point in v. 29 is that the gifts and calling of God are “irrevocable” (ametamelēta). This adjective, which Paul places at the beginning of the verse for emphasis, is best translated “irrevocable,” for it describes something that “one does not take back.”53 How can Paul’s readers be certain that Israel is still considered beloved by God when regarded from the standpoint of His choice of them? Because God does not take back His promises—His gifts to Israel and His calling of Israel to be His chosen nation are irrevocable. As Moo states, this word “emphasizes the point that Paul made at the beginning of his argument: ‘The word of God has not failed’ (9:6a)…. Israel still has a place in God’s plan because God is faithful.”54 In other words, “God has not abandoned the promises given to the fathers; they have not been nullified by Israel’s unbelief; God is still faithful.”55

According to Moo,

Paul’s assertion of Israel’s dual status in v. 28 succinctly summarizes the dilemma that drives the whole argument of these chapters: the Israel now at enmity with God because of the gospel is nevertheless the Israel to whom God has made irrevocable promises of blessing. In broad terms, as 9:30–10:21 has elaborated the former, negative side of this dilemma, so 9:6b–29 and 11:1–27 have explained the second, positive side.56

49The conjunction γὰρ that introduces v. 29 is causal.
50Moo, The Epistle to the Romans 732; cf. Murray, The Epistle to the Romans 101.
51Moo, The Epistle to the Romans 732. Moo explains the relationship between the “gifts” of God and the “calling” of God like this: “The ‘gifts’ may then be combined with ‘call’ as one idea—‘the benefits of God’s call’—or be taken as a distinct category—‘the gifts and the call of God.’ … God’s ‘call,’ then, is probably to be seen as one of the most important of those gifts: ‘the gifts and especially, among those gifts, the call of God’” (ibid.).
52Cranfield, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary 581. In this way, the “calling” of God in v. 29 serves as a synonym of the “choice” of God in v. 28.
53Bauer, Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon 53.
54Moo, The Epistle to the Romans 732.
55Dunn, Romans 9–16 694. Morris puts it this way: “God does not change His mind after He has made gifts or issued calls. He does not take them back. What God has done and said stands” (The Epistle to the Romans 423).
56Moo, The Epistle to the Romans 729–30.
In similar fashion, Murray writes,

Israel are both “enemies” and “beloved” at the same time, enemies as regards the gospel, beloved as regards the election. This contrast means that by their rejection of the gospel they have been cast away and the gospel had been given to the Gentiles but that nevertheless by reason of election and on account of their relation to the fathers they were beloved…. “Beloved” thus means that God has not suspended or rescinded his relation to Israel as his chosen people in terms of the covenants made with the fathers. Unfaithful as Israel have been and broken off for that reason, yet God still sustains his peculiar relation of love to them, a relation that will be demonstrated and vindicated in the restoration (vss. 12, 15, 26).\(^{57}\)

The description of “all Israel” in Rom 11:28, then, not only indicates that the unbelieving nation as a whole is in view, but also points to the fact that that nation will one day be restored. God made specific promises to the nation of Israel, and her refusal to embrace Christ and the gospel did not mean that the gospel had failed or that God would fail to fulfill those promises. In the words of Bloesch: “His rejection of his people is not final but only provisional. In the No of God’s rejection is hidden the Yes of his election.”\(^{58}\) All Israel will be saved.

CONCLUSION

It is clear that only the interpretation of view 3 corresponds to the dual status of “all Israel” as portrayed in Rom 11:28, for only this interpretation envisions a scenario in which both clauses of the verse are simultaneously and presently true of the entity “all Israel.” On the one hand the unbelieving nation of Israel is an enemy of God, but on the other she is beloved by Him. When the partial hardening of Israel is removed at the end of the present age (Rom 11:25), her present “transgression” will give way to her “fulfillment” (Rom 11:12); her present “rejection” will give way to her “acceptance” (Rom 11:15); and the natural branches will be grafted back in (Rom 11:23-24). And in this manner, all Israel will be saved in accordance with God’s covenantal love and in fulfillment of His promises (Rom 11:26-27). God has not, and will not, forsake His chosen nation.

\(^{57}\)Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* 100–101.

DOES GOD DECEIVE?
THE “DELUDING INFLUENCE”
OF SECOND THESSALONIANS 2:11

Gregory H. Harris*

Scripture uses several Greek and Hebrew words to denote deception, particularly in relation to the future period of Tribulation. Second Thess 2:11 is of special interest in discussions of deception during that future time, because God is the agent who sends the “deluding influence” (energeian planēs) among unbelievers. Two OT passages which present God as in some way deceiving are analogous to God’s future activity of this kind, 1Kgs 22:22 and Ezek 14:9. Romans 1:18-32 is partially parallel to that future action. Just as divine judgment of the rebellious was at the heart of God’s deceptive activity in the two OT examples, so it will be during the future Tribulation. His judgment on a rebellious world will take many forms with deception being only one of them. In all cases of His use of deception, He exposes falsehood by presenting His truth. His particular opponent in the future will be “the man of lawlessness” (2 Thess 2:3) who will offer “the lie” (2 Thess 2:11) in place of the truth. This agent of evil will have a very wide following because of his use of deceptive methods. God will then add to the deception of this man’s followers by sending them the “deluding influence” that will move them beyond the possibility of receiving the truth.

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Preliminary Considerations Regarding Deception

From the earliest deception of Eve in Genesis 3 up through Satan’s final attempt to deceive the world in Revelation 20, deception has played a significant role in the history of man. It is fitting that Scripture presents Satan at both the first and last efforts to deceive mankind, because ultimately all religious deception is traceable to Satan, “the serpent of old . . . who deceives the whole world” (Rev 12:9).1 Multiple verses in Scripture bear witness of this, such as John 8:44, which states of Satan, “Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is

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1Scripture quotations are from the 1971 ed. of the New American Standard Bible.
a liar, and the father of lies.” Two other verses specifically identify Satan’s role as a deceiver, especially in regard to the fall of man. In 2 Cor 11:3 Paul warned, “But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.” In an even more succinct statement, Paul later wrote in 1 Tim 2:14, “[I]t was not Adam who was first deceived, but the woman being quite deceived, fell into transgression.”

Deception, at its core, is a lie in place of the idea, “to let oneself be misled, deceived.”

The two words are used interchangeably throughout Scripture and seem to have no major distinction between them. The verb planado is rendered “to cause to wander, lead astray,” or “to lead astray, mislead by means of deception.” The passive voice conveys the idea, “to let oneself be misled, deceived.” The noun derivative “deception” (πλάνη, planê) means, “wandering from the path of truth, error, delusion, deceit, deception to which one is subject.” That satanic deception always stands in contrast to the standard of God’s revelatory truth is of utmost importance. The other Greek verb for deception, apataô, does not occur as frequently in the NT as planado, but it likewise conveys the idea of deceiving, or misleading someone. An intensified derivative (ἐξαπατάω, exapataô) expresses a...
The strengthened form of deception.

The Bible repeatedly uses both words for Satan’s activities of deception in history past as well as for the deception associated with the future Tribulation. In fact, the Tribulation will be a time of satanic deception unlike any other in history. As bad as Satan’s previous deceptions have been, it will pale in comparison to what awaits the world ahead. Every major NT passage that details events and persons operative during the Tribulation (Matthew 24–25/Mark 13; 2 Thessalonians 2; Revelation 4–20) presents statements and warnings about tributional deception. Both Greek words for deception occur repeatedly, with forms of planē occurring more in Revelation than in any other NT book. In fact, not only does the Bible predict a greatly intensified deception during the Tribulation, it also discloses the agents of that deception. Specific agents of deception will be false Christs (Matt 24:4-5; Mark 13:5-6), false prophets (Matt 24:11; Mark 13:22), the Antichrist (Dan 8:25; 2 Thess 2:10; 2 John 7), Satan (Rev 12:9; 20:2-3, 7-8, 10), the false prophet (13:14; 19:20), Babylon (18:23), and in a completely different sense to be discussed below, God (2 Thess. 2:11).

The Controversy over 2 Thess 2:11

That Scripture predicts deception of the unbelieving world during the Tribulation is not surprising, especially in light of Satan’s past history. However, 2 Thess 2:11-12 introduces an unexpected party associated with deception during that period: “And for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.” The “deluding influence” (ἐνεργείαν πλάνης, energeian planēs) is highly controversial and has caused much debate. A striking aspect is the linking of the same word used elsewhere for satanic deception (planē) with a work of God. In fact, with the exception of 2 Thess 2:11, every other Scripture predicting tributional deception attributes the deception to Satan and his agents. Second Thessalonians depicts the man of lawlessness as coming in accord with “the activity of Satan” (2:9), as well as with “all the deception of wickedness” (2:10). One would expect a continuation of Satan’s role in empowering such a person. Instead, Paul switches to God as the sender of the energeian planēs. To associate God with any form of deception is unusual; one should approach this verse cautiously.

Multiple questions emerge because of this verse. Does 2 Thess 2:11 present God as the source for any deception predicted for the Tribulation? If so, this has theological consequences. For instance, does God actively deceive? If God deceives,
then one who is judged by God can blame God for his sinful actions, since God deceived him. Such reasoning carried to its logical conclusion would lead to the bibliically untenable conclusion that God is a liar—since deception at its core is a lie—and that God is the author of sin. Because of these and other related questions, examining 2 Thess 2:11 in regard to tributional deception is essential.15

Though the previous questions concerning God and the deception of the Tribulation are pertinent, they should not detract from the core truth of 2 Thess 2:11: God will send the deluding influence in the Tribulation. Whatever the energetic planēs will be, it will not be a by-product of some previous action. The finite and transitive verb πεπεμένει (pempei, “sends”) underscores the fact that the deluding influence is, in fact, sent; it will not merely result from an outworking of related events.16 Accordingly, Alford warns against reducing the significance of the term, stating it “must not for a moment be understood of permittiveness only on God’s part—He is the judicial sender and doer.”17 He further notes that many versions have “weakened, indeed almost stultified the sentence by rendering . . . (it) ‘a strong delusion,’ i.e. the passive state resulting, instead of the active cause.”18 Lünemann concurs, noting that it is “not a statement of the consequence [for sin leading on to

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16In reference to 2 Thess 2:11, Aus states, "God is the subject; he does the deluding, although it is based on the individual's rejection of the gospel. The theocentric significance of this summary statement should not be overlooked because of the more interesting details of the whole paragraph, 2:1-13." (Roger D. Aus, "God's Plan and God's Power: Isaiah 66 and the Restraining Factors of 2 Thessalonians 2:6-7," Journal of Biblical Literature 96 [1977]:500). However, whether God deludes or deceives will be discussed below.


18Ibid.
Does God Deceive?

Marshall summarily advises, “Various commentaries have rightly warned against any attempt to weaken the force of Paul’s statement, no matter how unwelcome it may be to modern readers.”

Still much debate on defining this term, and especially how it relates to God, remain. Usually the suggested definitions are quite broad since the particulars of this verse are difficult to ascertain. Some describe the deluding influence as a “powerful working of error” whose sending is attributed to God. One view presents God as subjecting the unbelievers of the Tribulation to the powerful delusion that comes from their choosing error over truth.

Other views highlight the element of power normally associated elsewhere with energeia. Along with the etymological considerations of the word, a major reason the power aspect is often highlighted is Paul’s previous use of energeia in the context of 2 Thessalonians 2. Since Paul’s emphasis was on the active, powerful activity of Satan (ἐνέργειαν τοῦ Σατανᾶ, energian tou Satana) through his earthly agent (2:9), then an active, powerful activity should be expected as well in the deluding influence that will originate from God (v. 11). Accordingly, the energian planēs sent by God is defined variously as “the power that leads to deception,” or as the working of error that could be best be rendered “an active power of misleading.” An even more challenging interpretation asserts that God Himself “leads unbelievers into error.” Morris agrees, noting that throughout Scripture energia always “denotes power in action,” so that the reference to God sending a deluding influence in 2 Thess 2:11 likewise “indicates not merely a passive


22Thomas L. Constable, “Second Thessalonians,” in The Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament, eds. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor, 1981) 720. Though it is true the choosing of error over the truth will be the basis for God’s judgment, this interpretation associates the sending of the ἐνεργείαν παράνοιας with the normal outworking of God’s judgment, such as in Rom 1:18-25. Whether this is a legitimate association will be addressed below.

23Specifics of the word ἐνεργείατε will be addressed later in this article.


26Paul Ellingworth and Eugene A. Nida, A Translator’s Handbook on Paul’s Letters to the Thessalonians, Helps for Translators Series (London, New York, Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1976) 178. Herein will be one of the main considerations in determining the meaning of the ἐνεργείαν παράνοιας. Does God lead the unbelievers into sin? Ellingworth and Nida go even further by concluding that a possible translation is, “God causes them to act very wrongly” (ibid., 179). This point will be discussed below.
acquiescence in wrong-doing, but an active forwarding of evil.”

Another line of reasoning places more emphasis on the inward effect of the energeian planēs will have on others. Consequently, God will remove from the unregenerate of the Tribulation “their power of discerning the true from the false.”

Eadie likewise defines the term as “an inworking error” so that “indifference to the truth gets its divine recompense in its facile seduction into gross and grosser errors.” However, the use of an aorist indicative in 2:10 in describing the deceived as those “who would not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved” points more to blatant rejection of the truth, not indifference to it. Likewise, the adamant refusal of the unredeemed to believe the truth, coupled with their active taking pleasure in wickedness in 2:12, argues against indifference to the truth as the basic problem.

A few factors should be in the forefront in characterizing the future deluding influence. Initially, for God to send some element of deception is not exactly equivalent to God actively deceiving. He sends someone or something which deceives; He Himself is not named as the deceiver. Second, the uniqueness of the future period must be emphasized. The Tribulation will be an unprecedented period of God’s judgment on earth with many unique events. Consequently, establishing a precise definition for the deluding influence by either historical or present analogies may not be possible, since no historical situation is directly comparable.

The wise course is to deal with specifics of the text instead of attempting to explain it by current analogies. Though some biblical accounts may be similar, no previous account will match perfectly. Another factor to consider is the judicial nature of God’s sending of the energeian planēs, something clearly attested in 2 Thess 2:12 as developed below. Finally, the claim by some that God leads unbelievers into sin, particularly by means of the deluding influence, must be examined, especially in view of the previously stated controversies. It is necessary to consider these and other matters along with other passages associating God with deception.

**Biblical Examples of God’s Use of Deception as a Means of Judgment**

The Tribulation will be a unique time of intensified satanic deception, as well as the time of God’s sending of the deluding influence, but the Bible indicates...
God has already used deception as a means of judgment against those who reject His truth. Two OT passages—1 Kgs 22:22 and Ezek 14:9—specifically present God as using deception for His purpose; a NT passage—Rom 1:18-32—may also be relevant.

**First Kings 22:22**

First Kgs 22:22 is the initial biblical account that associates God’s use of deception to suit His purpose. Here God instructed a spirit who volunteered to be a deceiving spirit among the false prophets of King Ahab, “You are to entice him and also prevail. Go and do so.” Wide disagreement exists among scholars concerning the identity of this spirit. Whether the spirit is an angel of God, a demonic being, or Satan Himself, is not the primary focus of this article. God’s role in commanding the deception to occur is the main point. In this episode God commissioned the spirit, either holy or evil, to deceive, something not normally associated with the God who cannot lie (Heb 6:18).

Contextual factors in 1 Kings 22 help to understand this occasion when God employed deception to accomplish His purpose. The chapter records the encounter of Micaiah the prophet as he stood against kings Ahab and Jehoshaphat and their collective prophetic corps. The pending issue was Syria’s possession of Ramoth Gilead, a town Ahab felt rightly belonged to Israel. Before going into battle to recapture the city, Jehoshaphat requested that an inquiry be made of the Lord (22:5). Ahab gathered approximately four hundred prophets before him, all of whom counseled going into battle, assuring the kings “the Lord [also Lord] will give it into the hand of the king” (22:6, 11-12).

Despite the unanimity of the prophets’ decree, Jehoshaphat was not convinced. Instead he asked, “Is there not yet a prophet of the Lord here, that we may inquire of him?” (22:7). Ahab summoned Micaiah, who was asked by the messenger to speak favorably to the king (22:13). Micaiah’s response establishes a
crucial aspect in understanding the deception that will follow. In 1 Kgs 22:14 Micaiah declared, “As the Lord lives, what the Lord says to me, that I will speak.” When asked by the king concerning the pending attack, Micaiah mockingly responded by mimicking the prophets, telling Ahab to go to battle because the Lord will give victory to the king (22:15). Something in the prophet’s demeanor must have reflected his sarcasm. Ahab readily recognized Micaiah’s insincerity, issuing a second crucial injunction that dramatically changes the course of the conversation.

The king chastened Micaiah, saying, “How many times must I adjure you to speak to me nothing but the truth in the name of the Lord?” (22:16). Thus, the core issue comes to the forefront: who speaks for God, or, more precisely, what is the truth of God? That two distinct sides existed who both made claim to speaking divine truth is foundational in understanding God’s upcoming use of deception. Both sources of “truth” could not be correct; neither could both opposing factions speak for God. One or both were false.

After prophesying that the attack would end in certain defeat and destruction, Micaiah revealed the heretofore unknown spiritual realities beyond the present earthly realm in 1 Kgs 22:19-23: “Therefore, hear the word of the Lord. I saw the Lord sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by Him on His right hand and on His left. And the Lord said, ‘Who will entice Ahab to go up and fall at Ramoth Gilead?’ And one said this while another said that. Then a spirit came forward and stood before the Lord and said, ‘I will entice him.’ And the Lord said to him, ‘How?’ And He said, ‘I will go out and be a deceiving spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.’ Then He said, ‘You are to entice him and also prevail. Go and do so.’ Now therefore, behold, the Lord has put a deceiving spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets, and the Lord has proclaimed disaster against you.” Three times in this account a form of נָעַר (nawâr) is used (22:20-22). That a means of deception will be employed by God is also seen in the twofold use of “deceiving spirit” (נָעַר נֵעֲרָ, nawâr ‘nawâr). The verb נָעַר (nawâr), a close synonym of nawâr, is used of breaking a promise or of words or activities which are false because they are without any factual basis. 40

God’s sending of a member from the host of heaven to be a deceiving spirit may surprise some, but other factors are relevant. 41 First, it is difficult to call God a liar or deceiver when He announced before Ahab went to battle that a deceiving spirit had been placed in the mouths of all his prophets and that certain defeat awaited Ahab. 42 Second, God sent a spirit to counsel Ahab to take the wrong course of action Ahab had already decided to take. God did not lure Ahab into sin, nor did

39Chisholm notes that this was the first time “truth” factored in the account and sets the stage for Micaiah’s response. “Only when the king insisted on the truth . . . did Micaiah give him an accurate prophecy of how the battle would turn out” (“Does God Deceive?” 14).


41If the spirit was, in fact, an evil spirit, this poses no theological dilemma. It should be noted that God may send or use evil spirits to accomplish His purpose, such as in the case of the tormenting of Saul (1 Sam 16:14, 23) and the demons yet to be released from the abyss in Rev 9:1-12.

God entice him to change his intentions. Simply put, God did not lead Ahab into sin. Ahab had already determined what he intended to do; he was simply looking for religious permission to pursue his own course of action, and even that permission came only because of the request of Jehoshaphat. Nothing—including God’s specific revelation whereby He had proclaimed disaster against Ahab (22:23, 28)—would deter him.

A sequential development occurs in the broader context of 1 Kings 22, especially in reference to divine truth. In addition to the revelatory truth of the OT up to that time, God also set forth His truth by means of Elijah (1 Kings 17), and His other true prophets (19:10, 14), including Micaiah (22:13-28). Ahab rejected God’s truth and ultimately became responsible for the deaths of the majority of God’s prophets (19:10, 14). Ahab replaced God’s revealed truth with “another truth” by erecting an altar to and worshiping Baal (16:31-32), making the Asherah (18:19), as well as giving place to the hundreds of false prophets associated with these false gods. The four hundred false prophets also replaced God’s truth when they traced their message to the true God of Israel (22:11-12). Ahab did not believe God’s revealed truth but instead readily accepted multiple sources of falsehood. Ironically, God then used “other truth” Ahab had chosen as a means of judgment against him. Despite his disguise and precautions, Ahab died in battle, true to the prophetic word of the Lord through the prophet Micaiah (22:29-38).

Ezekiel 14:9

Another OT passage associates God with deception as a means of judgment. In Ezek 14:9 God promised, “But if the prophet is prevailed upon to speak a word, it is I, the Lord, who have prevailed upon that prophet, and I will stretch out My hand against him and destroy him from among My people Israel.” While particular circumstances differ in this account, the overall framework is virtually identical to that of 1 Kings 22, as are many of the same questions. For instance, if God incited an individual to sin, why would God hold that individual accountable for his wrongdoing?44

As with 1 Kings 22, events leading up to this verse are relevant in understanding this second instance of God’s use of deception. In the fifth year of King Jehoiachin’s exile the word of the Lord came to Ezekiel (Ezek 1:1-3). This statement is important since the one who spoke for God will again be a major consideration of the pending deception. Ezekiel had repeatedly prophesied that God would judge His people for their rebellion against Him. Many Jews, both in Israel and Babylon, rejected Ezekiel’s prophecies. The lack or slowness of God’s action became a derisive proverb throughout the land: “The days are long and every vision fails” (12:22). However, the failure was about to change quickly. In 12:23b-25 God instructed Ezekiel to inform the nation, “Thus says the Lord God, ‘I will make this proverb cease so that they will no longer use it as a proverb in Israel.’ But tell them, ‘The days draw near as well as the fulfillment of every vision. For there will no longer be any false vision or flattering divination within the house of Israel. For I the

41As in 1 Kings 22, יִשְׁבָּד is used.
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**God** not only set forth His truth of pending judgment, He also identified and denounced the false prophets of Israel whom the people foolishly respected and revered. God revealed that such false prophets prophesied from their own inspiration, even though they presented their message as originating with Him (13:2). God renounced them, declaring, “Woe to the foolish prophets who are following their own spirit and have seen nothing” (13:3). Further, “They see falsehood and lying divination who are saying, ‘The LORD declares,’ when the LORD has not sent them; yet they hope for the fulfillment of their word” (13:6). God declared His open and active opposition against such lying prophets who misled His people (13:8-10a), as He promised certain wrath and destruction against them (13:10b-16). Included in this denunciation were the women who practiced magic and falsely prophesied, thus profaning God’s name to the people (13:17-19). Consequently, God identified and renounced two tragic effects of false prophets: they “disheartened the righteous with falsehood when I did not cause him grief, but have strengthened the hand of the wicked not to turn from his wicked way and preserve life” (13:22). Contained within this verse is an indication of God’s desire for the wicked to repent, but He realized false prophets hindered the rebellious from turning to Him. In keeping with His earlier promise of immediate action, God pronounced judgment on such false prophets (13:23a). The culminating result would be, “Thus you will know that I am the LORD” (13:23b). As in 1 Kings 22, God openly presented His truth as well as exposed the source of falsehood. Anyone who then chose to ignore God’s Word and instead replaced it with “another truth,” such as the teachings of the false prophets, stood in active, deliberate opposition to God and would receive the just consequences of rebellious actions. Whereas the false prophets may have previously deceived the nation by not being detected (although this is not certain), such an argument could no longer be made after Ezekiel 13. God exposed both the lie and the liars by His truth.

God’s enticing or deceiving by means of false prophets in Ezek 14:9 occurs in this context. Having concluded his previous prophecy, Ezekiel was approached by some of the elders of Israel (14:1). God identified the intentions of their heart by saying, “Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their hearts, and have put right before their faces the stumbling block of their iniquity. Should I be consulted by them at all?” (14:3). Having previously denounced the false prophets and having warned the nation that He opposed them—for one who would nonetheless approach the LORD to inquire by a prophet—God promised, “I the LORD will be brought to give him an answer in the matter in view of the multitude of his idols” (14:4b). God strongly admonished the participants to repent and turn away from their idols (14:6), repeating His warning that He Himself would answer when one seeks inquiry by a false prophet (14:7). As with His pronouncement against Ahab long before,

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45 Even though in this case the elders sought a word from the true prophet Ezekiel, the intents of their heart indicate that they had by no means severed their relationship with the false prophets. Because of this God would use the occasion of their seeking a word from Him as a means of pronouncing their doom, through either His true prophets (14:7-8) or false prophets (14:9-10).
God forewarned what the outcome would be: He will set His face against that man and destroy him (14:8a). Just as with His warning in 13:23, God affirmed when such judgment transpired, “So you will know that I am the LORD” (14:8b).

In spite of such specific warnings about the consequences of seeking the counsel of false prophets, some would nonetheless totally disregard God’s word. To these God declared, “But if the prophet is prevailed upon [‘enticed; deceived’] to speak a word, it is I, the LORD, who have prevailed upon that prophet, and I will stretch out My hand against him and destroy him from among My people Israel” (14:9). Stated in clear and distinct terms, God promised wrathful judgment on both parties: “And they will bear the punishment of their iniquity; as the iniquity of the inquirer is, so the iniquity of the prophet will be” (14:10). Such a pronouncement against both inquirer and false prophet merely expands the pronouncement of God previously made in singling out Ahab for destruction; the core issues are identical. When a false prophet is enticed into compromising with idolaters, the LORD will deceive him as a means of judgment. Instead of light, those who aligned themselves with evil would receive darkness; instead of life they would choose death.

In a pattern analogous to 1 Kings 22, God addressed those who would yet choose to rebel against Him and seek the word of false prophets. As with the prophetic announcement of Ahab’s doom, God announced beforehand what would result. No deception occurred in either the identity of those who prophesied falsely or in any question of the outcome for those who, in spite of the strong warnings, would still seek such false prophets. In addition to this, God did not deceive by hiding truth. Neither could it be argued that God led anyone into sin. As was true for Ahab, those of Ezekiel’s day who refused God’s warning and chose instead to consort with false prophets continued in the inclination of their own sinful heart already established. Such individuals also would seek the false prophet even after specifically forewarned by God not to do so. Similar to Ahab, what they used to replace God’s truth would eventually become the instrument of judgment God would use against them. If a false prophet in Ezekiel’s day received a word to give an idolater, it would be a deceptive word from God that would destroy both false prophet and idolater. The people were forewarned by God. Their choice lay in whom they would believe, the true or the false, a choice that would result in good or bad consequences.

Romans 1:18-32

A third Scripture may contain factors relevant to the deluding influence God of 2 Thess 2:11, but it differs from the two OT passages cited. Some see a similar concept of divine judgment in Rom 1:18-32 with the threefold statement of God giving people over to the course of sin they choose. Though some common elements exist between this and the two previous accounts, other matters do not

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48 E.g., Constable, “Second Thessalonians” 720.
harmonize. Of particular importance, Romans 1 does not present God as actively sending any means of deception to accomplish His purpose. Instead the text presents the judicial standard according to which God turns over those who devolve from blatant sin into an even deeper bondage of sin.\textsuperscript{49} If this text involves deception, it could be more readily attributed to Satan rather than God (2 Cor 4:3-4). Another notable difference in Romans 1 versus the Kings and Ezekiel accounts is that it exposes no hidden spiritual agents, such as false prophets who present themselves as speaking divine truth. Such false teachers or false prophets may factor in the spiritual degradation for some of those who fit the description of Rom 1:18-32, but Paul does not identify them. As previously noted, the Tribulation, on the other hand, will have numerous agents of deception.

However, in spite of differences, some core similarities between Romans 1 and the two OT examples can be seen. As with 1 Kings 22 and Ezekiel 14, God’s judicious use of one’s choice is evident. God sets forth His truth, in this case clearly seen general revelation that a creator exists (Rom 1:19-20), so that those who view it are without excuse. Several reject God’s truth by suppressing it (1:18), and turn instead to futile speculation (1:21). In essence they exchange “the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures” (1:23). Because of their previous rejection of God’s truth, God intervenes and pronounces His threefold judgment against them.\textsuperscript{50} God gives such people over to the lusts of their hearts and impurity (1:24), to degrading passions (1:26), and to a depraved mind to do those things which are not proper (1:28). As with 1 Kings 22 and Ezekiel 14, God does not lead people into sin but instead uses the determined course the unrighteous choose as a means of judgment against them.\textsuperscript{51} As with the two previous OT accounts, those referred to in Romans 1 replace God’s truth with something else, namely, “they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator” (1:25). Such action opens the way for additional sin which, unless repentance occurs, ultimately culminates in God’s judgment (1:18; 2:2, 5). In keeping with the two previous accounts, God openly declares His impending judgment for such a course of action.

It has been demonstrated from 1 Kings 22 and Ezekiel 14, and to a limited degree from Romans 1, that under certain circumstances God may use deception to accomplish His judgment. Consistencies between the three accounts emerge. God’s

\textsuperscript{49}In the account of God hardening Pharaoh, Chisholm’s conclusion harmonizes with that of Romans 1:18-25. When God hardened Pharaoh, “He did not override the human will, but this was not inconsistent with His justice, nor was it a violation of human moral freedom. In Pharaoh’s case, Yahweh gave the Egyptian ruler several ‘windows of opportunity,’ each of which the stubborn king closed. Divine hardening was Yahweh’s sovereign response to Pharaoh’s arrogant rejection of His authoritative demands” (Robert Chisholm, “Divine Hardening in the Old Testament,” Bibliotheca Sacra 153 [October-December 1996]:434).

\textsuperscript{50}“Therefore” in Romans 1:24, διὸ instead of οὖν, heightens the logical consequence of the previous actions.

\textsuperscript{51}Again similarity to God’s dealing with Pharaoh is evident. “Six times Yahweh gave Pharaoh a window of opportunity by issuing a demand and warning, but each time Pharaoh closed it. . . . When he closed these windows, he placed himself in a position to be hardened” (Chisholm, “Divine Hardening in the Old Testament” 428).
use of deception is never capriciously wrought but rather is reserved for those who blatantly turn away from His declared truth and replace it with something or someone they deem truthful. In each case an open rejection of God and rebellion against Him occurs after He has revealed His truth. In the two OT examples where God actively employed deception as a means of judgment, God initially exposed and identified the source of falsehood before sending His judgment. He further forewarned of the severe repercussions that would certainly follow for anyone who chooses to align himself or herself with the exposed agents of evil. No charge of deception against God is appropriate. The absence of faith and obedience rather than ignorance or innocence played a substantial part in those who would be deceived. Anyone who chose a course of rebellion had their wrathful doom announced beforehand.

**Divine Judgment in Tribulational Deception**

Divine judgment of the rebellious who spurned God’s revealed truth is at the heart of God’s deception in 1 Kings and Ezekiel. The same will be true for God’s use of deception during the Tribulation. Though Scripture contains many details regarding Satan’s activities in the Tribulation, overwhelming scriptural attention focuses upon God’s judgment against an unbelieving and rebellious world during that period (e.g., Rev. 3:10). Satan will actually play a key yet secondary role. The wrath inflicted on the world is from neither men nor Satan, except as God uses them as channels to execute His will; the Tribulation is from God.\(^5\) God’s active involvement is apparent in such ways as Christ instigating the tribinational judgments through the breaking of the seals of the scroll (Rev 6:1–8:1). However, unbelievers alive at the time will at first view God as one defeated and impotent—if He exists at all. The unbelieving world at large will see the forces of Satan as having no equals and will worshiping both Satan and the beast (Rev 13:3). During this time God will send the *energeian plané* with the express purpose of judging unbelievers for accepting the lie instead of God’s truth (2 Thess 2:11-12). An examination of relevant factors in 2 Thessalonians 2 and how they resemble or differ from the two OT accounts of God’s use of deception will provide clarification.

As was true when God announced beforehand that He would use deception, 2 Thessalonians also exposes what is false by comparing it with what is true. Having warned the Thessalonians that they should not be deceived by false channels of revelation (2:3), Paul exposed falsehood by detailing attributes and activities of the satanic agent yet to appear. Paul described him as “the man of lawlessness” (ἡ ἀνθρώπος τῆς ἀνομίας, *ho anthropos tēs anomias*), using a Hebraism to indicate his intrinsic character, not merely his title or name.\(^5\) Lawlessness will be evident in all he does since it will be of his innate nature to live that way. The second

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description, “the son of destruction” (ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῆς ἀπόλειας, ho anthrōpos ἀπόλειας), is likewise a Hebraism indicating either character, as in “son of peace” (Luke 10:6) and “sons of light” (1 Thess 5:5), or destiny, as in “son of death” (1 Sam 20:31). This case refers to destiny, a loss of this person’s well-being, not to a cessation of his existence. In the NT apōleia is the opposite of salvation, the loss of eternal life and the resultant suffering of eternal perdition and misery. The certain demise of the man of lawlessness surfaces before any of his other characteristics. Regardless of the power or authority he will temporarily display, and despite the unbelieving world’s assessment that he has no equal, his demise is a divinely promised certainty.

In 1 Kings 22 and Ezekiel 14, God exposed falsehood by setting forth His truth. He does so in 2 Thessalonians 2 as well, as He does with other passages relevant to the Tribulation. In fact, an unprecedented presentation of God’s truth to the entire world will characterize the Tribulation. Matthew 24:14 records Jesus’ words: “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come.” The ways in which God will proclaim His truth in the Tribulation will be quite numerous, different opinions over chronology notwithstanding. Such means will include the witness of the martyrs of Rev 6:9, who will be slain “because of the word of God and because of testimony which they had maintained.” The 144,000 sealed in Revelation 7 most likely have a great deal to do with the great multitude from all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues standing before God’s throne (7:9). Further, the 1,260-day ministry of the two witnesses of Revelation 11 will be a means of God’s setting forth of His truth and exposing the lies of Satan. The global impact of the two is evident in the worldwide celebration at their death (11:9-13). Because of the open witness of God in exposing the lies of Satan, who or what is false may be contrasted with who or what is true. As with the previous biblical examples, people will stand forewarned before God’s judgmental use of deception overtakes them.

Second Thessalonians reveals additional characteristics of the coming agent of evil. The participles used to describe him evidence the extreme of this man’s lawlessness, including his total disregard for any so-called god, especially for the one true God. The base nature of the man of lawlessness will be to oppose any rival by describing him in 2:4 as “the one who opposes” (ὁ ἀντικείμενος, ho antikeimenos), taken from the verb ἀντικείμενον (antikeimai), whose literal meaning is “to lie opposite to.” Further self-exaltation will characterize him according to the use of ὑπεραυξομένος (hyperaoménos), from the cognate meaning “to lift up above,” or “to raise oneself over.” In the pinnacle of his rebellion he will seat

54 Ibid.
55 Ibid., 248.
58 Thayer, Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament 640.
himself in the temple of God and present himself to the world that he is God.\(^{59}\) That he would enter the temple of God would be brazen enough; sitting there demonstrates a minimum of respect toward God and a maximum claim to deity.\(^{60}\)

Having alluded to the destiny of the coming one in “the son of destruction,” Paul explicitly pronounces his certain doom before his advent by describing him as the one “whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth” (2:8), indicating that merely Christ’s spoken word will destroy the Antichrist. In any regard, no extended battle is in view, nor will there be any debate as to the outcome. The mere presence of the Lord will render the man of lawlessness inoperative (καταργήσει, katargēsei), bringing his lawlessness, but not him, to an end.\(^{61}\) Before his demise, however, the man of lawlessness will exercise heretofore unparalleled satanic authority and activity on earth. Paul described the Antichrist as “the one whose coming is in accord with the activity (energeian) of Satan” (2 Thess 2:9), indicating that a major aspect of the Antichrist’s attraction will be in the extensive power he will display. Because of such factors, the Antichrist will be tremendously effective in misleading the world into thinking that he is God and has no equals.

Having exposed what is false by means of God’s truth, and paralleling Ezekiel 14, Paul next sets forth the predetermined and preannounced fate of those who would still choose to reject God and align themselves instead with the man of lawlessness. Second Thessalonians not only offers significant details about the advent and activities of the Antichrist; it also gives insight into the unbelieving world’s reception of him. Before the demise of the Antichrist at the return of Christ, he will enticingly deceive the totality of unredeemed humanity. Paul presents the Antichrist’s advent as being in accord with the activity of Satan, explaining that he will come “with all the deception of wickedness” (ἐν πάσῃ ἄπατη ἀδίκησις, en pasē apatē adikias) (2:10). Herein is the heart or core of tribubational deception, namely, Satan. He is the agent of deception—not God. Milligan notes that with “its union with ἄπατη, ἀδίκια is evidently thought of here as an active, aggressive power which, however, can influence only τοὺς ἀπολλυμένους.”\(^{62}\) Braun sees this satanic deception as uniting all the motifs previously discussed regarding deception in 2 Thessalonians 2, especially the superhuman element of the eschatological error.\(^{63}\) Satan will deceive the world at large so they will gladly accept the claims of Antichrist. Yet unbelievers will be held accountable for allowing themselves to be deceived, as Findlay observes:

The dupes of Antichrist are treated after their kind; as they would not love truth, they

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\(^{59}\)The present participle ἰποδεικνύεται indicates that he displays himself continually as God, not as a one-time event (D. Edmond Hiebert, *The Thessalonian Epistles* [Chicago: Moody, 1974] 308).

\(^{60}\)Best, *A Commentary on the First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* 286.


shall not have truth, lies must be their portion. . . . For δέχωμαι, implying welcome, the opening of the heart to what is offered, cf. I. i. g; ii.13, describing the opposite conduct of the Thessalonian readers.  

The activity of the Antichrist will be of such nature that it will be awe-inspiring and humanly unexplainable. However, despite his superior power on a human or satanic level, his promised demise has already been pronounced (2:8). With truth exposing falsehood, the only real issue is whom one will believe. Consequently, those who reject God’s truth will perish, as will the one whom they follow (2:10). As in Ezekiel 13–14 and 1 Kings 22, when God demonstrated His mercy by warning those endorsing the lie, the same grace is offered here. Those forewarned could substitute salvation for perishing through accepting the love of the truth (2:10b). However, most will adamantly reject God’s grace and forgiveness extended to them, bringing divine judgment on themselves as a consequence of their action. Rejection of the truth of God leads to the same damnation promised for the man of lawlessness, as God will hold his followers culpable for the choice they make.

A final element to consider is the substance or heart of their deception. Paul indicates the deluding influence God will send will be for the express purpose “so that they might believe what is false” (2 Thess 2:11). “What is false” is rather a loose translation. Paul stated the unbelieving world at large will accept a specific lie, namely “the lie” (τὸ ψεύδητα, τὸ ψευδεῖ), not lies in general. “The lie” contrasts starkly with “the truth” of 2:10, which they have previously rejected. Findlay well observes, “ἡ ἀλήθεια is not the moral quality, ‘truth’ as sincerity in the person, but the objective reality—‘the truth’ coming from God in Christ, viz. the Gospel.” Especially in its contrast with “the truth,” “the lie” of 2 Thess 2:4 is significant. In that verse the Antichrist is “displaying himself as being God.” Again, Findlay’s comments are significant:

τὸ ψεύδητα the opposite of ἡ ἀλήθεια (v. 10), the truth of God in the Gospel, . . . is here “the lie” par excellence, the last and crowning deception practised by Satan in passing off the Lawless One as God (vv. 4, 9f.). This passage, in fact, ascribes to God


45For arguments that the miracles of the Tribulation by Satan and the two beasts will be, in fact, authentic miracles, see this writer’s “Satan’s Deceptive Miracles in the Tribulation,” Bibliotheca Sacra 156 (1999):156, 308-24.

46Findlay, “The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Thessalonians” 183-84. Compare a similar understanding of the term in John 8:32; Rom 1:18, 25; 2:8; 2 Cor 4:2; Gal 5:7; Eph 4:24; Col 1:5; 1 Tim 3:15.

47Weinrich states that the vast majority of the Fathers understood that Paul’s reference to the temple of God to mean the temple in Jerusalem. Since the temple was destroyed in A.D. 70, they concluded that the Antichrist would rebuild the temple. Accordingly, the Antichrist displaying himself as God is crucial in understanding the deception of the Tribulation (William C. Weinrich, “Antichrist and the Early Church,” Concordia Theological Quarterly 49 [April-June 1985]:141-42).
the delusion that we have hitherto been regarding as the masterpiece of Satan.  

Such an interpretation fits the context of 2 Thessalonians 2 since the Antichrist will be the major focus of the deception in the Tribulation. He will present himself to the world that he is God and will require universal worship of himself, deceiving the masses who will willingly so acknowledge him.

With these factors in mind, attention turns to the deluding influence of 2 Thess 2:11. A proper study of the verse can proceed only with an understanding of the preceding context as is evident from καὶ διὰ τοῦτο (kai dia touto, “and for this reason”) that introduces the verse. The setting forth of the truth of God, the exposure of the wickedness at its very core, and then the blatant rejection of God by those who choose the deception instead of the truth leads to God’s sending the energeian planēs. In harmony with 1 Kings 22 and Ezekiel 14, what is deemed as the truth ultimately becomes a means of judgment against the participants. However, this will not be the normal consequences of sin, but rather God’s actively sending judgment on those who reject His truth. As was true with Ahab and as with those who would inquire of a false prophet in Ezekiel’s day, God will lead no one into sin. Instead He will employ the agents of sin, whom the unredeemed have already welcomed, as agents of judgment and destruction against them. After the unregenerate choose the lie over the truth, God will respond by sending the energeian planēs so that they will believe the lie they have already chosen even more. Perhaps this harmonizes with the angel’s pronouncement of doom on those who will worship the beast and receive the mark of his name (Rev 14:9-11). One who receives the mark of the beast will have already chosen his course and have his judgment declared beforehand by God. The same will be so for those affected by the deluding influence. From this point onward they will have no hope of repentance and salvation. Just as Rev 14:9-11 is a pronouncement of doom before the events take place, so is 2 Thess 2:11. The course of the rebellious is settled, God’s bringing it to its previously revealed conclusion being all that remains.

Defining the Energēian Planēs of 2 Thess 2:11

Obviously, God will send the energēian planēs as a means of judgment against the unredeemed, but determining precisely the substance of this expression is difficult, perhaps even impossible, prior to the Tribulation, since history furnishes no analogy. Consequently, approaches to establishing a definition vary. An initial point to consider is the possibility that the energēian planēs of 2 Thess 2:11 may be a person, that is, another way of referring to the man of lawlessness of 2:4. That would then be equivalent to the breaking of the first seal in Rev 6:1-2, and would harmonize with the sending required in 2 Thess 2:11. God, through Jesus Christ,
will break the seal and will send forth the rider on the white horse. 70 Four components support the *energeian planēs* as the Antichrist. First, the judicial nature of this act is clearly seen, since God will send the rider as a means of judgment, as He will do with the remaining seals. Second, the sent rider is specifically linked to the tribulational deception of 2 Thess 2:10. Third, that the man of lawlessness is Satan’s agent, not God’s, is no insurmountable problem, since to accomplish other purposes God will use satanic beings, such as the demons from the abyss (Rev 9:1-11). Fourth, although he will be embraced by the unbelieving world at large, the Antichrist will become an agent of judgment against those who rebel against God; both he and his followers will ultimately share the same doom (2 Thess 2:8, 11-12; Rev 14:9-11; 19:20-21; 20:10-15).

Other factors, however, are against identifying the *energeian planēs* as a person. Second Thessalonians 2 clearly presents specific individuals in the context: God the Father, Jesus Christ, Satan, the man of lawlessness. To refer to the man of lawlessness in ambiguous terms breaks that mold. Even more to the point, God will send the *energeian planēs* as a result of the world’s rejection of His truth and reception of the lie (2:4, 11-12). The deluding influence comes after the Antichrist’s revelation and acceptance by the masses, not simultaneous with his advent. In addition to this, nowhere else in Scripture does *energeia* refer to a person; it is an active, working, operative power, that is, power in action. 71 Such power is always associated with supernatural activities, but nowhere is it a description of the one(s) performing such acts. 72 So while *energeia* may be a component of Antichrist’s deceptive works, it is not synonymous with him. Finally, that *energeian planēs* cannot refer to a person is evident when Paul describes the man of lawlessness in 2 Thess 2:9 as coming “in accord with the activity of Satan” (*energeian tou Satana*). Paul employed the same word to describe what God sends in 2:11. A person is not in view in 2:9; no hermeneutical grounds give reason to switch to a person two verses later.

Since the phrase does not refer to an individual, one must seek indications of what it is. A few factors help. First, since the *energeian planēs* is yet to be sent by God, no viable analogy exists. The principles from 1 Kings 22 and Ezekiel 14, or to a lesser degree, Romans 1, are available, but not a historical precedent. The *energeian planēs* will be more extensive in content and scope than the deception in the two OT accounts, and substantially more effective. The removal of the Spirit’s restraining ministry before the occurrence of the *energeian planēs* (2 Thess 2:6-7) 73

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70 For various views concerning the identity of the rider on the white horse, see Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 1-7* 418-23. While acknowledging that the Antichrist will be an aspect of the first-seal judgment, chronological factors plus a similarity to the three other horsemen lead Thomas to conclude the rider is a personification of the antichristian forces operative during the early part of the Tribulation. The beast out of the sea (Rev. 13:1-8) will be part of this movement and on his way to the top, but at the time represented by the first seal, he will not have risen to be the pre-eminent one of the movement. At the very beginning of the period . . . he will be one of many impostors who constitute this antichristian force of which this first rider is an emblem” (ibid., 422).


72 Thomas, “Second Thessalonians” 326.
increases the unlikelihood of fully defining this unique act of God before the Tribulation.\textsuperscript{73} The \textit{energeian planēs} will be different from God's previous works.

\textit{Energeian} occurs only eight times in Scripture, all eight in Paul's epistles. Every instance but one refers in some way to the active, supernatural working of God.\textsuperscript{74} For instance, it refers to the efficacious power of God by which He raised Jesus Christ from the dead (Eph 1:19; Col 2:12), the exertion of Christ's power to subject all things to Himself (Phil 3:21), the equipping of the apostles for their office (Eph 3:7; Col 1:29), and to the divinely ordained working of each part of the body of Christ (Eph 4:16).\textsuperscript{75} The only other uses of \textit{energeia} refer to the man of lawlessness coming with "activity of Satan" (\textit{energeian tou Satana}) (2 Thess 2:9) and the \textit{energeian planēs} sent by God (2:11). In each case, supernatural activity is present, and in each case, except 2 Thess 2:9, reference is made to God's divine working.\textsuperscript{76} In keeping with other biblical uses of \textit{energeia}, the \textit{energeian planēs} of the Tribulation must likewise be supernatural and not merely the appearance of the supernatural.\textsuperscript{77}

The \textit{energeia} sent by God will be one which will magnify the deception of the Tribulation. The genitive \textit{planēs} is objective and could be translated, "a working that enhances and develops error" or "a working that energizes deception," as evidenced in the \textit{eis τό} (\textit{eis to}) clause which follows (\textit{eις τὸ πιστεύσαι αὐτοῦς τῷ ψευδεῖ}, \textit{eis to pisteusai autous iō pseudei}, "that they might believe what is false").\textsuperscript{78} God will work actively to enhance the lie of the Antichrist to its fullest measure to make it irresistible to rebellious humanity.\textsuperscript{79} The lie which unbelievers will welcome will become one that they cannot help but believe; they will be unable to resist obeying the Antichrist to whom they have previously committed themselves.\textsuperscript{80} Once more, this is not a matter of God deceiving but rather of God using the lie the followers of the Antichrist have already chosen. Second Thessalonians 2:11 seems to say that the satanic deception of the unbelieving world would be impossible unless God actively sends the \textit{energeian planēs}. God Himself will not deceive, but He will send an energized work that will allow deception to
manifest itself to its fullest capacity.

In light of those considerations, the energeian planēs sent by God appears to be God’s creating the environment by which evil can manifest itself to its fullest capacity, allowing satanic power and works of such magnitude as not previously permitted by God. The energeian planēs may be similar to God expanding Satan’s realm of operation under Job, but with an intensified form beyond this because of factors related to the word energēia and the impossibility of survival unless God limits its duration (Matt 24:21-22). An aspect of this expansion of satanic operation may be the cessation of the Spirit’s restraining work, but 2 Thess 2:11 requires an active sending of something by God; the energeian planēs will not be an indirect consequence of another act of God. The man of lawlessness will support his claims of deity with miraculous works and with the full activity of Satan, creating the delusion that he is God. Not only will God not hinder or limit his earthly realm of operation, but He will also “energize” the deception so as to extend it beyond any human explanation and cause the entire world to marvel. The energeian planēs will confer judgment on those who do not believe the truth, but take pleasure in wickedness, and the wickedness in which they will take pleasure will ultimately become an avenue of their judgment.

Summary and Conclusion

God’s sending of the energeian planēs in 2 Thess 2:11 is a major aspect of tribulational judgment to come upon the unredeemed. Though unique to the Tribulation and unparallelled to any of God’s previous work, the framework of the deluding influence is virtually identical with two occasions when God used deception to accomplish His will. In 1 Kings 22 and Ezekiel 14, God employed deception as a means of judgment. However, before judgment He openly presented His truth to the people, even announcing beforehand what would transpire. Second Thessalonians 2:10 demonstrates the same as true during the Tribulation. The recipients of the energeian planēs will know at least the content of the Gospel. Lack of access to God’s truth will play no role in their judgment. Similar to God’s warning in 1 Kings 22 and Ezekiel 14, God shows His grace in exposing the lies by means of truth, long before the advent of the man of lawlessness. God also establishes a means by which one may avoid the worldwide deception.

A second similarity to 1 Kings 22 and Ezekiel 14 is God’s sending of the deluding influence to those who will have already committed to rejecting God and following “another truth,” a “truth” identified as satanic falsehoods. Second Thessalonians 2:10 states that such people will perish because they did “not receive the love of the truth to be saved.” Lack of warning plays no part in their sinful reception of the man of lawlessness. Their volitional decision is further seen in that they will not believe the truth but instead will take pleasure in wickedness, that is, the specific wickedness associated with the lie of 2:4. In addition to this, the recipients of the energeian planēs will refuse to believe the truth (2 Thess 2:10b), which again shows they will understand to a degree what comprises the truth. Consequently, their status can best be described as “those who perish” (2:10a) even though the culmination of their judgment is still future.

Another similarity in these accounts is merely a logical step in the process.
With God’s truth available and having summarily been rejected, “another truth” must take its place. As with the other accounts, God will use what (or who) the people will choose as a means of judgment against them. God will send the deluding influence with the express purpose “that they may believe the lie,” the very embodiment of the lie they have chosen to replace the truth of God. As in 1 Kings 22, Ezekiel 14, and Romans 1, God will not lead such people into sin. They will reject God’s truth and pursue the agents of sin. They will receive, worship, take pleasure in the lie, the one who sits in the temple of God, displaying himself as God (2:4). They also will worship the dragon who gives his authority to the beast (Rev 13:4). The judgmental goal of God’s sending the energēian planēs is clearly stated: “in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness” (2 Thess 2:12). In Ezek 14:9 the prophet and the one who sought after him would share the same fate. The same will be true for those who reject the truth of God and receive the lie of the Tribulation. They will experience not only physical death (2 Thess 2:8; Rev. 19:20), but ultimately will share eternal torment in the lake of fire (Rev 19:20; 20:10, 15). As with the OT accounts cited, people of the Tribulation stand forewarned of the deception before it occurs and will be held accountable before God for their own deception.
THE ESCHATOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF LEVITICUS 26

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The blessings and curses of Leviticus 26 have eschatological significance because they relate to the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants. Verses 33-45 speak of retributive dispersion/exile, the Sabbath rest, the stricken remnant, and the contingency of repentance. Repentance includes Israel’s acceptance of retribution, Yahweh’s acceptance of repentance, and a summary of the retribution. Chapter 26 touches upon various eschatological themes, one of which is its attention to the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Deuteronomic covenants. It also speaks of the land promised to Israel under the Abrahamic Covenant, of Israel’s exile and eventual salvation, of preservation of the covenant by Yahweh though breached by Israel, of the prohibition of idolatry, of Sabbath observance, of the Lord’s presence with Israel, of His promises to bless obedient Israel, of Israel’s obedience and disobedience, of retribution and chastisement, and of future exile and repentance. Though the NT has only one direct reference to Leviticus 26, application of the chapter to believers of every era is obvious: faith is the binding requirement for anyone to have a relationship to the God of Abraham.

* * * * *

Leviticus is not normally the first source students of Scripture consult when discussing eschatology. Its focus is on holiness, not prophetic events. Leviticus reveals that God called the Israelites to holiness in their worship and daily living as His chosen people. Chapters 1–7 present a sacrificial system that established an outward manifestation of individual and corporate covenant communion consistent with the divine standard of holiness. The sacrificial system facilitated the preservation of fellowship between the people of the covenant and their holy covenant God.

Next, chapters 8–10 define the priestly ministry. The priests were the caretakers of the covenant relationship. Chapters 11–15 move on to describe the purity Yahweh requires of His people so that surrounding nations might recognize Israel’s identification with Him. He summons His covenant community to a holy

1Philip J. Budd, Leviticus, NCB (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996) 34.
lifestyle distinct from that of neighboring nations. The annual renewal of this covenant relationship takes place on the Day of Atonement (chap. 16). That high holy day focuses on the sovereign rule of Yahweh over the nation of Israel. On the Day of Atonement the divine Suzerain blesses His covenant people by granting them His continued presence among them (16:16; cf. vv. 1-2).

To ensure the covenant community's holiness, chaps. 17–24 prescribe obligatory ordinances. This legislation affects their diet, social relationships, religious leadership, calendar, and center of worship. The calendar (chap. 23) focuses on the seventh month with its three major observances (vv. 23-43). Eschatological overtones in the realm of kingship and kingdom are especially prominent in the New Year celebration (also known as the Feast of Trumpets, vv. 23-25).²

Then chapters 25 and 26 emphasize the monotheistic and sabbatical principles that comprise the two pillars of the Sinaitic Covenant (cf. 25:55–26:3 and Exod 20:2-11). Gerstenberger admits that Isa 61:1-2 (together with Luke 4:16-21) suggests that Leviticus 25 should be read eschatologically, but finds nothing eschatological in the levitical instructions concerning the year of Jubilee.³ On the other hand, Gordon Wenham correctly connects Christ's quotation of Isa 61:1 with Leviticus 25. “Release” (נַעֲרָא, ḫērēr) in Isa 61:1 is the same term employed in Lev 25:10. He observes that “It seems quite likely, therefore, that the prophetic description of the ‘acceptable year of the Lord’ was partly inspired by the idea of the jubilee year. The messianic age brings liberty to the oppressed and release to the captives.”⁴ The jubilee, therefore, “not only looks back to God’s first redemption of his people from Egypt (Lev. 25:38, 55), but forward to the ‘restitution of all things,’ ‘for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells’ (Acts 3:21; 2 Pet. 3:13).”⁵

The synagogue avoids Leviticus 26 because of its unpleasant subject matter.⁶ Commentaries (past and present, Jewish and Christian) give it sketchy treatment. In addition, materials dedicated to the concept of covenant in the OT rarely discuss the chapter's covenant affinities. Occasional references, however, demonstrate that many biblical scholars are aware of its significance for covenant

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⁵Wenham, Leviticus 324.

studies. Over forty years ago Delbert Hillers placed this section of the Torah on a par with Deuteronomy 28 because the prophets employed the tradition of curses from Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26 to compose their threats of doom.\(^7\)

Multiple similarities between Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 catapult the former pericope into the same sphere of significance as the latter. Meredith Kline suggested that the curses of Deuteronomy 28 were “anticipated in the promises and threats” of Leviticus 26.\(^8\) Assuming Mosaic authorship for both pericopes, it is safe to assume that Moses wrote Leviticus 26 prior to Deuteronomy 28. God revealed the former at Sinai on the threshold of Israel’s wilderness wanderings, but the latter on the plains of Moab after the wilderness wanderings. The chronological data, therefore, indicates that Deuteronomy 28 is an exposition of Leviticus 26—a point too often neglected.

The promulgation of the Mosaic Covenant creates an apparent tension with the Abrahamic Covenant. Leviticus 26, however, explains the relationship between the two covenants and reemphasizes the exclusive lordship of Yahweh. In effect, the chapter declares that the Mosaic Covenant did not nullify the eschatological promises of the Abrahamic Covenant. That instruction took place fifteen centuries earlier than Paul’s teaching in Gal 3:17 that “the law that came 430 years afterwards does not annul a covenant previously confirmed by God so that it voids the promise.”\(^9\)

The blessings and curses in Leviticus 26 advance the respective emphases of the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants. The blessings relate directly to the Abrahamic Covenant’s eschatological promises regarding land and blessing. The cursings represent the Mosaic Covenant’s five-stage process\(^10\) designed to produce confession of guilt, humility, and restitution—elements that anticipate the New Covenant and its eschatological elements. Restitution involves the sabbatical principle central to both the Mosaic Covenant and Leviticus 26. Indeed, the sabbatical principle is itself eschatologically significant. The Land-Giver and Exodus-Causer will always be loyal to His covenants and to His covenant people. He is Lord of both space (the land) and time (the sabbaths). The OT prophets expand on Yahweh’s future loyalty and work on behalf of Israel. Leviticus 26 (together with Deuteronomy 27–28) anchors prophetic revelation’s concepts of covenant. House explains that the concepts in these passages provide hope to Israel: “The God who forgave once can surely do so again, as Deuteronomy 30:1-10 indicates.”\(^11\)

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\(^9\)All Scripture citations are my translation unless otherwise noted.

\(^10\)(1) Dehilitation and defeat (Lev 26:16-17), (2) drought (vv. 18-20), (3) devastation by wild beasts (vv. 21-22), (4) deprivation by siege (vv. 23-26), and (5) deportation (vv. 27-38). William D. Barrick, “Leviticus 26: Its Relationship to Covenant Contexts and Concepts” (unpublished Th.D. dissertation, Grace Theological Seminary, Winona Lake, Ind., 1981) 90.

The following outline summarizes the contents of Leviticus 26. The bulk of this study is focused on the third major division regarding penalty (26:14-45), especially the consequence of deportation or exile (vv. 27-38) and the contingency for repentance (vv. 39-45).

I. Precept (26:1-2)
   A. Prohibition of Idols (v. 1)
   B. Preservation of Sabbaths and Sanctuary (v. 2)
      1. Sabbath Observance (v. 2a)
      2. Sanctuary Reverence (v. 2b)

II. Promise (26:3-13)
   A. The Prerequisite: Obedience (v. 3)
   B. The Product: Blessing (vv. 4-12)
      1. Productivity (vv. 4-5)
      2. Peace (v. 6)
      3. Power (vv. 7-8)
      4. Population (v. 9)
      5. Provision (v. 10)
      6. Presence (vv. 11-12)
   C. The Premise: Yahweh’s Salvation (v. 13)

III. Penalty (26:14-45)
   A. The Cause: Disobedience (vv. 14-15)
   B. The Consequence: Retribution (vv. 16-38)
      1. Debilitation and Defeat (vv. 16-17)
      2. Drought (vv. 18-20)
      3. Devastation by Wild Beasts (vv. 21-22)
      4. Deprivation by Siege (vv. 23-26)
      5. Deportation (vv. 27-38)
         a. Introduction (vv. 27-28)
         b. Dehumanization – Cannibalism (v. 29)
         c. Desolation (vv. 30-32)
         d. Dispersion – Exile (v. 33)
         e. Desertion of the Land (vv. 34-38)
            (1) The Sabbath Rest (vv. 34-35)
            (2) The Stricken Remnant (vv. 36-38)
   C. The Contingency: Repentance (vv. 39-45)
      1. Repentance: Israel’s Acceptance of Retribution (vv. 39-41)
      2. Remembrance: Yahweh’s Acceptance of Repentance (v. 42)
      3. Repetition: A Summary Concerning Retribution (v. 43)
      4. Reaffirmation: Yahweh’s Promise to the Exiles (vv. 44-45)

Examination of Leviticus 26:33-45

Retributive Dispersion/Exile (v. 33)

Verse 33 sets up a contrast between God’s treatment of the land and His
treatment of its population. He announces that He will desolate the land: “but I shall disperse you [pl.] among the nations.” Dispersion (הָרַע, zarâ) is a subject common to this pericope and to key sections in Ezekiel (e.g., 5:2; 10; 12; 6:8; 12:14; 15; 20:23). “Dispense” (or, “scatter”) is often employed “in agricultural contexts of the winnowing process (e.g., Ruth 3:2; Isa. 30:24; 41:16).”

This figure could point to a remnant by implication (cf. Zech 1:18-21 [Heb. 2:1-4] and 13:8-9). At Sinai, Yahweh warned Israel about complacency when they finally took residence in the land. Dispersion was divinely designed to disrupt their complacency. The nation’s apathy toward Yahweh and His covenants would result in God making them landless again. In order to cure their selective amnesia, Yahweh would return them to the bondage from which He had delivered them. Brueggemann’s poignant observation applies here: “It is hard enough for landed people to believe Yahweh will lose. It is harder to imagine Yahweh will do it” (cf. Lev 26:32a, 33a).

The goal of the Abrahamic Covenant was to give an inheritance to the people of the covenant just as Yahweh had promised (cf. Gen 12:7; 13:14-17). Israel’s exile caused a delay in the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promises. Therefore, it could be said that exile itself has eschatological implications, since exile and dispersion indicate that the ultimate fulfillment of the promise is yet future (or, eschatological) in nature.

Yahweh promised that He would “unsheathe the sword behind you [pl.]” (Lev 26:33). In all four OT occurrences of the phrase (here, Ezek 5:2; 12; 12:14), it is preceded by the use of “dispers” and it is always a reference to Israel. “Unsheath the sword” occurs in three other passages but always in reference to the judgment of a nation outside Israel (Egypt: Exod 15:9; Ezek 30:11; Tyre: Ezek 28:7). In these latter occurrences neither “dispers” nor “behind” are employed. In Lev 26:33 the phrase refers to Yahweh’s dealing with Israel. Emptying (כָּחָב) the scabbard (unsheathing a sword) is an act of hostility. Yahweh will unsheathe His sword and position it “behind” Israel, so that they will flee from it and it will block the path of return. Shades of Eden! Just as the flaming sword of the cherubim prevented Adam and Eve’s reentry to Eden (Gen 3:24), so the unsheathed sword of Yahweh will prevent Israel’s reentry to Canaan.

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12Ibid., 373.
13Gerhard F. Hasel, The Remnant: The History and Theology of the Remnant Idea from Genesis to Isaiah, 3rd ed., Andrews University Monographs: Studies in Religion 5 (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University, 1980) 26, refers to Leviticus 26 in passing while summarizing the viewpoint of Othmar Schilling: “the origin of the prophetic remnant motif is grounded in the sanctions of the law, especially in Lev. 26 and its Deuteronomistic parallels.” I would agree with Hasel that the remnant motif is earlier than Leviticus 26, but would argue that the chapter had a significant effect upon the prophetic development of the theology of remnant.
14Budd, Leviticus 372.
16Hartley, Leviticus 468.
17Cf. כֹּז in Ezk 28:7 and 30:11, and no preposition in Exod 15:9. The כֹּז of both substantives is clearly assonant, drawing attention to the state of the land.
A summary of the effects of deportation comes next in Lev 26:33b: “your land will be for devastation and your cities will become ruins.”

This declaration, that Yahweh consigns the land and its cities to a state of devastation, corresponds in its conceptualization and its syntax to the earlier statement (v. 12b) of divine blessing:

\[
\begin{align*}
12b \text{ wêhayîtû lôkem lêêhîm} & \quad \text{wê'attem tîhêyû-lî lêêm} \\
& \text{so that I will be your [pl.] God} \quad \text{and you yourselves will become} \\
& \text{my people}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
33b \text{ wêhâyê'û 'arsêkem šêmânû} & \quad \text{wê'ârêkem yîhêyû hârêbû} \\
& \text{and your [pl.] land will be for} \quad \text{and your [pl.] cities will become} \\
& \text{devastation} \quad \text{ruins}
\end{align*}
\]

Deviations from strict correspondence in these two statements are instructive: (1) the possessives “your” and “my” in 12b emphasize mutual identification in the covenant relationship and (2) “And your land shall be” in 33b may be an allusion to Gen 1:2 (wêhûrê'êres hâyê’û rûhû wâbôhû, “and the earth was empty and void”). Such an allusion potentially serves three purposes:

- to remind Israel that Yahweh is historically the Lord, the Creator, of all the earth—not just the Giver of the promised land;
- to emphasize the totality of the dispersion: the land would be without inhabitants; and
- to imply that the dispersion was but the commencement of something new which Yahweh would do.

Allusion to Gen 1:2 is noteworthy for several reasons. First, the re-creation or new creation of the earth is a key eschatological theme in apocalyptic Scripture (cf. Isa 65:17; 2 Pet 3:10-12; Rev 21:1). Eschatologically, judgment precedes emptying or emptiness followed by renewal and restoration (cf. Isaiah 24–26). Eichrodt recognized that “the thought of God’s activity as Creator and Giver in the bé’rît … with the prophets—and even in P [including Leviticus 26] as well—was definitely primary.”

Secondly, Jer 4:23 employs the same predicate adjectives as Gen 1:2 (“empty and void”) to describe the land of Israel following judgment. Thirdly, Israel’s removal from the land or “exile is the way to new life in new land.”

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18The alternation of the qatal (יָכַה) and yiqtol (יָתַה) of הָוָה is characteristic (cf. 12b).


The Sabbath Rest (vv. 34-35)

A careful observation of the two types of clauses in these two verses reveals an elevated prose style:

Main clauses (a):

\[ a^1 \text{āz tiršēh ḫăāres} \]  
then the land will enjoy \( 'et-\text{šabbētōyehā} \)  
the restitution of its sabbaths

\[ a^2 \text{āz tīšbat ḫăāres wēhirsāt} \]  
then the land will rest, yea, it will enjoy \( 'et-\text{šabbētōyehā} \)  
the restitution of its sabbaths

\[ a^3 \text{tīšbōt} \]  
it will rest on account of your sabbaths in which it did not rest

Temporal clauses (b):

\[ b^1 \text{kōl yēmē hāśšammā} \]  
all the days of its devastation

\[ b^2 \text{wētem bē’eres ūyēbēkem} \]  
while you are in the land of your enemies

\[ b^3 \text{bēšibēkem ūāleyhā} \]  
while you were dwelling upon it

A pattern of correspondences and logical development occurs in these verses:

Verse 34b is transitional, employing the epexegetical \( \text{waw} \) to join these two terms in the middle member of the construction.

The initial “then” (תִּשְׁבְּת, ‘az) of v. 34 sets that verse apart from the preceding context. It serves, as it does sometimes in poetry, “to throw emphasis on a particular feature of the description.”

The emphasis is on the land’s enjoyment (יָשָׂר, ḥāśēḇ). יָשָׂר may be translated either “enjoy” or “make or obtain restitution.” In this context, “Making restitution” could imply that the land shares in the guilt of Israel’s failure to observe the sabbatical years. This is unlikely since the context appears to make “enjoyment” practically equivalent to “rest.” The more positive concept of

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22Cf. ASV, ESV, NASB, NIV, NRSV, Septuagint, Targum Onqelos, Syriac, Latin.

“obtaining restitution” might indicate the basis for the land being able to enjoy rest. The land might be depicted as being “pleased” at receiving “its due portion.”24 The “due portion” is defined as “its Sabbaths” which the land will enjoy “all the days of its devastation” (v. 35). Devastation will bring about a forced sabbatical rest—a rest the land had been denied under Israel’s plows:

Then the land shall enjoy the restitution of25 its sabbaths all the days of its devastation while you are in the land of your enemies. Then the land shall rest; yea, it shall enjoy the restitution of26 its sabbaths. It shall rest all the days of its devastation on account of your sabbaths in which it did not rest while you were residing upon it. (vv. 34-35)

The expulsion of Israel was necessitated by their defilement of the land.27 Leviticus focuses on Israel’s unholy and impure condition as the primary factor leading to her ultimate collapse and deportation. Leviticus shares this viewpoint with Deuteronomy, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.28 In Leviticus 26, Moses identifies idolatry and violation of the sabbath (vv. 2, 34-35) as the key areas of disobedience. Of these two, the sabbatical issue receives the greater emphasis in the context. Second Chronicles 36:20-21 makes the same observation:

The remnant surviving the sword were deported to Babylon so that they became servants for him [the king of Babylon] and for his sons until the ascendance of the kingdom of Persia, so that the word of Yahweh through Jeremiah might be fulfilled until the land enjoyed the restitution of (דָּבַעַט) its sabbaths. All the days of its devastation it rested, so that seventy years might be completed.

The Chronicler associates the chronological extent of the exile (70 years) with the theological nature of the exile (the enjoyment of restitution for non-observed sabbatical periods). Any attempt to account for exactly 70 years of violated sabbatical years and/or jubilees would be an exercise in futility. The Scripture is silent about such figuring and there are too many unknown factors29 to make an exact accounting feasible.


25The italicized words are supplied in order to bring out the full scope of (Qal yiqtol here).

26, Qal qatal. The alternation of the qatal and yiqtol forms of (דָּבַעַט) is characteristic of the elevated style of the pericope.


29E.g., the number of times Israel was obedient in sabbatical observances and the exact dates for the Babylonian exile itself.
The Stricken Remnant (vv. 36-38)

This section may be divided into two parts: (1) vv. 36-37a, indicated by the third person plural referring to the remnant, and (2) vv. 37b-38, identified by the second person plural referring to the exiles. The disjunctive waw with the accusative absolute serves to separate this section from the previous verses. “Those who are left from among you [pl.]” are the prominent topic in vv. 36-37a:

As for those who are left from among you, I shall bring timidity into their heart in the lands of their enemies. The sound of a driven leaf shall pursue them; yea, they shall flee as though in flight from before the sword and they shall fall without a pursuer—indeed, they shall stumble over each other as though in flight from before the sword except there will be no one pursuing them.

Panic will beset the exiles at the mere rustling of leaves. In their paranoia they will strain their ears to catch the slightest sound that might indicate the presence of their enemies. With shattered nerves they will give place to their fears and cowardice. They will flee, only to fall over one another. It will add to their unbearable humiliation. Defeated by a non-existent enemy, they fall over their own soldiers in a stampede initiated by a stirring leaf.

Verses 36-37a are reminiscent of the taunt-song best exemplified by Isa 14:4, Mic 2:4, and Hab 2:6. These taunt songs exhibit assonance, concise wording, third person grammar in a second person context, a theme of judgment, an interrogative, and the use of the root mšl in the introduction. Leviticus 26:36-37a contains all but the last two characteristics.

Turning from the remnant, vv. 37b-38 describe the condition of the exiles lest they forget their own dire predicament: “Nor will there come to be any resistance from you [pl.] before your enemies.” There is a correlation between the last word of 37a (יָשָׁר, “there will be no”) and the first construction of 37b (וְלֹא יָשָׁר, “nor will there come to be”). It is an example of a carefully worded transition or hinge, flipping from one subject to the next by means of the same concept though employing different terminology.

The result of nonresistance is clear: “so that you will perish among the nations; yea, the land of your enemies will devour you” (v. 38). There will be no escape from the judgment of Yahweh. Concepts parallel to similar OT passages

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33In Isa 14:4 and Mic 2:4 the interrogative is תֶּבֶן (“How?”) and in Hab 2:6 it is כָּרָם (“How long?”).
34םסלמ—verb: “recite derisive verses”; noun: “proverb” or “parable.”
include perishing (יתן, cf. Deut 28:22, 63), being devoured (יִュן, cf. Num 13:32 and Ezek 36:13-14 where land is the devourer), the nations, and the land of the enemies. The reference to devouring in Lev 26:38b does not refer to the land of Canaan, to the infertility of Israel’s land (due to devastation), nor to wars, depopulation, drought, famine, or the chastisements of Yahweh. The context refers to physical destruction so clearly that the concept of spiritual stumbling (becoming entangled in sins) also must be ruled out. “Falling under the pressure of the circumstances in which they were placed” is too vague. It means that the exiles will vanish. They will be taken from the land Yahweh had given to them, enter their enemies’ land(s), and not return. They will die and be decimated in a strange land (cf. Amos 7:17). When Yahweh brought them out of exile, they would be fewer in number than when they went into captivity. This exile will be unlike the Egyptian bondage in which the nation multiplied greatly (cf. Exod 1:7). God sets aside the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant during Israel’s exile:

- Rather than possessing the land (Gen 12:1; 15:7, 18-21; 17:8), Israel will be dispossessed from the land (Lev 26:33-38).
- National greatness (Gen 12:2) will be turned into humiliation, inferiority, and insignificance (Lev 26:29, 32, 36-37; Deut 28:43-44).
- Blessing (Gen 12:2; 22:17) will turn to cursing (Lev 26:14-38; Deut 28:15-68).
- Instead of being a blessing (Gen 12:2-3; 22:17), Israel will become a curse (Lev 26:32, 36-37a; Deut 28:25, 37).
- Multiplication (Gen 12:2; 15:5; 17:4-6; 22:17) will be replaced by diminution (Lev 26:22, 29, 38; Deut 28:18, 20-22, 53-57, 62).
- Success over Israel’s enemies (Gen 22:17) will turn to defeat at the hand of their enemies (Lev 26:16-17, 32, 36-38; Deut 28:25, 31, 48, 52, 68).

Promise will be turned to privation. Covenant vengeance consists of the removal of all privileges and protection together with all attendant prosperity.

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34Cf. Gray, Numbers 151.
The Eschatological Significance of Leviticus 26

The Contingency: Repentance (vv. 39-45)

Divine retribution’s ultimate goal, according to vv. 39-45, is the repentance of Yahweh’s covenant people (vv. 39-41). When they repent, Yahweh will reestablish or reanimate the Abrahamic Covenant’s blessings. Israel must first understand her relationship to the land, observe the sabbatical principle, and confess her guilt (vv. 42-43). Thus, Yahweh, Lord of the covenant, may restore the land and the people to a right relationship with Himself. Above all else, it must be remembered that Yahweh’s covenant promise is sure. He reveals His commitment to restore His people in order to reassure them (vv. 44-45). Yahweh remains loyal to His covenant—even when His covenant people are disloyal.\footnote{Cf. a similar concept in 2 Tim 2:13.}

Repentance: Israel’s acceptance of retribution (vv. 39-41). The same accusative absolute employed in v. 36 is repeated here: “As for those who are left from among you [pl.]”.\footnote{In v. 36 דַּעְתֵּיהֶם (‘those who remained”) is an accusative absolute serving to isolate and give marked prominence to the object of the sentence. Cf. E. Kautzsch, ed., Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar, 2d Eng. ed., trans. and rev. A. E. Cowley (Oxford: Clarendon, 1920) §143c; hereafter, “GKC.”} The text emphasizes the languishing\footnote{“Many will perish in a foreign land. Others will דָּעַתֵּיהֶם (‘languish away,’ slowly in the land of their enemies. דָּעַת means ‘fester’ of wounds (Ps 38:6[5]). The noun of this root דָּעַת means ‘rot’ (Isa 3:24; 5:24; BDB 596-97). In Zech 14:12 it describes the wasting away of the body, the flesh, the eyes, and the tongue. Here it pictures the slow but steady erosion of people’s lives as they eke out a miserable existence in a foreign land (cf. Ezek 4:17; 24:23; 33:10)”—Hartley, Leviticus, 468.} suffered by the guilt-ridden Israelites. This will be their condition in exile. Ezekiel best describes both the resulting cry of the people and Yahweh’s response:

Now you, O son of man, you say to the house of Israel: “Thus you speak: ‘Our transgressions and our sins are upon us so that we are languishing in them. Therefore, how will we live?’” Say to them: “‘As surely as I live,’ declares Lord Yahweh, ‘I do not delight in the death of the wicked, but rather in the turning [or, repenting] of the wicked from his way so that he lives. Turn [or, Repent]! Turn from [or, Repent of] your ways, O wicked ones! Yea, why will you die, O house of Israel?’” (Ezek 33:10-11)\footnote{The association of דָּעַת with יִּתְנַשֶּׁה (‘languish’) is a feature shared by both Leviticus (5:1; 7:18; 10:17; 19:8; 20:17, 19; 22:16; 26:41, 43) and Ezekiel (4:17; 24:23; 33:10). Cf. Budd, Leviticus 374.} While in exile, the disobedient nation will suffer terribly. The remnant of Israel “will languish because of their guilt in the lands” of their enemies (Lev 26:39a). “Yea, they also will languish because of the guilt of their fathers which will be with them” (v. 39b). By moving the verb (“languish”) from the first word in the first clause (39a) to the last word in the second clause (39b), an inclusio is formed that emphasizes the concept of languishing. As Budd puts it, “They will … fester and

\footnote{Plural of intensity.}

\footnote{Cf. Keil and Delitzsch, Pentateuch 2:477. The third masculine plural is in agreement with the plural of יִּתְנַשֶּׁה which is irregular and takes a feminine ending in the plural.}

\footnote{Supplied in agreement with the time element of the main verb in the context.}
decay as a generation, just as their fathers did.”

In 39b the adverbial phrases positioned before the verbs draw attention to themselves: “because of their fathers’ guilt … with them.”

Rashi’s explanation for this concept is that “it means that the guilt of their fathers will be with them as those who are holding fast to the practice of their fathers.” Corporate guilt was so rigidly maintained in pre-exilic Israel that individual responsibility often was ignored. During the Babylonian exile Yahweh reminded Israel that He was concerned more with the individual’s guilt (Ezekiel 18). Although their ancestral guilt had contributed to the reality of exile, Lev 26:39a establishes that Israel will be subject to its own current guilt. In other words, the generation of Israelites facing the day of retribution is also guilty. This may not identify the individual per se, but it does distinguish the guilt of separate generations. This same principle of distinguishing guilt also applies to the concept of individual guilt.

In Ezekiel’s and Moses’ days, the solution was repentance (יהוה, Ezek 33:11) and confession (יהוה) Hitpa’el, Lev 26:40a) of personal and corporate guilt: “If they confess their guilt and the guilt of their fathers” (v. 40a). The order is significant. Even though corporate guilt had brought about their languishing under the “spector of an irreversible destiny,” Yahweh replies that personal guilt requires attention first. The now-generation’s guilt, as opposed to the past-generation’s guilt, must be admitted if the repentance is to be genuine.

Corporate guilt ceases to be a problem to the individual who has confessed his own guilt. Corporate guilt is not a straight-jacket or a bottomless pit. Escape from it is the same as for personal guilt: repentance. It is not a destiny. It is a lesson in the history of the faith (or, lack of faith). The covenant not only brings blessing to Abraham’s descendants, it can also bring cursing, depending on each generation’s personal obedience or disobedience. Each generation has the same opportunity to rid itself of a sordid history of disloyalty. Each has the opportunity to be personally loyal to the Lord of the covenant.

A parenthesis from vv. 40b through 41b serves to explain the nature of the guilt and the reason for the nation thus burdened: “because of their being unfaithful to me” and also because they walked in opposition to me, I also walked in opposition to them and I brought them into the land of their enemies.” The only new

48 Budd, Leviticus 374.
49 Cf. GKC, 337 (§112kk-li), 494 (§159g).
51 בִּטְמוּ הַאֲדֹנָי מִטְעוֹנֶת לֹא תִּמְלִיצָה: This construction is a cognate accusative with an internal object (cf. GKC, 366-67 [§117p-q]). There is no retrospective pronominal suffix and יָדַע introduces the relative clause acting as an attribute for the preceding noun. The expression could be rendered, “being treasonously unfaithful.”
terminology or concept presented in this parenthesis is “being unfaithful.” Elsewhere it describes Achan’s sacrilege (Josh 7:1; cf. 22:20) and the breach of vows (oaths or covenants; cf. Ezek 17:20; Num 5:12). Lev 26:40b deals with covenant treason (breach of covenant). The contexts of Ezek 14:13, 15:8, 20:27, and Dan 9:7 are similar to Leviticus 26 in both contents and concepts.

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The protasis (“if they confess”) begun in v. 40a is resumed by means of a dual particle construction containing the conditional “if/whether” together with the temporal “then”: “If then (樯) their uncircumcised heart is humbled and then (חלי) they make restitution (יושב) for their guilt” (v. 41cd). The temporal reference comes after the exile and at the time of their confession of guilt. This is the result of Yahweh working in their heart (cf. v. 36a) while they are in exile. Exile will strip the nation of all pretense of being spiritual. Exile will be the irrefutable evidence that they were displeasing to Yahweh. Kline explains it as follows:

The covenant Lord demands heart-consecration which reflected the fulfillment of the consecration sworn in the circumcision oath. Circumcision is an oath-rite. To be uncircumcised would be to place oneself outside the juridical authority of Yahweh and a refusal to consign oneself to the ordeal of the Lord’s judgment for the final verdict on one’s life—eternal weal or woe.

God depicts Israel’s spiritual condition, while living in exile among uncircumcised nations, as an uncircumcised heart (cf. Jer 9:25; Ezek 44:6-9; see also Jer 4:4). He was, in effect, declaring to the nation: “If you want to live like the uncovenanted nations, then live among them!” Exile is a fitting and just punishment.

The confession of guilt (v. 40a) must be sincere. There is no room for pride. The humbling of the nation means that they will no longer be self-reliant, but rather, trusting Yahweh. “Humble” (乣, לָנָד, v. 41c) occurs 36 times in the OT (19 of which are in Chronicles). In the spiritual sense (rather than the political or physical) it is used only 18 times (14 in Chronicles, 3 in Kings, and Lev 26:41c) and always in a context of an invasion of the land by Israel’s enemies. Such invasions were in all cases Israel’s chastisement for sinful pride or idolatry. The nations, therefore, will be the instrument of humiliation for disobedient Israel.

The last phrase of v. 41 is the most difficult theologically. The phrase “make restitution for guilt” (דָּאַתְתָּנִים וּדָאַה) occurs only three times in the OT (here, v. 43, and Isa 40:2). Wenham interprets the phrase in Lev 26:41 as meaning that Israel would “accept (the punishment for) the guilt.” On the same verse Keil and...
Delitzsch say that Israel “will take pleasure, rejoice in their misdeeds, i.e. in the consequences and results of them.” In other words, Israel will rejoice that God is just in awarding what they deserved. However, Delitzsch elsewhere (viz., Isa 40:2) distinguishes between “a satisfactory reception” and “a satisfactory payment.” He interprets Isa 40:2 in the latter sense. Edward J. Young takes the phrase in Isa 40:2 as a reference to the acceptance of “a sacrifice sufficient to atone for the iniquity.” He further indicates that such a sacrifice is “more fully revealed in the fifty-third chapter of the book.”

Young’s view, therefore, is messianic and soteriological in scope, indicating that the only acceptable restitution for guilt must be made by God Himself in the person of Christ. Redemption or freedom from guilt is not the work of Israel, it is the work of Yahweh (cf. Isa 43:22-28). However, “make restitution for guilt” is not a statement of soteriological redemption. It is a statement of federal (or, natural) consequence. The individual must exhibit a conversion or repentance that exhibits turning away from sin. Conversion focuses “on concrete commands, prescriptions, and rights, contempt for which had called down all the disasters of the past, and the strict observances of which was therefore essential in order to prove the seriousness of the new change.”

Making restitution for guilt, therefore, is “an evidence of repentance and expiation,” not the cause. Evidence of true repentance also involves the acceptance of the consequences of sin, which are not removed immediately since “conversion and the necessity of continuing to bear God’s punishment are not mutually exclusive.” For example, natural (or federal) consequences were involved in the case of Rehoboam’s servitude to Shishak (2 Chr 12:1-12). The leaders of Israel “humbled themselves” (as in Lev 26:41c) and Yahweh granted them a stay of full execution, but left the nation in subjection to Shishak to teach the converted leaders the seriousness of disobedience and the pleasantness of walking in obedience (vv. 6-8, 12). Exile’s impact will linger on. No matter when Israel’s repentance takes

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4Keil and Delitzsch, Pentateuch 2:478.
4Cp. the concept of works as the evidence of faith in the epistle of James in the NT. The manifestation of conversion ought not to be limited to active participation in “good works.” It must also involve passive acceptance of the righteous will of God regarding the effects of past sin.
4Eichrodt, Theology 2:470.
4Eichrodt, Theology 2:471. Punishment, in this sense, is not the mediate effect, but the immediate effect of the sin. Similarly, the NT believer, though forgiven by Christ, still must die physically. His spiritual (second) death, however, is completely removed.
place, the remainder of exile and the land’s sabbaths must be fulfilled. Adequate restitution for their guilt will include obedience to the demands of Yahweh’s law (e.g., regular observance of the sabbaths; cf. Neh 10:28-31 and Isa 58:1-14).

The protasis presented in vv. 40a and 41cd consists of three parts: (1) acknowledging before Yahweh the breach of covenant (i.e., confession), (2) subjugating the mind and will to the God of the covenant (i.e., humility), and (3) obeying the life-changing commands of the Law-Giver (i.e., restitution). As a result, the covenant relationship may be reentered.

**Remembrance: Yahweh’s acceptance of repentance (v. 42).** The apodosis of the conditional sentence beginning with 40a is a carefully formed construction:

and I shall remember my covenant with Jacob, even my covenant with Isaac, yea, I shall remember my covenant with Abraham, and I shall remember the land.

The repetition formed by the verb “remember” (还记得,  זכר, zākar) sets the tone for the apodosis. Six occurrences of the first person singular (three times as the subject of זכר and three times as a pronominal suffix in “my covenant”) indicate that Yahweh Himself will respond to Israel’s repentance. The threefold repetition of “covenant” (בְּרִית, berit) confirms the pericope’s covenant context and Israel’s repentance.

In addition to the repetitions, the following observations may be made concerning this apodosis: (1) The elevated style of verse 42abc is similar to a tristich containing synonymous parallelism.58 (2) זכר opens and closes the section in order to maintain the emphasis on remembrance.59 “My covenant” is the object of זכר only four times in the OT (Gen 9:15; Exod 6:5; and Ezek 16:60). In Leviticus 26 the remembrance of the covenant is the opposite of the breach (v. 44) of covenant.60 (3) “Yea, also/even,” in v. 42bc continues the concept initiated in 42a and is not employed again at the commencement of 42d. This confirms the individual nature of v. 42d. (4) The names of the patriarchs in v. 42abc are the reverse of the usual order.61 The order certainly does not indicate comparative worth in an ascending

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58 The last phrase of v. 42 and the subsequent context confirm that only one covenant is in view. If this style is not poetic, it certainly is fastidiously developed so that the logical correspondences (parallelisms?) are undeniable.

59 Note the typical וְגָתַל followed by יִקְטָל. The absence of זכר in 42b aids the inclusio. Rashi indulges in fanciful speculation to explain the absence of זכר in 42b. He explains it on the basis of the presence of the ashes of Isaac on an altar before God.


61 This is a hapax phainomenon in the OT.
fashion. It probably presents a backward look to the original promise to Abraham. Thus Moses confronts Israel with her historical foundation and her covenant relationship to Yahweh. (5) The apodosis concludes with 42d. It substitutes “the land” for “my covenant,” since the central promise of the covenant was the land. It also utilizes the juxtaposition of these two terms since they are the only truly significant concepts in this context. The patriarchs are not the center of attention. The land, as given by Yahweh, is the focus of the verse. God gave that land by means of the Abrahamic Covenant. (6) Verse 42d duplicates the imperfect of zākar at the end of the line (cf. 42c) to maintain the continuity of thought between 42abc and 42d. Therefore, 42d is a concise summary of 42abc.

Repetition: a summary concerning retribution (v. 43). Retribution is not primarily reformatory, curative, or preventative in nature. Retribution is primarily revelatory. The just punishment of the sinner, or covenant breaker, reveals the holiness and righteousness of Yahweh. Verse 43 emphasizes the reason for retribution involving the land and people of Israel:

Nevertheless, the land must be forsaken by them, so that it might enjoy the restitution (יִשָּׁבוֹת) of its sabbaths during its desolation without them. However, they themselves must make restitution (יִשָּׁבוֹת) for their guilt simply because they rejected my ordinances and they inwardly [deeply?] despised my statutes.

The structure of verse 43 (together with the preceding line, 42b) may be represented in the following fashion:  

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73 The disjunctive waw is employed here with the emphasized subject, using the preceding לְגַהְרִי (42d) as a springboard.


75 Some of the correspondences are conceptual, but most involve assonance which can be observed only in the Hebrew. The English translation cannot convey all the nuances (especially in the interlinear format).
The Eschatological Significance of Leviticus 26

Note, first of all, that assonance involving וּלְכָּז (w`lez) in the first member of the first four lines emphasizes the object of retribution and restoration: the land (הָאָרֶץ). Likewise, the phonetic repetition of guttural + תָּנָכָּה (tanakah) serves to heighten the correspondence between the opposites "remember" (זָכָּה) and "forsake" (לָכָּז). What Yahweh will remember, Israel will forsake. Secondly, the repetition of pronouns in "by them ... without them ... and they" binds the first three lines of v. 43 together. Just as vv. 42d and 43a began the same ("and the land"), so 43a and 43b end the same ("by them" and "without them"). Then v. 43c picks up the last concept of 43b (with "and they") to maintain the continuity. The logical progression is noteworthy:

forsaken by them ⇔ enjoyed restitution without them
⇔ nevertheless, they must make restitution

In vv. 43b and 43c the initial verb is רָשָׁב (rasab), continuing the assonance of vv. 42d and 43a and highlighting the concept of restitution in 43bc. In v. 43de
They rejected my ordinances and their soul despised my statutes" repeats in reverse order the same phrases found in v. 15, "and if they reject my statutes and their soul despises my ordinances." It is significant that both verbs in 43de are qatal even though they are preceded by their objects. Departure from the usual syntax of the pericope must be for the purpose of bringing the concepts forcefully to the mind of the reader. Disobedience is the true and emphatic cause for the need of restitution. There is no question regarding Israel’s guilt or the necessity of restitution.

Verse 43 presents a negative picture in contrast to verse 42. The jussives (v. 43abc) provide an element of anticipation and decree. Yahweh will initiate Operation Restitution on the basis of His covenant with Abraham. The Mosaic Covenant will have a role by means of its sabbatical stipulations. For its part, the Abrahamic Covenant promised a land and a seed to inherit that land. On the other hand, the Mosaic Covenant promised a nation with a special relationship to Yahweh (Exod 19:5-6). Just as God instituted circumcision as the seal of the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 17:9-14), so He made the sabbaths the seal of the Mosaic Covenant (cf. Exod 20:8-11; Lev 25; 26:2; Neh 10:28-31; Isa 58:1-14). The emphasis on land in Leviticus 26 belongs to the sphere of the Abrahamic Covenant, while the emphasis on sabbatical restitution belongs to the sphere of the Mosaic Covenant.

Eschatological Significance

Covenant

“Covenant” (bērîṯ) is employed eight times in Leviticus 26 (vv. 9, 15, 25, 42 ter, 44, 45). It always denotes a binding relationship between Yahweh and His people Israel. This relationship provided Israel with a life which had a goal and with a history that had meaning. In this pericope, “covenant” promotes the concept of the sovereignty of Yahweh, the Covenant-Giver. In six of the eight uses of the term, “my” is attached (vv. 9, 15, 42 ter, 44). Yahweh Himself is always the antecedent, which implies the unilateral nature of the covenants. Yahweh Himself established the covenants, and He alone. Yahweh’s personal intervention in the history of Israel is a central theme of the covenants. Such intervention is not limited to the past; it has its place eschatologically. His lordship is personal and absolute. The covenant demands that Israel surrender unconditionally to the will of God. Loyalty to the covenant must be more than outward acquiescence, it must be an inward reality. As Kline points out, the “uncircumcised heart” (v. 41) is the antithesis of such loyalty:

76bēmiṣpātay nā ḥāsū wē ’et-huqqōtay gā’alā nāpō‘ām.
77‘wē ’im-bē-huqqōtay timē ăsū wē ’im ’et-miṣpātay tīqē al nāpō‘ēkem.
78This is the only such example occurring in Leviticus regarding “statute” (_enqueue) and its verbs. The same observation holds for “ordination” (_enqueue) and its verbs. Normally, when the noun precedes its verb, the yiqtol is employed; and when it follows its verb, the qatal is utilized (Lev 18:4, 5, 26; 19:37; 20:22; 25:18; 26:15). The only exception is 26:43.
79Onqelos evidently interpreted the retribution of v. 43 in the light of the blessings and cursings of the Deuteronomic covenant, since he substituted the following phrase for לְצֹא מִמָּלְךָ (לְצֹא מִמָּלְךָ) (“there are cursings instead of blessings distinguished against them”).
The covenant Lord demands heart-consecration which reflects the fulfillment of the consecration sworn in the circumcision oath. Circumcision is an oath-rite. To be uncircumcised would be to place oneself outside the juridical authority of Yahweh and a refusal to consign oneself to the ordeal of the Lord’s judgment for the final verdict on one’s life—eternal weal or woe.80

Since the ultimate salvation of Israel is yet future (cf. Romans 9–11), the covenant has eschatological implications.

The Abrahamic Covenant. Yahweh’s covenant with Abraham appears to underlie the references to “covenant” in vv. 9, 42, and 44. A fruitful population echoes the theme of Gen 17:6, 7, 19, and 21 (cf. also Exod 6:4 and Deut 8:18). Verse 9 demonstrates the distinctions made within the passage concerning the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants. The text characterizes the Abrahamic Covenant by the following elements:

1. the theme of promise,
2. emphasis on divine fulfillment, and
3. references to land, prosperity, and blessing and/or cursing.

On the other hand, it characterizes the Mosaic Covenant by:

1. the theme of law,
2. emphasis on human responsibility, and
3. references to sabbath, sanctuary, and divine sovereignty.

Although v. 9 is in the midst of Mosaic Covenant material, it displays Abrahamic vocabulary, phraseology, and theme. Its message is pertinent to that brief span of time immediately following the revelation of the Mosaic Covenant at Mt. Sinai. In effect, the point is that the revelation concerning law is equal in authority to the older revelation concerning promise. In order to receive the Abrahamic Covenant’s promised blessings, Israel must obey the stipulations of the Mosaic Covenant. In other words, the Mosaic Covenant would be the program by which Israelites might demonstrate their faith by faith’s works (cf. Jas 2:14-26). Yahweh Himself will respond to Israel’s repentance when it occurs. When Israel repents and turns back to Yahweh, the Abrahamic Covenant will be reconfirmed or renewed.

The blessings recited in Lev 26:4-12 are, at least in part, a fulfillment of the covenant made with Abraham. Those blessings fall into six categories:

1. productivity (vv. 4-5; cf. Gen 24:35; 27:28; 30:43)
2. peace (v. 6; cf. Gen 22:17)
3. power (vv. 7-8; cf. Gen 22:17)
4. population (v. 9; cf. Gen 12:2; 15:5; 17:6)
5. provision (v. 10; cf. productivity, above), and
6. presence (vv. 11-12; cf. Gen 17:7, 8).

80Kline, By Oath Consigned 47-48.
Scripture associates all these blessings with the land that Israel is to receive from Yahweh. They are consistent with various statements and restatements of the Abrahamic Covenant. On the other hand, the covenant curses of Lev 26:14-38 are, at least in part, a removal of the Abrahamic blessings.

The Abrahamic Covenant was the basis for Yahweh’s historical extraction of Israel from Egypt (cf. Gen 15:13, 14). While the nation resided at Mt. Sinai, they would remember that covenant as part of their theological heritage. They experienced the beginning of the historical fulfillment of its promises.

The Abrahamic Covenant demonstrated that Israel’s national identity is not of their own making. That covenant provided them with the hope of landedness at a time when they were landless. Leviticus 26:1-13 reveals to Israel that the covenant given at Mt. Sinai did not nullify the Abrahamic Covenant. The central concept of the Abrahamic Covenant is the land of promise (v. 42). The Mosaic Covenant will not conflict with the landedness promised long before.

Even the phraseology of covenant disloyalty (“uncircumcised heart,” v. 41) reflects the impact of the Abrahamic Covenant on the theology and life of Israel. Circumcision is the outward manifestation of inward commitment to the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 17:9-14). Personal commitment and accountability are implicit even in the unilateral pact that Yahweh made with Abraham while the latter was in a deep sleep (15:12-21). Divine sovereignty and human responsibility are not opposing concepts in the biblical covenants. Indeed, it is because Yahweh is Lord that the human vassal must obey Him. Human accountability would be nonexistent (at least, nonbinding) if it were not for the divine character. Yahweh’s lordship, as revealed in His covenant with Abraham, is not altered by subsequent covenants. Since the sovereignty of God is not altered, neither are the promises of His covenant altered or nullified (cf. Gal 3:17).

The continuity of the Abrahamic Covenant throughout the OT in deliverance contexts illustrates the eschatological implication of its presence in Leviticus 26. Arnold Fruchtenbaum indicates that this covenant ties together the prophetic pronouncements concerning Israel’s redemption.81

The Mosaic (Sinaitic) Covenant. Leviticus 26 directs attention to the Mosaic Covenant by the prominence of its immediate historical context at Sinai and the legal nature of some of the terms used in the chapter (“statutes, commandments,” v. 3; “commandments, statutes, ordinances,” vv. 14-15; “statutes, ordinances, laws,” v. 46). The precepts of vv. 1-2 have the Mosaic Covenant in view:

- prohibition of idols
- observance of sabbaths, and
- reverence for the sanctuary.

Verses 15, 45, and 46 remove any remaining doubt. Their legal emphasis sets the stage for covenant vengeance in v. 25. It also promotes the sense of Yahweh’s

lordship which is already present in the Abrahamic Covenant. The covenant at Sinai is based upon the historical deliverance of Israel from Egypt. That deliverance is in accord with the prior covenant (vv. 13, 45). It is intended to identify more narrowly the people of Yahweh. This refined definition of the people of promise supplements the Abrahamic Covenant’s identification of the land of promise. Just as the outward seal/sign of the Abrahamic Covenant is circumcision, so the seal/sign of the Mosaic Covenant is sabbath-keeping (cf. Lev 25; 26:2, 34-35, 43). The seal/sign of each covenant affects the realm of the other covenant: the covenant of the land (Abrahamic) relates directly to the people by circumcision, and the covenant of the people (Mosaic) relates directly to the land by the sabbaths. Thus the two aspects of these covenants (the land and the people) are bound together. The land is for the people, and the people for the land.

Legislation connected with the Mosaic Covenant encourages a serious mindset regarding submission to the divine lord. It also produces humility with reference to the unworthiness of Israel to be the chosen people of God (cf. Deut 7:6-11). Right behavior by the people of Yahweh is the means of witnessing to the nations. By such behavior Israel participates in the testimony that Yahweh Himself initiated by means of their miraculous deliverance from Egypt (cf. Lev 26:45). The legislation marks Israel as the people belonging to Yahweh, the Exodus-Causer.

Disobedience to the absolute sovereign of Israel’s history also results in the removal of covenant blessings associated with the Mosaic Covenant. The following aspects of the Mosaic Covenant will be rendered inoperable by exile:

1. Though previously a people above all the nations (Exod 19:5; Deut 26:18-19), Yahweh will abhor Israel and treat her as the tail of all the nations (Lev 26:30; Deut 28:43-44). The future “times of the Gentiles” (Luke 21:24; Rom 11:25) reflect this curse.33
2. The kingdom of priests (Exod 19:6) will become ceremonially unclean and their sacrifices unacceptable (Lev 26:31).
3. The holy nation of Israel (Exod 19:6) will be burdened with guilt (Lev 26:39) and characterized by a heathenlike uncircumcised heart (v. 41).
4. Israel’s history of national deliverance (Exod 19:4) will turn into a history of national exile (Lev 26:33, 38).

Sinai was but the commencement of the relationship between God and Israel. God and the nation must identify with each other if the wilderness years are to lead to the promised land. The apostasies of Sinai34 only serve to remind the nation why

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33A distinction between a covenant of the land and a covenant of the people should not be pressed to an extreme. The Abrahamic Covenant also identified the people of promise, referring to them as the descendants of Abraham. It became clear, however, that some of the descendants of Abraham (through Ishmael) would not be the people of promise. The Mosaic Covenant clarified the situation regarding the identification of the covenant people.

34Wenham, Leviticus 333.

35The golden calf incident provoked the public shattering of the covenant tablets (Exod 32:19). About 3,000 died that day (v. 28). Two priests, sons of Aaron, also died at Sinai when they did not follow divine instructions concerning service at the altar (Lev 10:1-2). Later, a man was executed because of his blasphemous appropriation of the name of God (24:10-23).
Yahweh gave them legislation. They need standards in order to avoid chaos and anarchy. The nation must be prepared for their inheritance, the land. Instruction (the primary concept of Tôrâh, v. 46) is the means of preparation. Leviticus instructional 26’s focus is on identification with the covenant deity/suzerain, Yahweh (cf. v. 45).

The Deuteronomic Covenant. Many parallels between Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 27–30 present the reader with a problem of relationship. How is the Deuteronomic Covenant related to Leviticus 26? The similarities of structure (blessing and cursing), the revelation of ultimate chastisement for breach of covenant (exile preceded by siege, deteriorating into cannibalism), and a time subsequent to the impartation of the Mosaic Covenant all demonstrate a relationship in content. However, similarity is not identity. No third covenant is ratified in Leviticus 26. No third covenant is described in terms of a relationship to the past covenant (Abrahamic) and the present covenant (Mosaic). The connotation of a future covenant may be present, but the recipients of Leviticus 26 might not have associated that future covenant with Deuteronomy 27–30. The latter passage was revealed to the new generation of Israelites while they were camped on the plains of Moab. The former was revealed to their parents and grandparents while they were still at Mt. Sinai (Lev 26:46). Leviticus 26 may be considered a prophetic preview of the Deuteronomic Covenant only in the sense that the basic theological concepts of that covenant are present in the pericope. However, Leviticus 26 does not specify that covenant per se. Leviticus 26 does not provide a formal prophetic announcement regarding any future covenant.

Revelation is progressive in nature. The seeds of one age become the flowers of yet another age. Thus the seed of the Deuteronomic Covenant is present in Leviticus 26. The blessings and cursings of that chapter are transitional. They prepare Israel for the land while they are at Sinai, prior to commencing their wilderness wanderings. Transitional revelation will be expanded and formalized in a covenant upon arrival at the threshold of the land (on the plains of Moab). The title deed to the land (the Abrahamic Covenant), the constitution for the people of the land (the Mosaic Covenant), and the rights to the riches of the land (the Deuteronomic Covenant) will then provide the nation with all the revelation

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necessary to live within the land itself.

Land

Every gift to the nation of Israel is a summons to an obligation before the covenant suzerain, Yahweh. The land grant to Israel involves the people’s identification with Yahweh, the Land-Giver, who calls His people to service. The summons is both beneficial and binding. Benefits are conditioned upon obedience to Yahweh’s command. Yahweh delivered the enslaved nation from Egypt and her people became bond slaves belonging to Him (Lev 26:13). The prior bondage differs from the latter in that the latter brings blessing (vv. 2-12). No such rewards accrued as a result of Egyptian bondage.

The land grant predates the existence of Israel per se. Abraham received the land grant at the time of his own exodus from Mesopotamia. Israel’s national identity was established under Moses at the time of her exodus from Egypt. God controls the history of the land and the people. According to Wijngaards, “From the roughly 160 cases in which biblical passages speak of Jahweh’s giving the land to Israel, more than half contain references to ‘the fathers.’”86 Indeed, reference to “the ancestors” (v. 45) in a context related to the Mosaic Covenant establishes continuity between the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants. Just as Abraham’s descendants claimed the Abrahamic Covenant while they were at Mt. Sinai, so, in the future days, an exiled people will repent and claim the covenant made with their ancestors at Sinai. Willingness to identify herself as Yahweh’s people will qualify Israel for restoration to the land.

Leviticus 26 depicts the promised land as the setting for the fulfillment of both blessings (vv. 4-12) and curses (vv. 14-38). It is noteworthy that Ps 72:16-17 describes the worldwide extension of the Davidic kingdom in terms reminiscent of the blessings in Leviticus 26.87 That is one indication of the eschatological significance of this chapter. Another may be seen in the fact that a series of increasingly severe calamities affecting the reputation and the health of the nation of Israel will signal that divine judgment is underway. Kaiser writes concerning this time of judgment: “Then that nation should know that it was the hand of God, and men should return to Him. This principle was first announced in Leviticus 26:3-33 and used in most of the prophets, especially Amos 4:6-12.”88 Reward and retribution cannot be fulfilled elsewhere. The landedness of Israel is essential for fulfillment. Israel cannot receive landed prosperity without the land. On the other hand, Israel cannot be exiled from the land until they have possessed it.

Interestingly, the land itself is treated as a separate participant in the covenant. It can be the recipient of the restitution of sabbaths that it had been denied (vv. 34-35, 43). It is a land belonging first to Yahweh. As its sovereign Lord, He has authority to grant it to Israel. He presented the title deed to Abraham’s descendants, but any intermediate generation who is disloyal to the covenant will be subject to

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88 Ibid., 251.
expulsion from the land (vv. 33-44). Still, the land will remain, kept for the future generation who will obey Yahweh’s precepts. Generations may come and go, but the land will abide as the Abrahamic Covenant’s material entity. By means of sabbaths Yahweh intends to preserve the fruitfulness of the land for its ultimate possessors (cf. Leviticus 25). Therefore, disobedience to Yahweh’s sabbatical legislation is considered a sin against the land. Even more, it is a sin against future generations since such a breach of the covenant results from greed. Such greed robs the land of its fruitfulness and robs future generations of its provision.

Landedness makes it possible for the people to be tempted in the areas of self-sufficiency, idolatry, and sabbath breaking. Such temptations can be resisted by remembering the history of the people and the land. Remembering the covenant deeds of Yahweh reminds the people that the land they enjoy is an unearned gift. The exiled people, remembering the Lord of the land, will confess their guilt and make restitution (vv. 40-41). Their remembering and acting upon that memory will, in turn, result in Yahweh remembering the land (v. 42). He will preserve the covenant blessings for His people.

At Mt. Sinai and in the wilderness, the land represented hope. When the hope is fulfilled, the land presents the people with a challenge. They are challenged to exercise faith in the God of the covenant. Those who apostatized at Sinai and who died in the wilderness failed to exhibit such faith.

Jelinek observes that some theologians note the absence of land as a theme in the NT and assume that the OT promises have been displaced. He rightly concludes that “we are not justified in emasculating the OT by the virtues of the NT.” If language means anything, Israel must yet possess the promised land following their future national repentance.

The Lord of History

Divinely controlled history is the foundation of the Mosaic Covenant (vv. 13, 45). Yahweh is the God of history. He is the sovereign Lord of time and of place. Divine election and deliverance are the main factors in Israel’s history. Yahweh as Creator and Giver graciously and mercifully associates Himself with the nation. As the Lord of history, He controls all history. He can move entire nations in order to chastise disobedient Israel and return her to the land in the time of her repentance. The God of history can prepare the nations for receiving the exiled people (cp. Joseph, Gen 50:20). The nations will swallow up the scattered Israelites (Lev 26:33) and make them vanish (v. 38). Yet Yahweh will preserve a remnant so that a new history can begin. Israel must trust the God of history who controls all time, places, and nations.

Scripture describes the Abrahamic Covenant’s roots in the history of Israel. It involves Jacob, and before him, Isaac. Before Isaac, it was granted to Abraham. Verse 42 presents this confirmation of prior history. As Yahweh preserves (and will continue to preserve) the Abrahamic Covenant, so also He will preserve the Mosaic

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"John A. Jelinek, “The Dispersion and Restoration of Israel to the Land,” in Israel, the Land and the People: An Evangelical Affirmation of God’s Promises, ed. H. Wayne House (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998) 236. Jelinek’s attention to Leviticus 26 is a welcome contribution to the study of the eschatological significance of the pericope."
Covenant for future generations (v. 45). Yahweh’s deeds in history illustrate His faithfulness to preserve the covenant in spite of the failure of one generation to be faithful to it.

**Breach and Preservation of Covenant**

Israel might breach (vv. 15, 44) the covenant, but Yahweh cannot (v. 44). The “uncircumcised heart” (v. 41) of disobedient Israel reflects her disloyalty to the divine covenants. Yahweh can never be disloyal. He is always faithful because He is “Yahweh their God” (v. 44). Breach of covenant occurs when Israel disobeys the stipulations of the Mosaic Covenant (v. 15). Idolatry and sabbath breaking, especially, constitute breach of covenant (vv. 1-2). Such an action is willful. It results in the nullification of blessings associated with the Abrahamic Covenant and the identification associated with the Mosaic Covenant. Any infraction of Mosaic legislation is rebellion against the sovereign will of the suzerain-legislator, Yahweh.

Yahweh, however, “remembers” (zākār) His covenants and preserves them. The covenants contain both blessing and cursing, which are initiated by promise and implemented by legislation. Promise emphasizes divine sovereignty; legislation highlights human responsibility. When Israel is unfaithful, Yahweh remains faithful. The Suzerain’s faithful preservation of the covenant is in sharp contrast to the vassal’s failure to obey. Covenant history, therefore, confirms both divine dependability and human culpability.

**Prohibition of Idolatry**

It is a serious crime to defy the Creator of the universe and the God of all history. The ultimate reason for the prohibition of idolatry is succinctly expressed in the *Selbstvorstellungsf ormel* (“self-introduction formula”): “for I am Yahweh your God.” This formula is the key phrase in Leviticus 18–26. The contrast is self-explanatory. Yahweh’s inherent and exclusive authority makes idols worthless, powerless, anthropocentric, and void of any spiritually redeeming value. There is no room for divided loyalties. Yahweh insists upon exclusive lordship in the lives of His people. Awareness of Yahweh’s existence, identity, and presence is central to the covenant relationship that Israel enjoys.

The idolater chooses the way of the uncircumcised nations (v. 41), therefore he will be eaten up by those nations (v. 38) amongst whom he is exiled (v. 33). His guilt, his treason, will cause him great anguish (v. 39). The only way to be restored to Yahweh’s favor is by confession, humility, and restitution (vv. 40-41). Idolaters must confess their filthy idolatry, humility must be produced by the realization that they cannot manipulate Yahweh, and restitution must consist in giving Yahweh and His land priority in their lives. Only when these things occur will God restore Israel finally and permanently to the land from which they were expelled in A.D. 70.

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91 Wenham, *Leviticus* 250.
Observance of Sabbaths

“Sabbaths” is plural throughout the pericope (vv. 2, 34-35, 43). The reference is undoubtedly intended to include both weekly sabbaths and annual sabbaths (including the year of jubilee) that are mentioned in the preceding context (chaps. 23–25). Sabbath observance is theologically rich. It specially signifies God’s dominion over Israel. In His sovereignty Yahweh establishes the nation, grants them their land, and claims their time. The sabbaths are also a means of reminding Israel of their deliverance from bondage. As Zimmerli observes, “Any OT theology must pay attention to the way in which the faith of the OT hears the commandment of its God in its liturgical ordinances.” Israel’s liturgical calendar is Yahweh-oriented. He is the God of time as well as the God of space. The sabbaths honor the Lord of time by teaching the Israelites to trust the Lord of all things for their provisions. Thus lordship is the core of the sabbatical principle. By trusting the Lord to provide for the seventh day, the seventh year, and the forty-ninth and fiftieth years, Israel gives tangible witness to His power and wisdom. He who provided in the wilderness had already proclaimed the sabbatical principle while Israel was still at Mt. Sinai. The instruction for God’s people is simple: “Trust me to provide. I am Yahweh. I will not lead you where I cannot care for you.” God never demands what man is unable to do. Rather, He provides the way of service and blesses the path of obedience. Sabbath in the OT is more than an expression of the vertical relationship to the Lord of all creation; it is also an expression of concern and care for those who are fellow participants in the covenant (cf. Leviticus 25).

The sabbatical principle is the test, the seal/sign, of the obedience that the Mosaic Covenant demands (Exod 33:17-21). By means of the sabbath the legal covenant represents Yahweh’s legislative authority over time. Even the land needed restitution when the time that Yahweh demanded for it was not granted by Israel (Lev 26:34-35, 43). Yahweh is Lord of the land as well as the people. The land is a promised possession in a time-space continuum. Breach of the sabbatical principle regarding the land is evidence of rebellion against the Lord of time and space. Therefore, violation of the land by denying its just recompense is a violation of Yahweh’s gift of fruitfulness. It is robbery because it denies continued fruitfulness for future generations of Abraham’s descendants. The liberty proclaimed in the sabbatical principle is an echo of the divinely controlled history. The God of history delivered Israel from servitude in Egypt so that the people would be free from oppression. To deny that freedom is to deny the Lord who brought them out of Egypt (v. 13; cf. 25:38, 42, 55).

Presence and Sanctuary

Leviticus 26 refers to the presence of Yahweh by such terms and phrases as “presence” (v. 17), “walk among you” (v. 12), “sanctuary” (v. 2), and “tabernacle”

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93 Ibid.
94 Brueggemann, The Land 64.
95 Zimmerli, Old Testament Theology in Outline 125.
The Eschatological Significance of Leviticus 26

By “edifice-oriented” the writer does not mean that Yahweh is edifice-limited. The edifice was merely an accommodation to focus attention upon Yahweh’s presence among His people. Cf. Ezek 10:3-19; 11:22-23; 43:1-5.

Promises

Promize here is used in a very broad sense of the term. It is employed to cover both the promise to bless and the promise to curse. It has the sense of fulfillment or commitment as much as the sense of hope or expectancy. Leviticus 26 identifies promise with the solemn, divine self-introduction of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (vv. 1, 2, 13, 44, 45; cf. v. 42). Yahweh’s promise in the Abrahamic Covenant preceded His deliverance of Israel from Egypt and bringing them into Canaan. Promise does not refer to something inward and spiritual, but to the tangible aspects of covenant life: productivity, peace, population, presence, and land. God’s promise includes a pledge to bless Israel for their loyalty and to curse Israel for their disloyalty. Yahweh, the God of their ancestors, promises His own loyalty to His covenant and His people. He has not finished His design for Israel—His promises will yet be fulfilled. Merrill sums it up as follows:

Even Israel’s failure, however, would not imperil the purposes of God, for, as New Testament revelation makes clear, the Lord Jesus Christ—the suffering Servant of Isaiah—is in Himself a “new Israel,” as is His Body the church…. But praise be to God, His promise to Israel is not abrogated—not by Israel’s Old Testament disobedience or by the subsequent role of the church. For He will regenerate His ancient people and thus qualify them in ages to come to bring to fruition the grand design for which He had called and elected them (Lev. 26:40-45; Deut. 30:1-30; Jer. 31:27-34; 33:19-26; Ezek. 36:22-38; Rom. 11:25-32). This is the theology of the Pentateuch.97

Blessing and Curse

The blessings and curses of Leviticus 26 are quite similar to those of Deuteronomy 27–28. The similarities involve both formal structure and traditional phraseology and vocabulary. By their very contexts in the biblical materials, the
blessings and curses are distinctly covenantal. The blessings are directly related to the promised blessings and/or privileges of both the Abrahamic and the Mosaic covenants. Likewise, the curses are directly related to the nullification or removal of those same blessings and/or privileges.

**Obedience and Disobedience**

According to Zimmerli, “Obedience to Yahweh, the one God, who delivered Israel out of slavery and is jealous of his own uniqueness, defines the fundamental nature of the OT faith.” Obedience reflects respect for who and what Yahweh is personally and historically (Lev 26:1-3, 13-15, 39-45), includes acceptance of the lordship of Yahweh in one’s life in time and space (cf. vv. 2, 34-35, 43), and produces participation in covenant blessings (v. 9). Precepts reveal the will of God for Israel, since the will of man must yield to the will of Yahweh in covenant loyalty (cf. v. 41).

Disobedience is the denial of the identity of Yahweh in history, covenant, and law. It is breach of covenant faith (v. 15), thus acting unfaithfully, disloyally, and treasonously (v. 40) in blatant opposition to God (vv. 21, 23, 27). It may involve nonperformance of His commands (v. 14) while rejecting His statutes and despising His ordinances (v. 15). Disobedience relates to the inner man (vv. 15, 41, 43; note “soul” and “heart”) and has frightful consequences. Even cannibalism is not beyond the capability of the disobedient (v. 29). Sacrifice from one who is disobedient is unacceptable since sacrifice should be an outward manifestation of faith (v. 31). Disobedience deserves death (vv. 25, 33, 37, 38) and exile (vv. 33, 44). Whereas death is separation from the body, exile is separation from the land.

**Retribution and Chastisement**

Application of the curses/penalties of vv. 14-45 is highlighted by two factors: (1) the gradation of the punishments in five stages of severity (vv. 16-17, 18-20, 21-22, 23-26, and 27-38) and (2) the recurring refrain, “seven times for your sins” (vv. 18, 21, 24, 28). The stages of chastisement are emphasized also by the occurrence of the term “discipline” (v. 18, 23, 28). From start to finish, the process is intended as a means of restoration. However, the primary purpose is not restoration, but the glorification of the covenant God, Yahweh (cf. vv. 44, 45).

Retribution may be terminal (cf. vv. 25, 30, 38), but chastisement may result in restoration through repentance (cf. vv. 39-45). Both are involved in Leviticus 26. Divine retribution will come upon those who do not confess their sins and chastisement will be administered to those who do confess their sins.

Leviticus 26 emphasizes the seal/sign of the Mosaic Covenant, the sabbaths.

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100 For an excellent discussion of the form, structure, and setting of vv. 14-45, see Hartley, *Leviticus* 457-62.
The refrain “seven times”\textsuperscript{101} might imply the sabbatical principle. “For your sins” indicates breach of covenant.\textsuperscript{102} Yahweh will judge His people for their nonobservance of the sabbaths, for their worship of idols, and for their defilement (cf. vv. 1-2, 29-31). Divine judgment is not a betrayal of the covenants (v. 44). On the contrary, judgment declares that disobedience is sin and that sin is rebellion against the Lord. Eventually, Yahweh’s judgments will increase to such intensity and nature that there will be no doubt that He has exercised His covenant rights to exact retribution from those who defy His authority.

**Exile**

Exile (“scattering among the nations,” v. 33) is the ultimate penalty for breach of covenant. It means removal from the land of promise. The landedness for which the nation hopes will dissolve into the landlessness that had characterized their sojourn in Egypt. Servitude will once again engulf them. Due to their “uncircumcised heart” (v. 41) God will place them among the uncircumcised—those who are outside the covenants. Exile is a living death, a living separation from the land of abundant life. Exile means removal from the setting in which Israel can experience the blessings of the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants. Exile, however, need not be terminal. Landlessness can be a condition that gives rebirth to hope (vv. 39-45). Landlessness is not synonymous with divine rejection or abhorrence (v. 44). As at Sinai and in the wilderness, landlessness presents the people with a goal for life and a meaning for history. The landless ones must cast their cares upon the One who will guide them out of bondage to freedom. Even in the land of their enemies, Yahweh is their God (v. 44). The covenant relationship knows no geographical or political boundaries. Yahweh’s loyalty is unaffected by the landedness or the landlessness of His people. He is above the circumstances of history, working for the repentance of His covenant people so that His covenants will one day be fulfilled completely.

**Repentance**

The Hebrew word for “repentance” (šûb) does not occur in Leviticus 26. However, the concept of repentance is found in a threefold turning of the exiled people to Yahweh. First, they will confess their guilt and the guilt of their fathers (v. 40), recognizing their personal and corporate culpability. Next, they will humble their “uncircumcised heart” (v. 41), bringing it into subjection to the precepts of Yahweh, for they must submit to Yahweh’s lordship. Their submission must not be mere external compliance with religious exercises; it must be internal and real. Lastly, they will make restitution for their guilt (v. 41), accepting the natural (federal) consequences of sin. Such restitution is not soteriological redemption. It is the evidence, not the cause, of repentance and expiation. The impact of sin will be

\textsuperscript{101}Seven is more than just a symbolic number: “It is an appropriate and evocative number in view of the importance of the seventh in Israelite religion” (Wenham, Leviticus 331). Cf. also Elliger, Leviticus 375: “Naturlich ist ‘sieben’ eine schematische Steigerungszahl” (“Seven is naturally a stylized number of intensity”).

\textsuperscript{102}Sin” is also a term applied to breach of covenant in the vassal treaties of Esarhaddon. See D. J. Wiseman, The Vassal-Treaties of Esarhaddon, Iraq 20/1 (London: British School of Archaeology in Iraq, 1958) 42 (col. iii 160), 50 (col. iv 272), 52 (col. iv 292), 58 (col. v 397).
felt until the land has enjoyed its restitution. Exile will continue after repentance until the penalty has been fulfilled. Getting right with God does not ensure immediate blessing and a solution to uncomfortable circumstances. It does guarantee a restoration to the covenant relationship whereby Yahweh might renew promised blessings once the land is regained.

Is Israel’s repentance a precondition to the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom? Fruchtenbaum responds with a clear affirmative, employing Lev 26:40-42 as the first piece of scriptural evidence. The future restoration of Israel is also predicated upon the fulfillment of prophecies concerning a worldwide dispersion. The return from the Babylonian Exile does not fulfill those announcements since the people were restored from but one nation, not from among all nations. Leviticus 26:33 and 39 speak of a scattering among “the nations.” Are these references generic (merely referring to exile among Gentiles) or, are these references specifying a universal dispersion? Deuteronomy 30:3 and Jer 29:14 make it clear that the dispersion is universal.

The restoration of Israel from its worldwide dispersion will depend upon their repentance (cf. Jer 3:11-18; Hos 5:13–6:3; Zech 12:1-10). That this did not take place prior to the return from Babylonian Exile may be seen by the words of Jesus Himself 600 years later:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! For I say to you, from now on you shall not see Me until you say, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!”

**Leviticus 26 and the NT**

The employment of Lev 26:11-12 in 2 Cor 6:16 is the only concrete example of the influence of the chapter on the NT. Paul employs the passage from this pericope in order to better emphasize the concept of identification with God. It is unfortunate that Wenham did not deal with this NT usage in his commentary. Wenham, however, does observe that the blessings and curses of Leviticus 26 are expressed at least in principle by Christ’s teachings in His pre-cross ministry. The chastisement of Israel because of covenant disloyalty was a reality among the Jews of Christ’s day. Jesus also spoke of an eschatological chastisement. Wenham claims

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104Matt 23:37-39 (NASB); the statement of Israel at the end of this passage is a quotation from Ps 118:26.

105Paul’s quotation of Lev 26:11-12 is paraphrastic. His emphasis is on the concept of identification with God (v. 12b). His omission of v. 11b is a clue to his intention. That phrase does not serve any purpose in Paul’s discussion in the context of 2 Corinthians 6. Since he omits Lev 26:11b (“and my soul will not despise you”), he paraphrases 11a (“I will set my dwelling place in your midst”—cf. 2 Cor 6:16, “I will dwell among them”). Having established the concept and the context, Paul proceeds to quote Lev 26:12. Elaborate discussions of conflation of OT texts, “pearl stringing,” pre-Pauline usage, and 4Q LXX Lev are made unnecessary by the simple reading of the NT text alongside the MT.

that “many of the horrifying judgments described in Rev. 6ff. find their original setting in the covenant curses of Lev. 26 and Deut. 28.” This is true insofar as they are directly related by the Book of Revelation to the nation of Israel. Application of the covenant blessings and curses to the Gentiles is unwarranted (with the exception of the blessing for all peoples mediated by Abraham’s descendants; Gen 12:3). Technically, the covenants were made with Israel alone.\textsuperscript{108}

The principles of God’s dealings with NT believers by means of reward and/or chastisement are basically the same as the principles by which He dealt with Israel under the covenants. This must not be construed, however, to mean that NT saints are under the same covenant relationship as Israel. The similarity is due to the same God, not to the same covenant. The very nature of God demands that the natural consequences of sin be exacted from His people in all ages (cf. 1 Cor 11:30; Gal 6:7-10). The same God provides lessons for believers in every era, based upon His historical deeds (cf. Rom 15:4; 1 Cor 10:11-13). The same God blesses in tangible ways those who are faithful (cf. 2 Cor 9:6-15). The same God is loyal even in the face of His people’s disloyalty (cf. Phil 1:6; 2 Tim 2:11-13). The same God is Lord (cf. 1 Cor 12:3). The same Lord requires confession, humility, and restitution (cf. Phil 1:25; 1 Pet 5:5-7; 1 John 1:9). The same God promises that obedient service will be rewarded (cf. 1 Cor 15:58). The same God demonstrates that the believer has been delivered from bondage into a servitude that is totally unlike the bondage of fear and the curse (cf. Acts 26:18; Rom 6:12-23; Col 1:12-13; Heb 2:14-15).

The Lord who by means of Leviticus 26 revealed to Israel the continued authority and perpetuity of the Abrahamic Covenant after the ratification of the Mosaic Covenant, also confirmed that testimony in Gal 3:17. NT believers must recognize that the authority of one covenant does not annul the authority of a previous one. Any exceptions are clearly revealed by God (e.g., Heb 7:11-14). The epistle to the Galatian churches teaches that Abrahamic faith in Yahweh was not replaced by law under Moses. Therefore, faith is still binding upon anyone’s relationship to the God of Abraham.

\textbf{Conclusion}

The failure of theologians and expositors to give as much attention to Leviticus 26 as they have given to Deuteronomy 27–28 has impoverished the church’s doctrinal corpus. Leviticus 26 contains revelation referring to Israel’s future repentance and restoration, which are confirmed by both OT and NT. Since Israel’s repentance and restoration have not yet occurred, their fulfillment is eschatological. Leviticus 26’s relationship to the Abrahamic Covenant ties fulfillment to the land God promised to give to the descendants of Abraham. The fulfillment of the land promise awaits Israel’s repentance. When Israel turns to God and confesses her sins,
God will restore her to the promised land. Chronologically, Leviticus 26 is the first detailed description of Israel’s eschatological repentance and restoration. It provides significant evidence that disobedience to the Mosaic Covenant results in the removal of the blessings promised in the Abrahamic Covenant. The chapter is at the heart of the OT prophets’ announcements concerning the future Messianic Kingdom. A proper understanding of the prophetic program of the OT fully integrates the revelation of Leviticus 26.
THE DIDACHE’S USE OF
THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

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The Didache has attracted widespread attention among scholars interested in early Christian writings since being discovered in 1873. Of particular interest has been the way it uses the Old and New Testaments because it reflects the way earliest Christian leaders approached the same issue. The document shows a special familiarity with the Gospel of Matthew and cites passages frequently from that source. Evidence supports the conclusion that the Didachist had access to the canonical Gospel as currently known and not just to oral tradition about Jesus. His use of Matthew often followed very closely to the exact wording of that Gospel. His only use of noncanonical works was in a negative way. He also cited two OT passages and apparently followed the wording of the LXX most closely. He did not endorse an allegorical interpretation of the OT as came to be the practice in other early Christian writings. A personal translation of the Didache is included.

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Introduction

The discovery of the Didache in 1873 has been acclaimed in many a eulogy, in many a language and by many a scholar. And rightly so. For this work has cast a spell over even the most cautious who, finding its magic irresistible, seek time and again to prise its secrets. For however else can one explain the unending fascination expressed in such an abundance of words for a work written with so few—a bibliography which exceeds any reasonable expectation?1

If Professor Walker was amazed at the size of the bibliography on the Didache in 1981, what amazement would she express today about the continued scholarly interest in this little document that is shorter than Paul’s epistle to the Galatians? In the last decade alone, two major commentaries on the Didache have appeared, the most recent being 800 pages in length.2 Furthermore, three major collections of scholarly articles on the Didache by multiple authors have been issued.

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again in the last decade. The journal articles continue to appear at a regular pace. In April 2004, an international conference at Oxford University was convened to discuss “The New Testament and the Apostolic Fathers.” No less than five of the twenty-five papers presented dealt directly with the Didache and a number dealt indirectly with issues raised by the document.

The present writer is one of those people whom Walker describes, over whom the spell of the “Teaching” has been cast. As I have translated it, I have been captured by its profundity in simplicity and its obvious characteristic of multum in parvo. It has been a major focus of my sabbatical research. Yet, evangelicals by and large neglect the study of the Didache and the Apostolic Fathers in general, and usually leave such study to the more liturgical traditions of the church. In that regard, surprisingly, even Jewish scholars are contributing their unique perspective to this area of study (e.g., Flusser, n. 3). The evangelical commitment to “sola scriptura” and a general lack of engagement with the tradition of the church probably limit participation in such discussions. Only when patristic or apocryphal writings directly address issues raised in the canonical books do evangelicals usually involve themselves in this area of research. But the Didache and other early church writings constantly discuss many issues related to Old and New Testament studies. Should not evangelicals listen to and interact with what earliest Christians wrote about?

One of the most important recent issues in biblical interpretation among evangelicals is the New Testament’s use of the Old Testament and its impact on inspiration and hermeneutics. The attitude of early noncanonical Christian writers should at least be considered when learning how citations of sacred Scripture should be handled. Do the Apostolic Fathers cite the OT in the same way as the NT writers? Furthermore, how did they cite the NT? This article will discuss briefly how the Didache used the Old and the New Testaments. The two main issues are: 1. In what form does the writer cite Scripture (LXX or MT?), and 2. In what manner does the writer use Scripture to make his point? Both questions (the linguistic and the hermeneutical) are essential in discovering how to handle such citations.

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Before the addressing of the above subject, acknowledging other important questions about the Didache is important. Some of those questions are: 1. When was it discovered, and what has been its history in the church? 2. Who was its author and when was it written? 3. What is the theological framework of the Didache? 4. What implications for liturgy, sacraments, and ministry does it have since it appears to be a “church manual” in its literary genre? 5. What is its eschatological teaching, since the last chapter is an apocalypse? 6. How do the things that are taught in the Didache compare with teachings of the NT? Such related issues deserve separate treatments, which this writer hopes to undertake. What is of concern here, however, is how the “Didachist” (or the “Didachogapher” as Philip Schaff styled the unnamed author) quoted and used the canonical (and noncanonical?) writings.

A summary of suggested conclusions about some Didache issues will provide the reader with a framework for how this writer approaches the document. Without elaborating on the arguments, a first-century date for its writing is accepted, with its provenance probably being Syria, although some suggest Egypt. A strong case can be made for its compositional unity and that it represents a Jewish-Christian frame of reference and is orthodox in its theology. Later papers and articles will explore those questions as well as the document’s theological substructure.

Though scholars have occasionally proposed a very early date (prior to A.D. 70) for the writing, it seems safer to follow Lightfoot and a number of other scholars in recognizing that it is a document that reflects views of a group of Jewish Christians who lived and ministered during the last decades of the first century. The strongest arguments for a first-century date are, 1. the primitive simplicity of the Didache’s teaching on Jesus and the church’s leadership, and 2. its silence about any persecution experienced by its readers or writer(s). An even earlier date, however, is still possible. In his highly influential volume on the history of NT interpretation, Bishop Stephen Neill had this to say as he reflected on the volume by Audet (n. 9) that had recently appeared and which argued for a date prior to A.D. 70.

On the basis of an immensely learned survey of all the materials, Fr. Audet comes to the conclusion that the Didache was written in Syria between AD 50 and 70. It is hardly likely that this conclusion will meet with general acceptance; but it is exciting to consider the possibility that we have here a work outside the New Testament which may have been written earlier than most of the New Testament books.

One hopes that the same spirit of excitement and anticipation will

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8See the following standard works for treatments of these important “introductory” issues: J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers* (London: Macmillan, 1893), 2d ed., ed. Michael Holmes (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999); Schaff, *Oldest Church Manual, chapters I-XXXIII*, Niederwimmer, *The Didache*, chapters 1–7; Milavec, *The Didache*, Parts 1 and 2. Although Milavec follows some highly individualistic approaches to some Didache issues, his opinions need to be heard since he has thought long and hard about these issues.

9Jean Paul Audet in *La Didache: Instruction des Apotres* (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1958) has provided the most scholarly defense of a very early date, although he does acknowledge a number of later editorial additions to the document.

characterize an approach to how the Didache uses the Scriptures.

Use of the New Testament

The reader of the Didache who is familiar with the Gospels is struck by its preference for the Gospel of Matthew. Possibly the Didachist clearly cites only that Gospel to the exclusion of the other Gospels and probably to the exclusion of all other NT books. The question of how writers cite Scripture is complicated by the question of what constitutes a quotation from an earlier work. How close to the original source does it have to be to qualify as a “quotation”? As a working model, the following paradigm is proposed, a paradigm suggested by many writers and cogently described by David Aune:

In citations, a portion of text (is) reproduced word for word from a source, often prefaced with an introductory formula such as “As it is written” (Rom. 9:13), “For the scripture says to Pharaoh” (Rom. 9:17), “Have you not read this scripture” (Mark 12:10-11). Distinguished from citations are quotations, word-for-word reproductions of a text without any introductory markers. Allusions are references that the writer assumes the reader will recognize . . . consisting of one or more words sufficiently distinctive to be traced to a known text, but not a verbatim reproduction of any part of that text . . . . An echo is subtler than an allusion and is a relatively faint reference to a text.\(^\text{11}\)

Dogmatism about authorial intent tends to diminish the more one progresses through that paradigm from citations to echoes. In any case, the paradigm remains useful not only for how the NT refers to the Old but also how the Didachist or any other later writer refers to the canonical books. The Didache has examples of each of the ways of referring to Scripture suggested by Aune.

Before an examination of some examples of how the Didachist refers to Matthew, a listing of the number of times he does just that is helpful. The following table, limiting references to citations and quotations only, shows how often verses from Matthew appear in the Didache.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Didache Reference</th>
<th>Matthew Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>28:16,19,20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:1</td>
<td>7:13,14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:2</td>
<td>22:38,39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:2c</td>
<td>7:12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:3b</td>
<td>5:44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:3c</td>
<td>5:46,47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:4b</td>
<td>5:39,48,40,41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\(^{12}\)The information in this table was adapted from a more detailed table in Alan Garrow, *The Gospel of Matthew’s Dependence on the Didache* (Sheffield, Eng.: T and T Clark, 2004) xiv-xxiii. One does not have to accept Garrow’s novel thesis that the Didache actually antedates Matthew to benefit from his detailed research.
One may not agree that every one of the verses in the Didache constitutes a deliberate attempt by the author to refer to a Matthean passage. For example, some of the references from Didache 2:2–3:7 in the table could possibly be to various verses in the LXX text of their OT source (see Didache 3:7, e.g., for a possible quotation from Ps 37:11). Nevertheless, the Didache quotations of these possible OT verses match Matthew’s version of them in Greek. In any case, the overwhelming presence of the first Gospel in the Didache is quite evident.

Upon further examination of such a table one must notice that the bulk of the quotations are from the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7) and the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24–25), the two longest discourses of Jesus in Matthew’s Gospel. Another striking fact is that there is really only one other passage in the Didache in which it appears that a quotation agrees more closely with a Synoptic Gospel other than Matthew. That is in Didache 1:5a:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Didache text of 1:5a</th>
<th>Luke 6:30</th>
<th>Matthew 5:42</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>παντὶ τῷ αἰτοῦντι σε δίδου καὶ μὴ ἀπαίτει</td>
<td>παντὶ αἰτοῦντι σε δίδου καὶ . . . μὴ ἀπαίτει</td>
<td>τῷ αἰτοῦντι σε δὸς καὶ . . . μὴ ἄπουστραφής</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Though such a variation may prohibit blind dogmatism about the Didache’s sole usage of Matthew, its rarity of occurrence illustrates the point that the Didachist used Matthew almost exclusively.

Addressing the question of whether the Didachist (or any Apostolic Father for that matter) knew the Gospel of Matthew or any Gospel in its current canonical form is necessary. In this matter, Didache scholars are divided. Until the 1950s writers on the Didache universally held that the Didachist knew and used the current canonical Matthew. With the publication of Helmut Koester’s doctoral thesis under Rudolph Bultmann in 1957, the terrain began to change. The Bultmann/Koester “school” declares that since our canonical Gospels did not take final shape until the latter part of the second century, it is impossible that any Apostolic Father could have used them. They usually point to the fluidity in the tradition and how sometimes the verses from the Gospels do not appear exactly the way they are found now. They explain away the exact quotations that do appear as redactions to bring the quotations in line with their later written form. Therefore, according to this approach, all that the Apostolic Fathers had at their disposal was the oral tradition of Jesus’ words, which was heavily marked by fluidity and diversity. That diversity, they say, is illustrated by the very citations in the Fathers’ writings.

However, not all scholars have surrendered to that current view. Many argue that the Didache and other early Fathers like Ignatius and Polycarp did certainly utilize material from the Synoptic Gospels. If they did not always do so by direct quotation, then certainly they did by strong enough allusions to indicate their knowledge of the Gospels. Such writers have also provided the hard evidence to show this to be the case. One recent work from a contemporary German scholar affirms, “The Didache means by ‘the gospel’ [8:2; 11:3; 15:3, 4] the Gospel of Matthew; thus the Didache . . . documents the emerging authority of the one great Gospel.” Schnelle’s references to those places in the Didache where τὸ εὐαγγέλιον appear indicate that the writer had a written Gospel before him. Note especially the expression in 15:3 and repeated in 15:4: ὡς ἔχετε ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ. And since the words that he quotes from that εὐαγγέλιον are words that are found in canonical Matthew only, it appears that the presupposition that Matthew could not have existed at the turn of the first century is the only thing that keeps some scholars from admitting that it is quoted in the Didache. The only response to such evidence from the Didache is a theory that these verses were added by a later redactor. The evidence, however, points in another direction.

But what about the differences in detail when the Didachist cites Matthew? How is this explained? An examination of Didache 1:3-5a, for example, indicates that these verses are not verbatim from Matthew’s Gospel. They appear to be adapted freely from Matt 5:39-41 and 44-48 (see accompanying text). The differences are explainable by recognizing that the Didachist adapted the passages for his own didactic purpose, much like what some NT authors do. Modern teachers and preachers may adapt a passage for their purpose without necessarily changing the authorial intent of the passage. Tuckett persuasively argues this way in his article cited in n. 15, an argument that accords with common sense practice also. After a detailed analysis of Didache 1:3-5a, Tuckett concludes, “The Didachist was using his sources here with a certain degree of faithfulness. This suggests very strongly that the Didache here presupposes the gospels of Matthew and Luke in their finished forms. Further, this result seems to apply to all parts of the Didache examined here.”

Should exactness in quotation be expected from all ancient writers? Should the same precision in the biblical writers that meets modern scholarly standards be expected? The Fathers wrote what they did, not to be read as academic term papers graded by pedantic teaching assistants, but for the practical purpose of instructing and exhorting their readers. This teaching proceeded from passionate hearts, sometimes possibly as they quoted from memory. Lest one think this is the view of this writer only, consider the words of the great textual scholar, Bruce Metzger, about the quoting habits of the Fathers:

After the true text of the Patristic author has been recovered, the further question must be raised whether the writer intended to quote the scriptural passage verbatim or merely to paraphrase it. If one is assured that the Father makes a bona fide quotation and not a mere allusion, the problem remains whether he quoted it after consulting the passage in a manuscript or whether he relied on his memory.\(^\text{17}\)

Metzger illustrates how Origen hardly ever quoted the same passage in the same way twice! Enough has been said to grant the Didachist the benefit of the doubt if he occasionally fashioned Matthew’s verses to fit his teaching purposes. When he changes the wording slightly, he appears always to be consistent with the authorial intent of Jesus as recorded in Matthew.

Perhaps too much attention has been given to the differences between the Didache text and that of Matthew, since the differences are actually few compared to the similarities. For most of his citations/quotations, no discernible difference between the texts exists. Consider, for example, two specific examples of the Didachist’s quoting of Matthew in later chapters.

Intense ethical instruction composes most of chaps. 1–5 of the Didache. This material appears to be a pre-baptismal catechetical manual (note the phrase used before the command to baptize: \(\text{Τὰ ὡς γράφθηκαν πρὸς ὑμᾶς} \), “having said all these things beforehand,” i.e., the things contained beforehand in the first six chapters, 7:1). The Didachist proceeds to describe how a church should conduct its ministry of sacraments, prayer, teaching, and hospitality (chaps. 7–15). He does this by using the discourse marker \(\piτιμ \) five times, to mark off the sections in which he gives instruction on: 1. dietary restrictions (6:3); 2. baptism and prayer (7:1); 3.
the eucharist (9:1,3); and 4. the treatment of apostles and prophets (11:3) (see accompanying text). This resembles Paul’s use of the same discourse marker to introduce successive subjects he addressed in 1 Corinthians (7:1; 7:25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1; 16:12).

In the section on prayer, he introduces what has been called for many years “The Lord’s Prayer.” Here is this writer’s translation with the accompanying Greek text from the Didache and the corresponding text in the UBS 4th ed. Greek text:

8:2 “(And) do not pray like the hypocrites but like the Lord commanded in his gospel.

Pray this way:

Our Father, who is in heaven,
may your name be made holy,
may your kingdom come,
may your will be done upon earth as in heaven,
give us today our daily bread,
and forgive us our debt as we also forgive our debtors,
and do not lead us into trial but deliver us from the evil one,
because yours is the power and the glory forever.”

[Didache:]

Πάτερ ἡμῶν ὁ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ ἁγιασθῇ τὸ ὄνομά σου,
ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου, γεννηθήτω τὸ βῆθημα σου ὡς ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον δὸς ἡμῖν σήμερον. καὶ ἀφες ἡμῖν τὴν ὀφειλήμα τὴν ἡμῶν ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφίημεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν, καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν, ἀλλὰ ρῦσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν, ὡς καὶ ἡμῖν ἔξω τοῦ κόσμου ἐκεῖνος.

[UBS:]

Πάτερ ἡμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς ἁγιασθῇ τὸ ὄνομά σου,
ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου· γεννηθήτω τὸ βῆθημα σου· ὡς ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον δὸς ἡμῖν σήμερον· καὶ ἀφες ἡμῖν τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν· ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφίημεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν· καὶ μὴ ἐισενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν· ἀλλὰ ρῦσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ.

The words underlined indicate some differences between the Didache text and that in Matthew. As one can see, the differences are minimal. The Didache has the singular “heaven” and “debt” while the Matthew text has those words in the plural. There is also a slight change in the tense of the Greek word for “forgive.” No differences, however, affect in the least the meaning conveyed in the prayer.

There is an addition at the end of the prayer in the Didache that is not in our modern critical text since it is not in the earliest Greek manuscripts of Matthew. It is similar to but shorter than the addition familiar to many Christians that is found in the later Byzantine addition to the prayer (see textual apparatus in UBS or Nestle-Aland for the details). Though this addition to the prayer in the Didache initially may appear to encourage Byzantine text advocates since it could support an early date for this ending, the truth is just the opposite. The doxological ascription appears later in the Didache in almost the exact same form and is appended to the Eucharistic prayers in 9:2, 3, 4 and 10:2, 4, 5. It is very similar to a common ending
to prayers in the Jewish liturgy which exist even today. A better explanation of the manuscript tradition is that the Didache is an early witness to the tendency of scribes to add doxological ascriptions, which increased in Byzantine times when the doxological ascription crystallized and, in the Middle Ages, became part of the received text—at least in the Byzantine section of the church (Western and Latin texts along with the Alexandrian text-type omit the doxology).

Another apparently direct citation from Matthew appears in the Didache where the eucharist is explained. The Didachist supports his point that only believers should partake of the eucharist in the following manner:

9:5 (And) let no one eat or drink from your eucharist except those baptized in the name of the Lord, for also the Lord has said concerning this: “Do not give what is holy to the dogs.”

[Didache of Didache 9:5: Μὴ δῶσε τὸ ἐγινὼν τοῖς κυσί. UBS text of Matt 7:6: Μὴ δῶσε τὸ ἐγινὼν τοῖς κυσίν.]

The issue about the form of this text citation is simple. The texts are identical (unless one fusses about the “movable nu” in Matthew). Authority for this saying is traced directly to the “Lord.” Occasionally, that title has a general sense in the Didache, but as it does here, it often clearly refers to Jesus (see also 6:2; 8:2; 11:2; 4, 8; 12:1; 14:1; 15:4; 16:1, 8). It is not the “form” issue but the “hermeneutical” issue that arises this text. Would the reader of the Sermon on the Mount think of “closed communion” for believers only as the original intention of this Dominical saying in Matt 7:6? Probably not. Does that indicate that the Didachist has ripped this saying from its original Matthean context and applied it wrongly to the issue of correct participation in the Eucharistic observance? Proponents of the non-use of the Gospels by the Apostolic Fathers have no problem here. They affirm that this saying was taken either from the oral tradition or from a Jewish milieu, and was used by the Didachist in this way for his purpose and also by the “Matthean” author for his purpose. Is there another way to approach this?

The context of this saying is the Sermon on the Mount at the end of Jesus’ warning against hypocritical judging of others (7:1-5). It then precedes a pericope on prayer (7:6-11). The first five verses of Matthew 7 comprise a strong warning against harsh and wrongful discernment. To balance that warning, Jesus in v. 6 gives what could very well have been a proverbial Jewish saying to teach that there is such a thing as correct discernment about those who in reality are “dogs” and “pigs.” That is the legitimate connection between 7:1-5 and 7:6, and the commentators bear this out. If this is the case, the Didachist makes a point that it is also a correct act of discernment to deny the eucharist to unbaptized nonbelievers. It is not a harsh or unkind act to keep them from partaking. As a matter of fact, the leaders of the assembly have a moral and spiritual responsibility to do so. Though this verse was

19Oskar Skarsaune, In the Shadow of the Temple: Jewish Influences on Early Christianity (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2002) 406-21. Skarsaune’s chapter is very helpful in tracing the Jewish background of many of the early church’s practices, as is also his entire volume.

20Draper, “Jesus Tradition in the Didache” 78.

not originally given in Matthew to limit participation in the eucharist to believers, the Didachist's use of it is consistent with the way Jesus used it to make His point in the Sermon on the Mount.

Use of Noncanonical Material

More could be written about the Didache’s use of NT citations and allusions, but the above-mentioned texts evidence the author’s agreement with the broad scope of NT theology and practice as well as his adapting some NT verses for his own specific purposes. Before an examination of his use of the Scriptures from the canonical Old Covenant, some notice should be given to the question of whether or not the Didachist refers to non-canonical literature, and if he does, how he uses it.

For years scholars have noticed that Didache 1–5 develops the theme of the “two ways.” Didache 1:1 opens with “There are two ways: one of life and one of death! (And) there is a great difference between the two ways.” Later he concludes the first part of this section with “This is the Way of Life!” (4:14b). He then launches the second section this way: “The way of death, on the other hand, is this . . .” (5:1–2). Some have claimed that the Didachist adapted an existing Jewish “two ways” ethical treatise for his “Jewish Christian” purposes. Such a claim has arisen specially since the discovery and publication of the Dead Sea Scrolls, some of which reflect such an ethical treatise in the Community Rule of that sect.

However, after initially being positive about the possibility of the Didachist’s adaptation of a Jewish document to his purpose, this writer has become convinced that the comparison and relationship has been greatly overdrawn. Such an effort, in my opinion, suffers from what has come to be called “parallelomania,” the unjustified effort to see parallels and borrowings from one body of literature by another, based on either anachronistic or very slim analogies between the two.

The simple fact of the matter is that no clear example of a Jewish “two ways” document from the period antedating the Didache has ever been produced. To postulate the existence of such a document is easy, but such a document has not been found. A careful Didache scholar recognized this when he wrote about attempts to make the Qumran material a source for the Didache.

One must not lose the unique perspective that the comparison between the Manual of Discipline from Qumran and the different forms of the Christian duae viae brings concerning the dualistic framework (which is absent in the Didache!) and concerning the general literary genre of instruction which places side by side a list of virtues and a list

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22One thinks of the “little apocalypse” (chapter 16) and its relationship to Matthew 24–25 as well as the eucharist liturgy (chaps. 8–9) and its relationship, if any, to the eucharistic words of Jesus in Matthew 26.

23The DSS source most often referred to is 1QS 3:13–4:26. I can offer only a summary of some of the main books and articles on this subject of the Jewish context of the “Two Ways” section in recent years. Audet (see n. 9); van de Sandt and Flusser (n. 3); Jean Danielou, The Theology of Jewish Christianity I (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1964) 28ff., 315ff.; Gedaliah Alon, “The Halacha in the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles,” in Draper, Didache 165-94; Jean-Paul Audet, “Literary and Doctrinal Affinities of the Manual of Discipline,” in Draper, Didache 129-47. This is only a representative summary of works which seek to affirm a relationship between Didache 1–5 and 1QS to one degree or another.
Just three years after the Didache’s publication, the great scholar, Benjamin Warfield, warned against any effort to argue for a Jewish “two ways” vorlage, in light of the meager evidence of such ever existing. This writer challenges anyone to read the appropriate section of “The Community Rule” (1QS) 3:13–4:26 and find anything that would make one think of Didache 1–5, unless he or she had been preconditioned to do so. In my opinion, the only similarity in the two documents is the word “two.” The Scroll speaks of “two” angels, one of darkness and one of light and how men are ruled by one of “two” spirits. This may be parallel to the rabbinic concept of the two inclinations in man—the “yetzer hara” and the “yetzer hatov”—but it bears only a slight resemblance to the Didache’s description of the two ways, mainly in the word “two!”

It should be noted that the “two ways” ethical pattern is very Jewish and has deep roots in Jewish Scripture. Consider Deut 30:19: “I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death...” Psalm 1 describes the two ways with their contrasting results very graphically. The wisdom literature of the Hebrew Bible is replete with this contrasting comparison. Consider Proverbs 1–9 with its comparison of the “Way of Wisdom” with the “Way of Folly.”

Seeing the Didache and the Hebrew Scriptures as employing a literary pattern ingrained in pre-Christian Jewish thinking is more reasonable. It served as a pattern for the Didachist to employ in his Jewish Christian treatise. If there was literary dependence, it makes much more sense again to see it in the statement of one thoroughly versed in the Hebrew “two ways” thinking: “Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few” (Matt 7:13,14). Sometimes things may be simpler than people try to make them.

If the Didachist did not employ a non-canonical source as he composed the whole of chapters 1–5, his second verse may still present a challenge to that general conclusion. There one encounters what has often been called the “Negative Golden Rule.” Didache 1:2b states, “[A]s many [things] as you might wish not to happen to you, likewise, do not do to another.” This is certainly similar to Jesus’ statement in Matt 7:12, where it is expressed positively. A pre-Christian history to this piece of ethical advice exists, however. Tobit’s advice to his son in 4:15 is similar: “And what you hate, do not do to anyone.” Furthermore, the famous dictum of Hillel to the inquiring Gentile in Babyloni an Shabbat 31a also sounds very similar to Didache 1:2b. Did the Didachist deliberately alter the Dominical saying in accord with Jewish tradition, or could this be an example of a genuine agraphon—an unwritten saying of Jesus? No one knows, but anyone should recognize this as a further example of the definitely Jewish character of the Didache, even in its Christian dress.

One of the most perplexing statements in the Didache concludes a treatment of vices; but in the detail of content and vocabulary, resemblances are missing. 


of the possible non-canonical citations in the book. It comes at the end of chapter 1, concluding a previously noted passage that encourages giving, with many quotes from the Sermon on the Mount (1:3-5). Didache 1:6 states, “But also, concerning this [rule], on the one hand, it has been said: ‘Let your alms sweat in your hands, until you know to whom you might give [it].’” This appears to be a warning against indiscriminate almsgiving: the worthiness of the potential alms-receiver is a very important consideration before the alms-giver acts. Many commentators have noted a similar sentiment expressed in Sirach 12:1, but the wording is quite different from this (the Didachist uses the “citation formula” εἰρήνης, “it has been said”).

The best suggestion is that he did use Sirach, but not in the way he is often understood to have done. In one of the most brilliant examples of linguistic detective work this writer has ever read, the Dead Sea Scrolls scholar Patrick Skehan has shown, in light of a Hebrew copy of Sirach found in the Cairo Geniza, that it is possible that an ancient scribe mistook a Hebrew word for “truth” for the same initialied word for “sweat.” That mistake could have led to the strange translation in the Didache, which apparently utilizes only the Greek translation of the OT.

One more facet of linguistic phenomena helps to see why the Didachist chose this strange text from a non-canonical book—something he did not do elsewhere in his work. The introduction to the quotation in Greek is, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐπὶ τούτου δὲ εἴρηνης. The strong adversative conjunction plus the conjunction καὶ and later a milder adversative conjunction δὲ combine to make a rather involved Greek construction. Elsewhere in the Didache, the adversative ἀλλὰ ἀλάδε always introduces a strong contrast with what has gone before (see 2:5; 2:7; 3:9; 4:9; 8:2; 16:1). The explanation is that the same strong adversative idea is found here. What the Didachist does is to contrast the generous giving commanded by Jesus with the “tight-fisted” attitude commended by Sirach in 12:1-7, a further pessimistic tone about giving to unworthy people. In addition, the verse’s advice as it is quoted is totally opposite the spirit and practice of giving that is commended elsewhere in 4:8:

[C] You will not turn away the one in need;
   [1] but, on the other hand, you will share together,
       all things with your brother,
   [2] and you will not say that such things are your own.
       For, if you are partners in the immortal [things],
           how much more [are you partners] in the mortal [things].

It appears that the Didachist did actually use a non-canonical work, even quoting it. But he did so, not as a positive witness to confirm what he had just taught, but as a negative witness to a practice he intends his readers to avoid.

Use of the Old Testament

This study of the Didache’s use of Scripture concludes by noting its two direct citations from the OT. The first is a significant citation from Mal 1:11, 14.
The Didachist employs it at the end of a section in chap. 14 in which he exhorts the brethren to be at peace with one another lest they mar their participation in the eucharist. After alluding to the statement in Matt 5:23-24 regarding one’s sacrifice being defiled by unreconciled differences between brethren (14:2), he cites the OT text that he believes prophesies about sacrifices to be offered by the Gentiles.

14:3  For this is that which was spoken by the Lord: (ἡ ῥῆπτεισα) “In every place and time, offer to me a pure sacrifice.” “Because I am a great king,” says [the] Lord, “and my name is wondrous among the Gentiles.” (Mal 1:11, 14)

A comparison of the text form of the Didachist’s citation reveals some differences from both the Masoretic and LXX renderings of the verses.

[Didache]: ἐν παντὶ τοπῷ καὶ χρόνῳ προσφέρειν μοι θυσίαν καθαρὰν ὅτι βασιλεὺς μέγας εἰμὶ λέγει κύριος καὶ τὸ ὄνομά μου θαυμαστὸν ἐν τοῖς ἔθεσιν.

MT: בֵּבְכֵל מָקוֹם מַעַשׂ לְשֵׁם יְהֹוָה מָהֵר בִּלְבֶדֶר כִּי מֶלֶךְ גָּדוֹל אֶלֶף אֲמַר יְהוָה יְבִא אֶלֶף נַלְגָּה בָּגֵד.

LXX: ἐν παντὶ τοπῷ θυμίαμα προσάγεται τῷ ὄνοματί μου καὶ θυσία καθαρά, διότι βασιλεὺς μέγας ἐγώ εἰμι λέγει κύριος παντοκράτωρ καὶ τὸ ὄνομά μου ἐπιφανεῖς ἐν τοῖς ἔθεσιν.

The Didachist omits the title “Almighty” from Mal 1:11 (חָזָב in MT; παντοκράτωρ in LXX) and uses a functionally equivalent word (θαυμαστὸν) for the θηλιον of Mal 1:14 in the MT and the ἐπιφανεῖς in the LXX.

Of greater interest is why he may have chosen Mal 1:11, 14 and how he saw its function in redemptive history. The Didachist probably seized on the Malachi prophecy because of its reference to the Gentiles (ἔθέσι) in verse 14. It should be kept in mind that he sees his work as the “Teaching of the Lord through the Twelve Apostles to the Gentiles” (title). The prophecy about Gentiles offering a pure sacrifice when Malachi’s Jewish people were offering defiled sacrifices (see Mal 1:6-10) implied a reversal of what the Jewish people of Malachi’s day knew and observed. The Didachist saw these future sacrifices as spiritual, fulfilled in the Eucharistic observances commemorating the one great sacrifice for Christians through Jesus. A large number of church Fathers followed the Didache in viewing the Malachi prophecy as finding its fulfillment in the eucharistic observance in the

1–9. In addition to the similarity in Didache 3–5 to the wisdom tradition in Proverbs, there is a similar approach in the non-canonical wisdom book, Jesus ben Sirach. Throughout the book a τρέχειν is addressed no less than 19 times and then instructed in behavior similar to that prescribed in Didache (Sirach 2:1; 3:12, 17; 4:1; 6:18, 23, 32; 10:28; 14:11; 16:24; 21:1; 30:9; 31:22, 37:27; 38:9, 16; 40:28). No one claims that the Didachist is quoting Proverbs or Sirach. But he is utilizing a literary pattern that was prevalent in Hebrew wisdom teaching.
assemblies of (predominantly) Gentile believers. Though not limiting the fulfillment to Gentiles nor to the Eucharist, the NT writers (not citing the Malachi text but probably echoing it) see believers in the new age as offering spiritual sacrifices.

The last instance of the Didache citing an OT text is in the final chapter of the work. Chapter 16 has often been referred to as a “little apocalypse” and deserves a full treatment in itself due to the hermeneutical issues it raises. The present discussion looks only at how the Didachist grounds his point about the bodily resurrection at the second advent in a prophecy from Zech 14:5.

16:6 [4] And then the signs of the truth will appear:
[a] the first sign [will be] an opening in heaven,
[b] then [the] sign of a trumpet sound,
[c] and the third [sign will be] a resurrection of dead ones—
16:7 but not of all [the dead], (οὐ πάντων δὲ)
but as it was said: (ἐφρέθη)
“The Lord will come and all the holy ones with him.”

[Didache: ἡξει ο κύριος καὶ πάντες οἱ ἁγιοί μετ’ αὐτῶν.]
MT: ἡξει κύριος ὁ θεὸς μου καὶ πάντες οἱ ἁγιοί μετ’ αὐτῶν]

The Didachist does not claim that his “teaching” in this chapter is a special and new revelation. That would be inconsistent with his goal to present the “teaching of the Lord through the Apostles.” He simply takes material, mainly from the “Olivet Discourse” of Matthew 24–25 plus OT parallels, and adapts it to his perception of the order in which those events will transpire. The Didachist does not envision Scripture teaching a future “general” resurrection, but one that consists of believers only (οὐ πάντων δὲ, 16:7a). He believes this to be consistent with the prophecy in Zech 14:5 about “the holy ones” who will accompany the Lord (Κύριος when he will come (ἡξει)). The only issue of textual form here is that the Didache quotation agrees with the LXX reading “with Him” (μετ’ αὐτῶν) instead of the reading “with you” (Πρός) of the MT. The Didachist evidently sees the “holy ones” of Zech 14:5 as believers, not angels (cf. 1 Thess 3:13). Elsewhere, the NT sees angels as also accompanying the Lord at His advent (Matt 25:30).

Though this is not the place to engage in an exegeisis of the whole passage.

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29 A sampling of Patristic authors and their works utilizing this Malachi text as prophetic of the eucharist in the same way as the Didachist include Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho 41:2; 116:3; 117:1.4; Clement of Alexandria, Stromata 5.136.2,3; Irenaeus, Heresies 4.17.5,6; and Tertullian, Adversus Judaeos 5.4, 5.7; idem, Against Marcion 3.22.6; 4.1.8; Lactantius, Divine Institutions 4.11.8; Origen, Homily on Genesis, 13.3; Eusebius, Demonstratio 1,10,35; 3.2,74; and Cyril of Alexandria, Catechesis ad Illuminatos A 18,25. This listing includes Fathers only through the early fourth century who cite the text this way.

30 Phil 2:17; 4:18; Heb 13:15, 16; 1 Pet 2:5.

31 Didache scholars, while not ignoring this chapter, have not given it the attention it deserves. In this regard, it is interesting to take note of a doctoral dissertation devoted chiefly to this chapter by George Eldon Ladd, “The Eschatology of the Didache” (Harvard University, 1949).
some writers have seen strong chiliastic implications in the Didachist’s view of a resurrection at the parousia limited to believers only (cf. Rev 20:1-6). One cannot be dogmatic about such “evidence” for chiliasm, however, since the Didache reading breaks off at this point, and no one knows what followed in the original ending, which is missing in the manuscript discovered in 1873.

Summary and Conclusions

The discussion above has surveyed the way in which the Didachist used the canonical Scriptures to transmit to Gentile believers what he believed was the teaching of the Twelve Apostles. A few observations about how he does that follows:

1. The Didachist, while sometimes creatively re-arranging canonical material, knew that authority lay in those Scriptures, not in himself. He makes no attempts to present himself as a channel of revelation. He looked to the inspired Scriptures of the OT and to the words of Jesus for his authority in transmitting that “teaching.”

2. The Didachist was not only aware of Matthew’s Gospel, but he used it extensively in its canonical form. He did not hesitate to adopt some of the sayings of Jesus by arranging them in an order to argue effectively his point of ethical behavior and sacramental observance. Yet even when he did rearrange material, he always remained consistent with the authorial intent of those passages.

3. The Didachist utilized two of the three ancient divisions of the Hebrew Bible, the “Law” and the “Prophets.” He apparently knew and used that form of the OT Greek Bible called the Septuagint. The LXX, as was the case with most of the NT writers and the vast majority of Patristic writers, was his Bible, along with the words of Jesus in Matthew. The canonical/hermeneutical implications of this pervasive Christian use of the LXX needs to be explored further by evangelical scholarship.

4. From the OT passages that he used, the Didachist apparently did not employ the allegorical method that became so popular in the second century, as exemplified in the Epistle of Barnabas. He did not hesitate to see a change from literal sacrifices under the Old Covenant to spiritual sacrifices under the New; in this he was consistent with the practice of NT writers, although he was unaware of most of those writings. He follows, therefore, a redemptive historical hermeneutic in seeing progression in meaning. He did not, however, evidence an authorially intended allegorizing of the OT passages with a hidden meaning different from the historical-grammatical meaning.

5. The methodological paradigm of citations, quotations, allusions, and echoes, as ways in which NT writers referenced the Old, appears also to be the way

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33For a suggestion about the content of that missing ending, see Robert Aldridge, “The Lost Ending of the Didache,” Vigiliae Christianae 53 [1999]:1-15. I plan to write another article exploring these and other eschatological issues in the Didache as well as further studies of various issues in the document. For example, I regret that here I cannot examine the Didachist’s reference to Jesus as God’s πατήρ (9:2,3) in light of the early view of Jesus as the Isaiastic Servant (פיוט, cf. Acts 3:13, 26).

34See Martin Hengel, The Septuagint as Christian Scripture: Its Prehistory and the Problem of Its Canon (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 2002), and Mogens Muller, The First Bible of the Church: A Plea for the Septuagint (Sheffield, Eng.: Sheffield Academic, 1996) for serious efforts in this area.
in which the Didachist used authoritative Scripture available to him. Examples of each of those ways of referring to Scripture are present in the little book. Though this writer in no way espouses its inspiration nor calls for its inclusion in the canon, his conclusion is that the Didache accomplished what it set out to do: provide a faithful, if not complete, record of the teaching of the Lord through the apostles to the Gentiles.

AN ANALYTICAL TRANSLATION OF THE DIDACHE
(with Scripture citations and references noted)

Teaching (Didache) of the Lord
through the Twelve Apostles to the Gentiles

1:1 There are two ways: one of life and one of death!
(And) [there is] a great difference between the two ways.
(see Mat 7:13,14; Dt 30:19; Proverbs 1–9)

1:2 [A] On the one hand, then, the way of life is this:
[1] first: you will love the God who made you;
(Matt 22:37-39; Deut 6:5; Lev 19:18)
[B] On the other hand [the way of life is this]:
as many [things] as you might wish not to happen to you,
likewise, do not do to another. (cf. Matt 7:12; Tob 4:15; Hillel; v.l.
Acts 15:29)

1:3 (And) concerning these matters, the teaching is this:
[A] speak well of the ones speaking badly of you,
[B] and pray for your enemies,
[C] (and) fast for the ones persecuting you;
For what merit [is there] if you love the ones loving you?
Do not even the Gentiles do the same thing?
[D] you, on the other hand, love the ones hating you,
(Matt 5:44, 46, 47)
and you will not have an enemy.

1:4 Abstain from fleshly and bodily desires. (cf. 1 Pet 2:11)
[A] If anyone should strike you on the right cheek,
turn to him also the other, (Matt 5:39) and you will be perfect; (Matt 5:48)
[B] If anyone should press you into service for one mile,
go with him two;
[C] If anyone should take away your cloak,
give to him also your tunic;
[D] If anyone should take from you what is yours,
do not ask for it back; (Matt 5:41, 40)
for you are not even able [to do so].

1:5 To everyone asking you [for anything], give [it]
and do not ask for it back; (Luke 6:30; Matt. 5:42)
for, to all, the Father wishes to give
[these things] from his own free gifts.
[A] Blessed is the one giving according to the commandment;
or he is blameless.
[B] Woe to the one taking;
[1] for, on the one hand, if anyone having need takes,
he will be blameless;

[2] on the other hand, the one not having need
[a] will stand trial
[as to] why he received and for what [use];
[b] (and) being in prison, he/she will be
examined thoroughly
concerning the things he has done,
[c] and he will not come_out from there
until he pays_back the last cent. (cf. Matt 5:26;
Luke 12:59)

1:6 [C] But also, concerning this [rule], on the other hand, it has been said:
“Let your alms sweat in your hands,
until you know to whom you might give [it].” (see Sirach 12:1,7)

2:1 (And) the second rule of the teaching [is this]:
2:2 [A1] You will not murder,
[A2] you will not commit adultery,
(Matt 19:18; 5:33; the following vv. elaborate Exod 20:13-17)
[A3] you will not corrupt_boys,
[A4] you will not have_illicit_sex,
[A5] you will not steal,
[A6] you will not practice_magic,
[A7] you will not make_potions,
[A8] you will not murder a child by_means_of abortion,
[A9] nor you will kill one_that_has_been_born,
[A10] you will not desire the things of [your] neighbor.

2:3 [B1] you will not swear_falsely, (Matt 5:33 ?)
[B2] you will not bear_false_witness,
[B3] you will not speak_badly [of anyone],
[B4] you will not hold_grudges.

2:4 [B5] You will not be double-minded nor double-tongued,
for being double-tongued is a snare of death.

2:5 [In sum] your word will not be false nor empty,
but will be fulfilled by action.

2:6 [C1] You will not be covetous,
[C2] (and) not greedy,
[C3] (and) not a hypocrite,
[C4] (and) not bad-mannered,
[C5] (and) not arrogant.
[In sum] you will not take an evil plan against your neighbor.

2:7 You will not hate any person,
[1] but some you will reprove,
[2] and concerning others you will pray,
[3] and some you will love more than your soul.

3:1 My child, flee from every evil
and from everything like it.

3:2 [A] Do not become angry,
for anger leads to murder;
nor envious,
nor contentious,
nor hot-headed,
for, from all these, murders are begotten.
3:3  [B] My child, do not become lustful,
    for lust leads to illicit sex;
nor one using foul speech,
nor one lifting up the eyes,
    for, from all these, adulteries are begotten.
3:4  [C] My child, do not become a diviner,
    since [this] leads to idolatry;
nor an enchanter,
nor an astrologer,
nor a purifier,
nor [even] wish to see these things,
    for, from all these, idolatry is begotten.
3:5  [D] My child, do not become false,
    since falsehood leads to theft;
nor a lover of money,
nor a seeker of glory,
    for, from all these, thefts are begotten.
3:6  [E] My child, do not become a grumbler,
    since [this] leads to blasphemy;
nor self-pleasing,
nor evil-minded,
    for, from all these, blasphemies are begotten.
3:7  But be gentle,
since the gentle will inherit the earth. (Matt 5:5; Ps 37:11)
3:8  [A] Become long-suffering
    and merciful
    and harmless
    and calm
    and good
    and trembling through all [time] at the words
    that you have heard. (allusion to Isa 66:2?)
3:9  [B] You will not exalt yourself,
    (and) you will not give boldness to your soul.
Your soul will not be joined with [the] lofty,
    but with [the] just and [the] lowly you will dwell.
3:10 [C] You will accept the experiences befalling you as good things,
    knowing that, apart from God, nothing happens.
4:1  [A] My child, the one speaking to you the word of God,
[1] you will remember night and day,  (cf. Heb 13:7)
[2] (and) you will honor him as [the] Lord,
    for where [the] dominion [of the Lord] is spoken of,
    there [the] Lord is.
4:2  [3] (And) you will seek every day the presence of the saints
    in order that you may rest upon their words.
4:3  [B] You will not cause division:
[1] (And) you will reconcile those fighting;
[2] you will judge justly;
[3] you will not take [into account] social status
    when it comes time to reprove against failings.
4:4  [C] You will not be double-minded whether it will be or not.
4:5  [A] Do not become one,
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4:6 [B] If you should have [something] through [the work of] your hands, you will give a ransom of your sins.

4:7 [1] You will not hesitate to give, [2] nor will you grumble when you give; for you will know who will be the good paymaster of your reward.

4:8 [C] You will not turn away the one in need; [1] but, on the other hand, you will share together, all things with your brother, [2] and you will not say that such things are your own. (cf. Acts 4:32)

4:9 [A] You will not take away your hand from your son or from your daughter, but from youth you will train [them] in the fear of God.

4:10 [B] You will not command your male or female slave who are hoping in the same God [as you] in your bitterness, lest they should never fear the God [who is] over both [of you], for He does not come to call according to one’s social status, but [He calls] those whom the Spirit has made-ready.

4:11 [C] And you, the slaves, will be subject to your masters as to the image of God in shame and fear.

4:12 [A] You will hate all hypocrisy, and everything that is not pleasing to the Lord.

4:13 [B] Never forsake the commandments of [the] Lord, (but) you will guard the things that you have received, neither adding nor taking [anything] away. (allusion to Deut 4:2 or 12:32)

4:14 [C] In church, you will confess your wrongdoings, and you will not go to your prayer with an evil conscience. This is the Way of Life!

5:1 The way of death, on the other hand, is this: first of all, it is evil and full of accursedness:

[A1] murders, [A12] double-heartednesses,
[A2] adulteries, [A13] trickery,
[A3] lusts, [A14] arrogance,
[A4] illicit sexual acts, [A15] malice,
[A5] thefts, [A16] self-pleasing,
[A6] idolatries, [A17] greed,
[A7] magic, [A18] foul-speech,
[A8] potions, [A19] jealousy,
[A9] robberies, [A20] audacity,
[A10] perjuries, [A21] haughtiness,

5:2 [B1] [those] persecutors of the good, [B11] [those] not showing_ mercy to the poor,
[B3] [those] loving a lie, [B13] not knowing the one_who
[B4] [those] not knowing [the] wages of righteousness, [B14] murderers of children,
[B6] nor with just judgment, formed
[B7] [those] being on the alert not for the good,
[B8] [those] far from being gentle
[B9] [those] loving empty [things], [B16] turning away the one in need,
[B10] [those] pursuing retribution
[B11] nor with just judgment,
[B17] oppressing the afflicted,
[B18] advocates of the rich,
[B19] lawless judges of [the] poor,

May you be delivered, [Oh] children, from all of these!

6:1 Look out, lest anyone make you wander from this way of teaching,

since he is teaching you without God.

6:2 [1] For, on_the_one_hand, if you are able to bear
the whole yoke of the Lord, you will be perfect;
[2] but if, on_the_other_hand, you are not able,
that which you are able, do this.

6:3 And concerning eating,
[1] bear that which you are able,
[2] from the food, on_the_other_hand, sacrificed to idols,
very much keep away
for it is worship of dead gods.

7:1 And concerning baptism, baptize this way:
Having said all these things beforehand,

**immerge in the name of the Father**
and of the Son
**and of the Holy Spirit (Matt 28:19)**
in flowing water—

7:2 [1] if, on_the_other_hand, you should not have flowing water,
immerge in other water [that is available];
[2] (and) if you are not able in cold,
immerge in warm [water];

7:3 [3] (and) if you should not have either,
pour out water onto the head three times
in the name of [the] Father
and [the] Son
and [the] Holy Spirit.

7:4 (And) prior to the baptism,
[1] let the one_baptizing fast;
[2] and [let the] one_being_baptized;
[3] and if any others are able,
[let them fast also].

(And) order the one_being_baptized to fast
one or two [days] prior [to the baptism].

8:1 (And) let your fasts
not be with the hypocrites, (cf. Matt 6:16) for they fast on the second and the fifth days of the week (cf. Lk. 18:12) you fast, on the other hand, during the fourth day and the [sabbath] preparation day. (see Mk15:42; Jn19:14, 31)

8.2 (And) do not pray like the hypocrites (cf. Matt 6:5) but like the Lord commanded in his gospel.

Pray this way:

Our Father, who is in heaven,
may your name be made holy,
may your kingdom come,
may your will be done on earth as in heaven,
give us today our daily bread,
and forgive us our debt
as we also forgive our debtors,
and do not lead us into temptation
but deliver us from the evil one, (Matt 6:9-13) because yours is the power and the glory forever.

8.3 Three times daily pray this way. (cf. Ps. 55:17)

9.1 And concerning the eucharistic thanksgiving, give thanks thus:

9.2 First, concerning the cup:
We give you thanks, our Father,
for the holy vine of your servant David
which you revealed to us through your servant Jesus.
To you is the glory forever.

9.3 And concerning the broken bread:
We give you thanks, our Father,
for the life and knowledge
which you revealed to us through your servant Jesus.
To you is the glory forever. (Isa 52:13)

9.4 Just as this broken bread was scattered over the mountains,
and, having been gathered together, became one;
in this way, may your church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom.
Because yours is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ forever.

9.5 (And) let no one eat or drink from your eucharist except those baptized in the name of the Lord, for also the Lord has said concerning this:

“Do not give what is holy to the dogs.” (Matt 7:6)

10.1 And after being filled [by the meal], give thanks in this way:

10.2 We give you thanks, holy Father,
for your holy name,
which you tabernacle in our hearts,
and for the knowledge and faith and immortality
which you revealed to us through your servant Jesus.
To you [is] the glory forever.

10.3 You, almighty Master, created all things
for the sake of your name,
both food and drink you have given to people for enjoyment
in order that they might give thanks;
to us, on the other hand, you have graciously bestowed
Spirit-sent food and drink for life forever
through your servant.

10:4 Before all [these] things, we give you thanks
because you are powerful [on our behalf].
To you [is] the glory forever.

10:5 Remember, Lord, your church,
to save her from every evil
and to perfect her in your love
and to gather her together from the four winds (Matt 24:31)
as the sanctified into your kingdom
which you have prepared for her,
because yours is the power and the glory forever.

10:6 [A] May grace come
and may this world pass away!
[B] Hosanna to the God of David! (cf. Matt 21:9)
[C] If anyone is holy, let him come!
If anyone is not, let him repent!
[D] Come Lord [maranatha]! Amen! (cf. 1 Cor 16:22)

10:7 (And) turn towards the prophets [allowing them]
to “give thanks” as much as they wish.

11:1 [A] Therefore, whoever teaches you all these things said beforehand,
receive him.

11:2 [B] If, on the other hand, the one teaching,
if he has been turned around,
should teach [you] another doctrine
[1] for the destroying [of those things said beforehand],
do not listen to him;
[2] but, [if it is] for the bringing of righteousness
and knowledge of the Lord,
receive him as the Lord!

11:3 And concerning apostles and prophets, in accord with the decree of the
gospel, act thus:

11:4 [A] (And) every apostle coming to you, let him be received as the Lord:

11:5 [1] (but) he will not remain, on the other hand, more than one day;
[2] (and) if there is a need, also another [day];
[3] (but) if ever he should remain three [days], he is a false prophet

11:6 [B] (And), when he departs,
[1] let the apostle take nothing except bread [that he needs] until he is lodged.
[2] if, on the other hand, he asks for money, he is a false prophet.

11:7 [A] And every prophet speaking in the Spirit
you should not put on trial nor judge,

for every sin will be forgiven,
but this sin will not be forgiven. (cf. Matt 12:31)

11:8 [B] (But) not everyone speaking in the Spirit is a prophet,
but if he is, he should have the habits of the Lord.
Therefore, from these habits should be known the false prophet and the
the [true] prophet.

11:9 [A] And every prophet ordering a table in the Spirit
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11:10  [B] (And) every prophet teaching the truth,
if he does not do what he teaches, he is a false prophet.

11:11  [C] (And) every prophet having been put to the test and [found] true,
doing an earthly mystery of the church,
but not teaching [you] to do what he himself does,
he shall not be judged by you;
for he has his judgment from God,
for also the ancient prophets so acted.

11:12  [D] (But) whoever should say in the Spirit,
[1] “Give me silver or any other thing,”
you will not listen to him;
[2] (but) if, he should say to give to others in want
let no one judge him.

12:1  (And) everyone coming in the name of the Lord,
let him be received;
(and) then, having put him to the test,
you will know,
for you will have understanding of right and left [i.e., good or bad].

12:2  [A] If, on the one hand, the one coming is a traveler,
[1] help him as much as you are able.
[2] he will not remain, on the other hand, among you,
except for two or three days,
if there should be a necessity.

12:3  [B] If, on the other hand, he wishes to settle down among you,
and if he is a craftsman, let him work and let him eat.

12:4  [C] If, on the other hand, he does not have a craft,
according to your own understanding, plan beforehand
how a Christian will live among you, without being idle.

12:5  [D] If, on the other hand, he does not wish to act thus,
he is a Christ-peddler.
Beware of such ones!

13:1  [A] (And) every genuine prophet wishing to settle down among you
is worthy of his food;

13:2  [B] likewise a genuine teacher is worthy.
just as the laborer, of his food. (Matt. 10:10)

13:3  [A] So, you shall take every first-fruits of the produce
from the wine_vat and threshing_floor,
of both cattle and sheep,
[1] [and] you will give the first-fruits to the prophets;
for they themselves are your high-priests.

13:4  [2] (But) if you should not have a prophet,
give [it] to the poor.

13:5  [B] If you should make bread,
take the first-fruits,
and give according to the commandment.

13:6  [C] Similarly, when you open a jar of wine or of oil,
take the first-fruits,
[and] give it to the prophets.

13:7  [D] (And) of silver and of clothing and of every possession,
take the first-fruits,
as it seems good to you, and give according to the commandment.

14:1 (And) on the divinely instituted [day] of [the] Lord, when you are gathered together, break bread.

[A] And give thanks, having beforehand confessed your failings, so that your sacrifice may be pure.

14:2 [B] Everyone, on the other hand, having a conflict with a companion, do not let [him] come together with you until they have been reconciled, in order that your sacrifice may not be defiled. (cf. Matt 5:23,24)

14:3 For this is that which was spoken by the Lord:
“[In every place and time, offer to me a pure sacrifice.]”
“[Because I am a great king,] says [the] Lord,
“[and my name is wondrous among the Gentiles.]” (Mal 1:11,14)

15:1 [A] Appoint, then, for yourselves, overseers and deacons worthy of the Lord, (cf. Phil 1:1; 1 Clem 42,44,57)
[1] gentle men
[2] and not money-loving
[3] and truthful
[4] and tested;
for they likewise minister among you the ministry of the prophets and teachers.

15:2 [B] Do not, then, look down upon them; for they themselves are your honored ones along with the prophets and teachers.

15:3 [A] (And) reprove one another! Not in anger, but in peace!
as you have [it] in the gospel. (see Matt 18:15-18?)

[B] And to everyone wronging a neighbor,
[1] let no one speak to him

15:4 (And) do your prayers and alms and all your actions thus as you have [it] in the gospel of our Lord. (see Matt. 6:1-4; 5-15)

16:1 [A] Be watchful over your life;
[1] do not let your lamps be quenched,
[2] and do not let your waists be ungirded. (Matt. 25:8; Luke 12:35?)

[B] But be prepared; for you do not know the hour in which our Lord is coming. (Matt 24:42)

16:2 [C] (And) frequently be gathered together,
seeking the things appropriate for your souls;
for the whole time of your faith will not be of use to you if in the end time you should not have been perfected.

16:3 [1] For, in the last days,
[a] the false prophets and corrupters will be multiplied,
[b] and the sheep will be turned into wolves,
[c] and the love will be turned into hate.

For, when lawlessness increases,
[a] they will hate each other
[b] and they will persecute
[c] and they will betray [each other]. (Matt 24:10-12)

[2] And then will appear the world-deceiver as a son of God,
[a] and he will do signs and wonders, (Matt 24:24)
[b] and the earth will be delivered into his hands,
[c] and he will do unlawful things
that never have happened from eternity.

16:5 [3] Then the human creation will come
into the burning-process of testing,
[a] and many will be led into sin and will perish,
[b] the ones remaining firm in their faith,
on_the_other_hand,
will be saved (Matt 24:10,13) by the curse itself.

16:6 [4] And then the signs of the truth will appear: (cf. Matt 24:30)
[a] [the] first sign [will be] an opening in heaven,
[b] then [the] sign of a trumpet sound, (cf. Matt 24:30; 1 Thess 4:16)
[c] and the third [sign will be] a resurrection of dead ones—
but not of all [the dead],
but as it was said:
“The Lord will come and all the holy_ones with him.”
(Zech 14:5; cf. 1 Thess 3:13)

16:7 [5] Then the world will see the Lord coming atop the clouds of heaven . . . (cf. Matt 24:30; 26:64; Dan 7:13 LXX)

NOTE: The translation and Scripture annotations are my own. For the sentence analysis, I gratefully acknowledge the suggestions of Aaron Milavec in his recent books on The Didache. Words with a dieresis above their first letter (e.g., ÿou) are plural in the original Greek.
BOOK REVIEWS


A writer of more than thirty books follows up a similar theme in 1 Chronicles with twenty chapters on 2 Chronicles (cf. review, *TMSJ*, 14/1 [Spring 2003]:106-7). With a Th.M. from Dallas Theological Seminary and a D.Min. from Talbot Theological Seminary, the author has served on library staffs of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Rosemead School of Theology, and Simon Greenleaf School of Law. His other books include similar treatments of Ruth, Judges, Nehemiah, and 1 and 2 Samuel. Similar expositions of 1 and 2 Kings (784 pp., and 684 pp.) were issued by Wipf & Stock Publishers in 2004. He also co-authored *An Introduction to Theological Research* with Robert Krauss.

The commentator, whose wide awareness of scholarly literature is evident in footnotes throughout this work, insists on the accuracy of biblical details. He also is unafraid to differ on such things as the widespread view that the theme in the Chronicles is the temple. He opts for a theme of God’s faithfulness in covenant goodness to His people (cf. Ps 132:11-12). He reasons that God was faithful to His people in their Babylonian captivity when He helped them return to their land and rebuild against obstacles. He sees Ezra as the most feasible chronicler, as already shown in the review on 1 Chronicles noted above. He argues some facets of a case for the theme. A walk in the ways of David is upheld as a standard for kings (e.g., 11:17; 17:3-4). In spite of much detail about the temple, he feels that more emphasis is on prayer, as in 2 Chron 7:14 and often in the book (cf. also Dan 9:4-19). Other facets of God’s faithfulness refer to racial and spiritual purity, the law’s proper role, the place of worship in the temple and priesthood, and verses on not forsaking the covenant but being faithful to the Lord, plus a repeated focus on seeking God and the relevance of the Word in strengthening personal faith. Relevancy to believers today is found, for example, in Paul’s words of Rom 15:4 about OT Scriptures nourishing perseverance and encouraging comfort.

The author in his usual manner comments on sections and verses, laid out in a clear outline. He intersperses this with anecdotes that richly illustrate and catch attention. Devotional lessons are fairly consistent along with summaries of passages. Barber uses many good biblical studies, whether commentaries, journal articles, or specialized works. Footnotes, fairly frequent and both short and long, offer pertinent comments, such as Solomon’s probable age when taking the throne (4), algum as wood for temple furniture (21), and length of a cubit (26). In one note (213), Barber
The Master's Seminary Journal

says that he believes firmly in having one wife, but seems to soften a stand against polygamy. In another (294) he commends Warren Wiersbe's focus in the book Real Worship (Nashville: Oliver Nelson, 1986). In yet another he refers to Jerusalem's wall in pre-captivity days as more than 20 feet thick.

Another feature is reasoning that 2 Chronicles' numbers are plausible, although scholars often faulted their credibility (282 n. 7). He also sees no biblical evidence for Ethiopian and other tradition that the statement in 2 Chronicles 9 that Solomon gave the Queen of Sheba all her desire supports Solomon's having had sex with this visitor (78).

Devotional highlights in the work include brief comments on worship in the famous verse, 2 Chron 7:14, and principles drawn from 2 Chronicles 20 where an enemy coalition moved to attack Jerusalem. In the latter case, King Jehoshaphat emphasized prayer, trusting in God, the Spirit speaking encouragement through Jahaziel, and praise to God that He would defend His people. God destroyed the approaching soldiers, so that the Judeans found that the Lord gave relief from the threat (172-78).

Barber surveys successive passages in 2 Chronicles with edifying spiritual lessons for believers. He rises to a climax using provocative illustrations. He includes tempering footnotes that qualify or take things further, and has an outline for each passage to highlight main movements. Now that he is in his later years, readers who have profited from Barber's diligently studied and lucidly written commentaries on Judges through 2 Chronicles can be thankful for his tenacious persistence to finish the studies. Day to day devotional progress through the book is refreshing as frequent drinks from a canteen of cool water. Each work is a catalyst for pastors, other church workers, students, and laymen.


"Without a doubt, the church stands or falls, grows or dies according to the quality of the weekly diet that it is fed" (ix). William Barker, Professor of Church History emeritus at Westminster Theological Seminary, and Samuel Logan, Professor of Church History and President of Westminster Theological Seminary, as editors recognize well the necessity and value of faithful biblical preaching. Despite the technological changes of the past four hundred years and the unforgettable events of September 11, 2001 "what will still be needed—whatever the future brings—is the faithful preaching of the Word of God" (xiv).

The title is self-explanatory but the work is more than just a collection of eighteen sermons. They are sermons, in the estimation of the editors, which address major shifts in religion and culture, for example, the corporate nature of Puritan ideals by John Cotton and John Winthrop (chaps. 1–2); mindless "enthusiasm" of the First Great Awakening by Jonathan Edwards (chap. 4); the Christian and governing authorities by Jonathan Mayhew and Ezra Stiles (chaps. 6-7); preaching in a mixed
black and white church before the Civil War by John Girardeau (chap. 12); response to Harry Emerson Fosdick by Clarence Edward Macartney (chap. 14); and a sermon by Timothy Keller the Sunday following the World Trade Center bombing (chap. 18). Included also are manuscripted sermons from Gilbert Tennent, Archibald Alexander, Asahel Nettleton, James Waddel Alexander, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, Geerhardus Vos, J. Gresham Machen, Francis Schaeffer, and James Boice.

A special feature of the book is the biography of the preacher and historical details in which the sermon was preached. Reading a sermon in light of the events of its day is interesting. In this sense the book is somewhat of a religious history volume. Sermons appear chronologically so that one gets the editors’ view of significant issues, primarily in the Presbyterian denomination.

Regardless of denominational affiliation of the modern reader, those preachers “believed that there is an unchanging Word from God and precisely because they sought to faithfully speak that Word into the changing world they faced, what they said matters greatly” (x).


In six chapters this Catholic writer chooses to view prayer in the light of the OT Exodus. The first two chapters take up petitions for help and praises for deliverance in this venue, and also in light of the NT Exodus of Jesus in death and resurrection. He encourages readers to pray as in Ps 9:2, “I will declare all your wondrous deeds.”

Chapter 3 has insight in seeing prayer as not only words but a consistent lifestyle. Jesus is the model for prayer attitudes, and believers pray with Jesus, in His name, in the favor He has with the Father. Following up, the fourth chapter reasons that the ideal way to pray with Jesus is via the Eucharist, having mystical communion with Him in His passion, death, and resurrection. Yet Dumm admits to many other ways of praying outside this ritual, according to all individuals’ temperaments (cf. x). Prayer in chap. 5 is that of *lectio divina* as Catholics know it, i.e., praying details of the Bible, the main theme of the book. The final chapter focuses on praying in differing situations, in step with deep spiritual truths. Dumm’s main examples are from Mary, Abraham, Moses, the major prophets, Job, Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) which Roman Catholics accept as canonical, then writers of the Gospels, and Paul.

He sees the secret of life as the gift of faith to see the great reservoir of God’s goodness otherwise hidden from human eyes (31). One can do this rather than giving up to evil (32). In praying matters of Scripture, believers can, by faith, “go beyond the realm of mere words to a personal participation in those mighty saving deeds of God…” (32). Here Dumm is rather vague. But he feels that the Psalms furnish a vision of faith, yet he thinks most of the psalms were written long after David died (32). He also says that stories about David are embellished and put more accent on his religious and symbolical meaning (33). Many, as this reviewer, will
disagree with Dumm and see the Davidic psalms as by David himself, in his own day.

Viewpoints get quite subjective. The author links listening in the Spirit with baptism (35) when people, as he sees it, become children of God (37). He thinks it would be good if believers would spend twenty minutes a day in silence, listening for God to speak (38). How this would be a help, or relate to Scripture meditation, or prayer, is nebulous.

Though the title promises much, the book eventually reveals that it has in mind people who go to Masses to hear the priest say “give thanks,” and respond, “It is right to give him thanks and praise” (40) for God’s great deeds of salvation. In this fashion, people pray Scripture as active participants in those saving events. Some of his analogies are meaningless. For example, on Ps 143:6, “I thirst for you like a parched land,” a believer goes from the joy of deliverance from bondage to the desert of seeming abandonment. And “after the glory days of Galilee comes the darkness of Judea” (47). That connection is mystifying. However, one can identify with Dumm’s clarity on yearning for a God who at times seems far off, so unlike earlier happy days. So he can pray Scripture in Psalm 143 and feel in a condition similar to the psalm writer.

The author sees Jesus’ prayer experience as the ultimate expression of a prayerful life (54). Jesus prayed “Father, I thank you for hearing Me” (John 11:41), expectantly in gratitude looking for God’s power to raise Lazarus. To see his emphasis on Jesus (55) as a human with loud cries and tears (Heb 5:7-10) is helpful, as is seeing Jesus as always identified with believers as a faithful high priest helping them (Heb 2:17-18; 4:15-16). Other worthwhile examples include praying as Jesus prayed when often going into solitude (Luke 5:16) and crying “not My will but Yours be done” (Luke 22:42) (66).

Protestants can pray Scripture as Dumm says, but do not need the Roman Catholic ritual. His Catholic thinking gravitates to what he sees as the “real presence” of Jesus in the bread and the cup, as these are transformed by God’s power into the very body and blood of Christ (82). On the communion passage in 1 Corinthians 11, he adds words that Scripture does not add, for example in saying that believers’ own bodies need to be broken and their blood poured out. He uses Phil 2:3-8 as if a life of servant obedience like Christ’s involves believers’ pouring out their blood. Actually, in Jesus’ case He shed His blood, but in believers’ cases they ought to respond obediently in ways relevant to them (cf. 2:13) as they become like Christ.

On “pray without ceasing” (chap. 5) Dumm has many good words about constant preoccupation with the Lord. But he returns to detail about praying centered in the Eucharist and the remaining sacraments. Praying the rosary with fifty “hail Mary’s” follows in chap. 6 (147). The first half of the process is mostly on praise verses in Luke 1 giving honor to Mary, and the second half has petitions to Mary as “far and away the most effective intercessor before God for us sinners” (147). Where does Scripture ever say that Mary intercedes for believers? And what of the Holy Spirit’s intercessory work (Rom 8:26-27)?

In conclusion, the book has some helps for the mature discerner on meaningful prayer in various Scriptures, such as in the OT and in the life and teaching of Jesus. A good emphasis on faith and love is frequent. On the other
hand, the book misleads in so often pouring the prayer process through a Catholic perspective and ritual. It will be worthwhile for evangelicals at times, but overall is not recommended. One can pray Scriptures even in profusion by simply voicing particular details in worship. Some examples are thanking God for works of creation (Genesis 1), for truths in the Tabernacle, for realities in Psalm 23, and for things in the life and work of Jesus, or truths given by Luke in Acts, or by Paul, James, Peter, John, and Jude.


From start to finish the volume is an ongoing discussion of key issues involved in the New Perspective on Pauline studies. The symposium speakers were almost entirely those who espouse the New Perspective. Dunn is the guiding light as a symposium leader and as the editor who, by means of this volume, seeks to advance the propagation of New Perspective views. The speakers did not agree with him on every point, but he uses the consensus that was obtained to advantage.

Lichtenberger believes that the traditional view attributing a works righteousness to first-century Judaism has been thoroughly relegated to the ash heap (7, 10). One common thought in many of the essays is that Paul taught that justification occurred through faith in Jesus Christ, not by works (Lambrecht, 56, 69;
Wright, 149; Westerholm, 227). The difference arises with regard to which Pauline passages actually contain this doctrine (e.g., for Wright the doctrine is taught in Rom 3, but not in Rom 2). Although many of the participants in the symposium assume that first-century Judaism was not characterized by works righteousness, Stanton (105) is not convinced that all factions of Judaism were not uniform in their use of the law. In fact, he argues that first-century Jews might have held somewhat to both views: they believed that “entry into the people of God was on the basis of acceptance of God’s gracious covenant with his people and at the same time they maintained that carrying out the law was a sine qua non for past, present and future acceptance by God” (106, emphasis in the original).

Hengel holds strongly that Paul formulated his doctrine of justification before the conflict in Galatia (50). Indeed, the doctrine seems more directly related to the salvation experience of a young, zealous Pharisee. Hengel mentions, but no one discusses, the question about how much Christ’s own teachings affect Paul’s attitude toward the law (51).

Covenantal nomism and covenant theology are the topics of several of the essays (e.g., Longenecker, 78; Wright, 138, 148). Each author, who focuses on the covenant, points to the social aspects of covenant practices like Sabbath keeping and food laws (Barclay, 294-99). Therefore, the Galatian and Romans controversies boil down to Paul’s concern, not about soteriology, but about social relationships (Longenecker, 95; Hays, 153). This view’s primary advocate is Dunn. Following this line of interpretation, the disputes were purely between fellow believers (Dunn, 310). Thus Wright argues that Romans 2 addresses the situation of the Christian Gentiles (134). His primary argument basically is that similarity means identity—since Rom 7:6, 2 Cor 3:6, and Phil 3:3 all speak of Christians, Romans 2 with its similar phraseology must also refer to Christians (134-35).

One of the interesting sidelights in these essays is an underlying assault on the traditional doctrine of imputation of righteousness. Hofius argues against the traditional attribution of imputation as the meaning of the Greek verb “account” (ἐλλογέω) (194-97). Rather than meaning to “charge to someone’s account,” the sense is to “take into account,” or to provide a record (195). Since this volume did not purpose to offer the other side of the major issues in the New Perspective, traditional theologians should undertake a renewed examination of imputation.

Dunn argues that part of the apparent dichotomy between law and grace in Pauline thinking is really a distinction between the present and the apocalyptic or eschatological (322). The ultimate issues that came out of the symposium related to the problems of continuity and discontinuity. The argument of the majority of the essays is that the law continues to provide consciousness of sin and guidance for conduct. Dunn concludes that there is no essential difference between the OT, second-temple Judaism, and Christianity in this regard (334).

Interestingly, Dunn observes that the symposium of fairly common-minded theologians and exeges in NT studies was unable to reach a consensus on the meaning of “works of the law” or even terms like “sin” and “salvation” (310). That should certainly give one pause regarding the theological convictions of the participants and their view of the inspiration, inerrancy, and authority of Scripture.

Readers desiring to hear traditional theologians’ explanation of these issues must look elsewhere. There is little here to define or defend the traditional
viewpoint. Indeed the impression is, after reading this entire volume, that if anyone dares to hold to traditional views of Pauline doctrine regarding law and gospel, he/she is guilty of overstressing discontinuity between the testaments and misrepresenting second-temple Judaism—in other words, in denial about Sanders’ conclusions. To this reviewer, that is not an accurate picture of traditional biblical theology.


Pastors could use this light survey to help young believers grow. Green sees Paul as saturated with much prayer, praying to a God who is creator, revealing His will, coming in Christ, saving, indwelling, judging, and rewarding. Such themes receive surface treatment.

The writing is more of Green’s feather tip attempt to keep readers with him than an in-depth treatment of Paul’s prayers. Sometimes Green reads prayer into verses, as in the page and a half on Acts 9:1-2, which actually deals with Saul persecuting believers (17-18). At many points prayer is present, as in Acts 9:3-5. The author uses Saul’s words, “Who are you, Lord?” as a springboard to focus on Paul’s later teaching about access to God after being justified (Rom 5:1) (19).

Green does write in fascinating readability on such verses as Saul’s early evidence of new life in praying when God led Ananias to him (Acts 9:10-11). He also makes a good point about God strengthening His people when some pray (32), and about prayer when the Lord released prisoners from the Philippian jail (33). Supplying more substance on a passage would often be more helpful, i.e., more of the Word and less of Green’s writing artistry. On Paul’s “thorn in the flesh” (2 Cor 12:9), the book has a mere half line on what the thorn was (37-38), i.e., “almost certainly a physical ailment,” with no supporting evidence.

Sometimes the writer ceases jumping around from text to text and gives discussions of consecutive verses. Such surveys furnish more help. Examples are Phil 1:1-11 (73-90), Col 1:3-14 (97-110), Eph 1:1-23 (115-32), Eph 3:6-7 and 14-21 (135-44). A devotional on Phil 4:6-7 quotes the verses, then says nothing to expound what they mean, only giving about a page on being specific in praying for peace of mind (the verses do not teach prayer “for” peace) and on God’s interest in all facets of Christians’ lives (55-56). The comment on heartfelt praise after citing Eph 1:3 (67) is a good catalyst for believers.

A book such as Donald A. Carson’s work on Paul’s prayers, *A Call to Spiritual Reformation*, offers much more substance, yet in a writing style just as readable. Green’s writing is so elemental that it is bound to encourage people young in the faith, who need things light and quick. It will frustrate many others who expect more but do not find it. It does accomplish one of the author’s aims, to “encourage us to pray!” (12). It does that at times, but often is disappointing, and cannot be recommended for any but new converts. Even for new converts Carson’s work provides more on Paul’s passages about prayer to stimulate solid growth on
Although most seminary students may remember J. Gresham Machen (1881-1937) only as the author of the Greek grammar with which they began their Greek studies, he is perhaps best remembered in the wider world as the instigator, and ultimately, one of the founders of Westminster Theological Seminary. Following the Archibald Alexander, Charles and A. A. Hodge, and Benjamin B. Warfield, Machen is generally regarded as last in the line of the “Old Princeton” tradition and theology. He was at the center and in many respects the flashpoint of the modernist/liberal ascendency that began in earnest with the death of Warfield in 1921, culminating in the reorganization of Princeton Theological Seminary in 1929. The reorganization led Machen, Cornelius Van Til, Oswald Allis, Robert Dick Wilson, and others to resign from Princeton and form Westminster. Near the end of his life Machen was defrocked by the now liberal-dominated PCUSA. He helped found what is now the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC).

Machen was the author of three seminal works, Christianity and Liberalism, What is Christianity, and The Virgin Birth. Additionally, he authored scores of essays and reviews, some of which this volume contains. Originally, the essays in this book were in a larger three-volume set that included J Gresham Machen: A Biographical Memoir, God Transcendent, a collection of sermons, and a collection of essays entitled What is Christianity, written and compiled by Ned Stonehouse. Though the biography and sermons have remained in print, the collection of essays dropped away, and this volume, as the editor states, “is an effort to make up for this curiosity in publishing history” (2).

The editor, who has written extensively on Machen’s life and work, provides an introductory chapter, “The Forgotten Machen?” (1-22), which alone is worth the price of the entire book. It is an excellent examination of Machen, particularly in relation to the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy of his day and the theological decline of his own denomination.

The essays in this collection are divided into ten categories. Many articles deal with controversies raging in the PCUSA during Machen’s last days at Princeton. Those essays illuminate the issues that led to the formation of Westminster Seminary and finally the OPC. Some of the articles are classics, such as the section “The Task of Christian Scholarship.” Others, though a little odd-sounding, give the history of a previous era, such as the essay on the 18th Amendment and the laws enacting Prohibition. His essay on “The Christian and Human Relations” (421-28) furnishes up-to-date advice about relating to unsaved friends. He emphasizes that strong friendships with unbelievers are essential in personal evangelism. “Without such friendship, any persuasion will usually be mere empty words” (427). Machen was particularly concerned with interaction between Christianity and culture, as several other essays demonstrate. His essays on the Virgin Birth (57-74) and the
Resurrection of Christ (75-87) are both classic treatments of the subjects.

This work contains two lengthy bibliographies for additional reading (16-20 and 571-75). Though lists of the complete bibliography of Machen’s works are in an out-of-print work, this volume would have been an appropriate location for that bibliography. It also contains a useful, albeit brief, subject and name index.

The reissuing of this collection of Machen’s writings, combined with additional materials supplied by the editor, is a welcome addition to evangelical literature. Machen’s main works have remained in print since their original publication over 70 years ago, but Machen himself is perhaps not as well remembered as his stature warrants. This book will open a door into the life, times, and thinking of his day.


Seyoon Kim is Professor of New Testament at Fuller Theological Seminary. *The Origin of Paul’s Gospel* (Eerdmans, 1978) was his doctoral dissertation at the University of Manchester. In 1984 J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck) published a second edition including interactions with some of his reviewers’ comments. Kim originally conceived of *Paul and the New Perspective* as a further revision that might consist of one new chapter. However, that proved to be too limited for interaction with twenty-three years of Pauline scholarship (xiii). Therefore, this current volume contains five new essays that comprise the first five chapters.

“Paul’s Conversion/Call, James D. G. Dunn, and the New Perspective on Paul” (1-84) deals with Dunn’s conclusions that Paul’s Damascus Road experience was but a call to his ministry among the Gentiles and that the apostle developed his views of justification as a result of the Antioch incident (Gal 2:11-14). Kim determines that Dunn unsuccessfully associated “works of the law” with Jewish covenant distinctives in Paul’s doctrine of justification (59). He concludes that Sanders’ covenantal nomism needs correction and proposes a mediating view between traditional and New Perspective views of first-century Judaism (83). Suggesting the term “synergistic nomism” (84 n. 274), he identifies the Judaism of Paul’s day as a form of “covenantal nomism with an element of works righteousness” (83-84).

Kim’s second chapter (“Justification by Grace and through Faith in 1 Thessalonians,” 85-100) reveals that the early Pauline epistles contradict the New Perspective identification of justification as “obtaining membership in God’s people” (98). Paul did not need to expound the doctrine of justification in its forensic meaning except when judaizers challenged him (99).

Chapter 3 (“Isaiah 42 and Paul’s Call,” 101-27) deals only partially or indirectly with the New Perspective. Kim offers eleven observations and arguments by which he concludes that “Isa 42 was one of the chief Old Testament texts in the light of which Paul interpreted God’s revelation and call that he had received at the Damascus Christophany” (126). To an OT professor, this chapter was the most
engaging. Although it did not present much that was new, it highlights an area of study (viz., the background impact of the OT on Paul’s thinking and writing, rather than Paul’s use of the OT) that really deserves greater attention from both OT and NT scholars.

Returning to his interaction with the New Perspective, Kim’s fourth chapter (“Paul, the Spirit, and the Law,” 128-64) demonstrates (contra N. T. Wright and James M. Scott) that the concept of Israel’s involvement in “a continuing exile” does not aid in the interpretation of passages like Gal 3:10-14 (141). Kim observes the necessity of a continuity between Paul’s Pharisaic practices and the judaizing that he condemned (144). Marshaling first-century Jewish evidence presented by a wide range of critics of the New Perspective (143-52), the author supplements Pauline evidence that proves that there were some Jews of Paul’s day who sought salvific righteousness through perfect observance of the law (163-64). Kim also points out that Paul’s reflection on the promises of the new covenant as revealed in Ezekiel 36–37 and Jer 31:31-34 had affected the apostle’s views (158-63).

In Chapter 5 (“Christ, the Image of God and the Last Adam,” 165-213) Kim reexamines his interpretation of Paul in the light of Ezekiel 1 by interacting with Alan F. Segal and others. This topic was one that the author had developed in his original dissertation and The Origin of Paul’s Gospel. His conclusions in the current chapter reinforce his association of “Paul’s εἰκων-, Adam- and Wisdom-christology/soteriology” with the Damascus Christophany (213).


Kim provides an energetic active and reactive discussion of the New Perspective in this volume. It makes a valuable addition to the ongoing debates even though, at times, it seems like more of a defense of his original dissertation than fresh interaction. This is partly due to the fact that the book is generally limited to those areas in which New Perspective viewpoints impact his dissertation.


Lohfink’s German commentary on Ecclesiastes was first published in 1980. This translation is a revision of the German edition that makes the English “a new, and henceforth the only, authentic version” (ix). An English translation of Ecclesiastes opens the commentary (19-34) and introduces each exegetical section. McEvenue translated the text from the Hebrew, while following the exegetical decisions Lohfink made in his German translation of Ecclesiastes (xi). Formerly
Professor of OT at Sankt Georgen Seminary in Frankfurt, Germany, Lohfink is now retired.

In his introduction (1-17), Lohfink hypothesizes a setting in 3rd-century-B.C. Jerusalem and Alexandria under the Ptolemies. Setting the book in the Hellenistic Period, he believes it was a textbook for Jews in Jerusalem (11-12), although he often understands the text’s reference to be Alexandria rather than Jerusalem (50 [2:3-10], 104 [8:1b-4], 125-26 [10:2-3], 129-31 [10:16-17, 20]). Qoheleth supposedly exhorted the Jews to utilize the Greek worldview as a stepping stone to success in a very competitive climate (5-6, 118-19).

For Lohfink, similarities exist between modern existentialism and Qoheleth’s philosophy (viii-ix, 14). He also sees parallels between Qoheleth and Jesus (16-17). At the same time, he believes that “the decisive characteristic of Qoheleth’s theory of knowledge” is agnosticism (110).

Throughout the commentary, Lohfink theorizes that the text has been repeatedly manipulated by editors and copyists (3, 12-13, 136). Yet, late in the volume, he admits that “no theory attempting to show a variety of hands at work in the history of the book’s composition has proven to be convincing” (143). In addition, he treats the autobiographical sections as fiction (44, 55). Throughout the commentary, he cites parallels from Greek writers and philosophers of the Hellenistic Period to support his conclusions (e.g., Archimedes, Euripides, Menander, Pindar, Simonides). Interestingly, Lohfink mentions the parallels in the Gilgamesh Epic (4, 119-20), the Egyptian harp songs (119-20), and Assyrian sources (124), but denies that kind of antiquity to Qoheleth. At one point he cites archaeology in support of his 3rd century dating (141) in reference to the much-debated “wheel” at the well (12:6), which Iain Provan (Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, NIV Application Commentary [Zondervan, 2001] 218) identifies as a “bowl” or “water pitcher.”

As for the content of Ecclesiastes, Lohfink sees an elaborate structure of interlocking chiasms and linkwords (7-8). Although his analysis has some merit and contributes to an understanding of the book as a whole, some of the chiasms might be considered imaginative. For continuity, McEvenue translates the recurring hebel (traditionally “vanity”) with “breath” in most places. At 3:11 the translation departs from “in their heart” to read, “he has put eternity in all of it,” although a note refers to the alternative (58). Lohfink’s interpretation of 7:26-28 resonates with radical feminism in taking liberties with the text. He identifies the passage as antifeminist talk typical of male youth culture: “This is the type of thing one says when a classmate from the old school, a member of a sport team, or a military buddy is going to get married. And it gets a laugh” (102).

Although Lohfink’s commentary has many problems, he at least avoids the error of concluding that pessimism is the philosophical core of Qoheleth. He rightly understands the book’s theme of living joyfully in spite of one’s situation in this life—even in the face of inevitable death (44, 62, 134-35). Ultimately, those denying Solomonic authorship will have a greater appreciation of this volume than those, like this reviewer, who adhere to Solomonic authorship (see Gleason Archer, “The Linguistic Evidence for the Date of ‘Ecclesiastes,’” JETS 12 [1969]:167-81.). Lohfink’s bibliography (145-50) ignores Archer’s seminal essay as well as the best of English commentaries, such as Michael A. Eaton, Ecclesiastes: An Introduction...

Mack, well known for books on Christian family and counseling, seeks to motivate readers to pray more and pray as they should. His point is to pray as Jesus, the greatest expert in communion with the Father, prayed. To do this, the Adjunct Professor of Biblical Counseling at The Master’s College offers eighteen chapters, then chapter notes and a Scripture index. The foreword is by S. Lance Quinn, Pastor of the Bible Church of Little Rock, Little Rock, Ark., and former assistant to John MacArthur.

Overall the book provides Scripture-saturated thoughts to assist prayer. The author emphasizes in Chapter 1 that for people to pray is natural if indwelt by God’s Spirit and if they are true followers of Christ and love Him. To have God as Father and not to pray is a sin, and He gives blessings when His people pray rightly to Him. Readers will find much of value in these pages that reflect the sage, rich thinking of a man God has used to impact the lives of many fruitfully.

The book does have some opinions that readers will question. One example is, “Prayer is beyond any question the highest activity of the human soul” (44). A problem is where and how in Scripture is this rating established? Leading a soul to Christ and eternal life is a high act showing love to the Savior and concern for a person. Writing a book of Scripture was a very high activity with far-reaching effects. Meditating on Scripture by faith is a high activity, with a focus on God’s words to men, distinct from their words in prayer to Him. Preaching a Spirit-filled message of Christ to the glory of God and the life-changing benefit of hearers is a high act. So is worshipfully offering one’s life or possessions for the sake of God and helping others know Him. Likewise such a missionary as Amy Carmichael reflected high acts in rescuing children from heathen temples in India. These and other examples cause one to hesitate when he sees a questionable rating. Why not rank various acts as high acts without relativizing them? That praying as God wants one to pray is a very high act is certainly true; on that we certainly agree with the writer. And we ought to engage much in prayerful communion with God.

Mack winsomely spotlights thoughts that relate to Jesus’ prayer for disciples (Matt 6:9-13). Among many arresting points is the claim that spiritual matters should be the emphasis in prayers, more so than physical concerns, though the latter are important too (47). Another wholesome thought is that if people pray to the Father they should honor Him, resemble Him, and love His family (50-53). Practical, edifying thoughts about knowing God’s will and praying that it be done come often (chaps. 8-11). The author has much to say about praying to see physical needs met (chap. 12), praying about debts (chap. 15), and praying to receive forgiveness as well as forgiving others (chap. 16). Chapters 17–18 about praying for deliverance so as to avoid sin when tempted have much of worth.
When commenting on Jesus’ model prayer for disciples, some statements about the kingdom do not have a right sound to premillennial dispensationalists. Some will think that the book confuses things when it cites Thomas Watson (105) on “Thy kingdom come” as not referring to a political or earthly kingdom. As amillennialists do, the writer sees “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36) as excluding an earthly kingdom. What the author says seems to concur with Watson that “Thy kingdom come” means prayer for a kingdom of grace in believers’ consciences now and a kingdom of glory into which God will translate them, apparently at the Second Advent (106). Without a qualification, the impression is left of a translation in a rapture at Christ’s Second Coming, a post-tribulational rapture. The book again refers to the saved translated into the glorious kingdom (107), and says that believers will “enjoy eternity with Him.” Nothing is said of an earthly (yet spiritual) millennial phase of kingdom life after the Second Coming. As to John 18:36, Christ’s kingdom can be on earth (cf. Dan 2:35; Matt 5:6; Rev 5:10; 20:1-6) in relation to His regathering people of Israel to their land in accord with many OT passages (cf. Jeremiah 31–33; Ezekiel 34, 36, 37). But His kingdom, while it will be earthly, is not of this world in the sense of being derived from it (for God will bring it by His power, as in Dan 2:35), its values and perspectives. “Thy kingdom come” can be a prayer for fulfillment of the OT kingdom promises that lead into Jesus’ ministry, which is spiritually saturated with heavenly values and is also to be on earth.

As in just about any basically good book, informed readers can agree or disagree on some points. Here is a book on prayer that is a treasure of helpfulness, yet with certain points that are acceptable or not, depending on readers’ doctrinal convictions. The preponderant focus of the book on praying as a vital way of “reaching the ear of God” is a good contribution. One can rejoice when it fosters God-pleasing prayer among the saints. The work ought to have a place among the many books on prayer, especially those centered on Jesus’ prayer for His disciples (Matt 6:9-13). As Quinn says in the Foreword, it is an easy-to-read refresher for pastors, students, and lay people.


The theological aberration of hyper-preterism (hereafter HP) continues as a thorn in the side of pastors and ministries whose members have been affected by its publications and web pages. In short, the HP position, called “Full Preterism” by its proponents, is the notion that Jesus returned in A.D. 70 and that all biblical prophecy has been fulfilled and that believers are now enjoying the benefits of the New Heaven and New Earth (for a fuller examination of this view from a premillennial perspective, see this reviewer’s article, “International Preterist Association: Reformation or Retrogression?” in *TMSJ* 15/1 [Spring 2004]:39-58.)

Though this movement has not made significant inroads within those
ministries holding to a futurist premillennial position, it has been a bane in Reformed circles, among those who interpret prophecy according to the traditional or classic preterist mode and those who hold the historicist position. This current work is a series of essays by leading Reformed scholars (both of the theonomist and non-theonomist position) pointedly critiquing the hyper-preterist position. It includes seven essays by Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., Charles E. Hill, Richard L. Pratt, Keith A. Mathison, Simon J. Kistemaker, Douglas Wilson, and Robert B. Strimple.

The work is well constructed with excellent footnotes and contains useful (but brief) indexes of names, subjects, Scripture, and ancient literature. It lacks a bibliography, which would have been a helpful addition, leaving the reader to cull out the references from the footnotes. The contributors level their arguments against the writings of four leading proponents of HP: Max King, Timothy King, Ed Stevens, and John Nöe (the last two of whom operate the International Preterist Association).

Mathison, the general editor, admits that the contributors “to this volume do not completely agree in their interpretations of every eschatological text” (155). He notes that “some of the contributors are amillenialists, while some are postmillenialists” (ibid). All the contributors unite in opposing the HP position, because, as Strimple states, “In order to maintain their heretical doctrine of the resurrection, the hyper-preterists have devised heretical doctrines of creation, man, sin and its consequences, the person and redemptive work of Christ, and the nature of salvation. Much more than eschatology narrowly defined is at stake in this debate” (352).

Several of the essays are especially noteworthy. Gentry’s examination of the historic church creeds as over against the HP position is particularly well done (1-61). He thoroughly debunks the HP claim of “No creed but the Bible” (61). He states that the adherent of HP “feigns ‘scholarship’ and claims ‘consistency’ as a lure to theologically immature Christians” (ibid). Hard line fundamentalists, to keep their own sub-biblical teachings above scriptural and theological scrutiny, have also used such claims.

In the chapter on “Eschatology in the Wake of Jerusalem’s Fall,” (63-119) Hill takes the “bible” of the HP interpretative scheme, J. Stewart Russell’s The Parousia, to task. The Parousia 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 methodology toward prophetic interpretation in his Biblical Hermeneutics, Russell’s work made little impact and was largely out of print for nearly 100 years, until Walter Hibbard of Great Christian Books (who himself had adopted the HP position) arranged with Baker Book House to reprint the work in 1983. Hill notes that Russell’s work is “as brilliant as it is bizarre” and that “his solution [to the rapture] is almost too fantastic to deserve a response” (92). Hill demonstrates from early church history that Russell’s A.D. 70 “rapture” simply could not have occurred.

The work of Kistemaker on HP and its view of the Book of Revelation is noteworthy as he deals with their schema of prophecy, but is most decisive in dealing with the key issue of the dating of Revelation. HP fails entirely if the traditional or “late date” of the book is correct. He notes, “[B]oth the evidence from Revelation itself and the accounts of the church fathers favor a late date for the writing” (236). The work of Mathison on the “Eschatological Time Texts of the New Testament” is
also a highlight of this work (even for those who take a dispensational and futurist approach to those texts). Strimple’s chapter on HP and the resurrection is a devastating exposé to the HP heresy on this vital doctrine. The weak chapter in the work is that of Douglas Wilson. Though it does not display some of his notable theological oddities, it does not say anything that Gentry had not said in his chapter. The notations are weak, and it reads more like a sermon than a theological essay.

That minor criticism aside, this is a valuable and much needed work exposing the heresy of Hyper-Preterism. Even approaching the subject from eschatological and interpretative viewpoints we might disagree with, we agree that this is a common enemy of the church for both Covenantal and Dispensational evangelicals. This is a work that pastors should use as the HP error creeps into assemblies through those influenced by it. We highly recommend it.


A number of warnings and critiques against the so-called “Church Growth Movement” and the encroachment on ministry of secular models of business and marketing principles have appeared. The title of this work seems to fall into that genre, but that is incorrect. Instead of focusing on the “usual suspects” of Rick Warren and Saddleback, Willow Creek and Bill Hybels, Robert Schuller and the Crystal Cathedral, and others (in fact none of those people or ministries are even mentioned in the book), this work focuses on the role of “individual” Christians and how the “worldly influence of modern culture” is improperly driving the worldview and spiritual decision-making process of individual believers.

The author is the president of the Francis A. Schaeffer Foundation and a longtime associate of the L’Abri Ministry. The book is extremely well researched and has a useful subject index.

The work is an examination and critique of American Christianity and the author’s examination of the difference between “what is Christian and what is merely personal religion” (28). The author presents a historical and philosophical examination of the issue rather than an exegetical or even theological one. He fails to present a clear introduction, so it is often difficult to follow or even identify his thesis. The book is difficult to follow as the chapters are disjointed and lack a flow.

The concern of the author is clearly what he views as the detriments of a “personal” Christianity, which he defines as “private and individualistic” (148). He says, “Personal experience alone is a poor criterion for understanding who God is, what he has said, and what plan he might have for my life. What worked in my case is but itself not necessarily true, just, or good” (149). He also makes a strange remark that a harmful shift in Christian thinking “lies in the assumption that events, history, and life itself is a manifestation of the will of God” (163). He argues that “we now live in an abnormal world. Sin has destroyed what God had in mind and what he, successfully of course, had made” (163). This seems to indicate that God is not sovereign over the daily affairs of life and that somehow the fall entirely
thwarted God’s purposes. In other places, however, that does not seem to be the author’s contention, such as in his discussion of Calvin’s theology on 168-69. But even here he bemoans the fact that Reformed theology was corrupted at the Synod of Dort where the “teaching of the Bible was transformed into something quite similar to the Koran in the view of God’s sovereignty and his relation to history and creation” (169).

All in all, the good points in this book must be culled out from a rather convoluted and disorganized whole. Some of the warnings are helpful and made forcefully, but little is presented in terms of concrete corrections. This is a book that lacks a clear direction, fails to identify a particular audience, and whose goal is left to the personal imagination of the reader.


More than 100 years after his death, Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-92) remains one of the most formidable, influential, and quotable Christian preachers and theologians in print. Outside the Bible, the passage, “though he is dead, he still speaks” (Heb 11:4) perhaps applies to no one better than Spurgeon. He was the pastor and leader of the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London, really the first “mega-church” of the modern era. Spurgeon was pastor of the largest church in the English-speaking world, was president of the Pastor’s College, and administered the Stockwell Orphanage. The church itself was the home to numerous missionary, evangelistic, philanthropic, and Bible teaching ministries. Spurgeon’s wife Susanna, although in fragile health most of her life, operated a Bible and book-selling ministry.

That God raised up a godly man for a time and a place such as the ministry of the Metropolitan Tabernacle is obvious, but clearly more came from the influence of Spurgeon. He learned and emulated significant biblical principles of leadership in his life and ministry.

The influence of Jim Collins’ best selling work, Good to Great (HarperCollins, 2001) and particularly his emphasis on what he called “Level 5 Leadership” (17-40), has perhaps renewed a discussion of what makes for good leaders and good leadership (see Michael, 211-15). Although written by a non-Christian for the secular business world, Collins identifies, although unwittingly in terms of biblical content, the construct of “servant” leadership. Other works, from a distinctly biblical perspective (e.g., John MacArthur’s, The Book on Leadership [Thomas Nelson, 2004]) have been important contributions. These two works on Spurgeon are notable contributions to this recent emphasis.

The two books under review deal with biblical principles of leadership as exemplified in the life and ministry of Spurgeon. Miller’s is more of a compilation of quotations that illustrate the leadership priorities and principles of Spurgeon,
while Michael’s is a thorough examination and discussion of the principles and their outworking in ministry.

In Miller’s work, he notes that his goal is perhaps more devotional and exhortative in nature. “This is a carefully selected assortment of quotations designed to encourage you and give you ideas you can put into practice as you fulfill your leadership responsibilities” (11). He emphasizes Spurgeon’s credo “Not I but Christ” several times through the volume. The author focuses on the spiritual side of Spurgeon’s leadership, emphasizing his prayer life, his passion for soul winning, his willingness to suffer affliction, and his overriding passions for the effective proclamation of God’s Word. Each chapter ends with a section of “Spurgeon with His Pen” or “Spurgeon on His Knees,” a quotation from Spurgeon which brings the chapter to an effective culmination.

This well-done work is not without its faults. It has no indexes and no real bibliography. For some reason, the publisher decided on a smallish paperback format that is reminiscent of the 1950s and 1960s. Beyond this, while it is well researched with helpful endnotes, the author often cites electronic sources, CD-ROM collections of Spurgeon’s sermons and writings instead of the original published material. This makes it difficult for the reader to follow up with a deeper examination of Spurgeon’s materials. He also occasionally cites later editions of Spurgeon’s works, which in some cases have been edited from the original, instead of original sources.

Those minor criticisms aside, this is excellent work and a great starting place for a pastor or student who would like to refresh his ministry or gain insights as to how to begin a ministry on a solid foundation of true biblical leadership.

Michael’s work is a more thorough examination of the outworking of Spurgeon’s practical leadership philosophy and practice. Extensive historical and theological parallels exist between Spurgeon’s Victorian era and the current state of evangelicalism in America. This book builds and expounds on those parallels from a leadership perspective. The author states, “This book lets Spurgeon speak to Christian issues that are identifiable in the current socio-political-religious setting. It makes practical applications, using some contemporary leaders and the author’s personal experience in ministry” (18). The author’s experience is considerable: he has taught on seminaries and pastored several churches, including his current ministry at First Baptist Sweetwater, Longwood, Florida.

The work begins with five qualities as a foundation for understanding Spurgeon as a leader: Competence (his own personal preparation and continued self-education); Confidence, “It is essential that we should exhibit faith in the form of confidence in God” (35); Context, Spurgeon’s own life and times, an excellent and concise discussion of the socio-political and religious context of Spurgeon’s life; Calling, detailing Spurgeon’s conversion and spiritual growth; and finally Character, centers in his unwavering commitment to personal integrity before God.

This review cannot detail several excellent chapters in this work. One of the more noteworthy is the section on “Casting Vision” (91-103). The author notes that “Spurgeon’s ‘vertical vision’ was to lead a declining church in the heart of London to renewed growth and service in its community, reaching thousands of people with the Gospel of Christ” (91). This chapter tells both how Spurgeon possessed a clear biblical vision of God’s purposes, not only for his local church but
also for the church at large, and how he was also able to communicate that vision to inspire those around him to rally to the vision’s fulfillment.

Another fascinating chapter is on “Creativity: Preaching, Methods and Ministry Innovation” (137-51). Though Spurgeon is often remembered as a conservative Calvinistic pastor, it is forgotten that within a thoroughly biblical framework, he was one of the most original and innovative thinkers in terms of ministry in modern church history. His methods and innovations were often criticized by the “established” religious community of his day. As the author notes,

One further note of warning regarding creativity and innovation is that serious problems occur within the church when one departs from biblical patterns, principles, and practices by introducing or allowing methods of the world that compromise the revelation of God. Creativity and innovation can be a very positive force for good, but, in the effort to attract more people, the Christian leader must always be alert as to things that divert from the gospel of Christ (149).

Every pastor and spiritual leader should read this outstanding work. It is one of the most outstanding contributions on spiritual leadership to appear in many years. This reviewer cannot recommend it highly enough.

Reviewed by Larry D. Pettegrew, Professor of Theology.

This book, part of the Oxford Studies in Historical Theology series, is made up of eleven interrelated essays devoted to a defense of the post-Reformation scholastics. Muller believes that there is much more continuity between humanism, the Reformation, and Reformed scholasticism than most scholars have taught in the past. The first half of the book argues this thesis directly, and the second half illustrates it historically. It has interesting case studies of Francis Turretin’s theological method, the scholastics wrestling with the problem of the vowel points of biblical Hebrew, Herman Witsius’ and Wilhelmus a Brakel’s advancement of the covenant of works, and Henry Ainsworth’s development of Protestant exegesis in the early seventeenth century.

Richard Muller, the P. J. Zondervan Professor of Historical Theology at Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan, has often promoted the continuity thesis in his past works. He grants that the scholastics in the post-Reformation era were academicians and thus wrote more in an academic style than did the pastor-theologians, like John Calvin, of the Reformation. He admits, “The early orthodox phase of Protestant theology did bring about an important change in the forms and patterns of thought; indeed what occurred at the hands of men like Bartholomaeus Keckermann was a formalization, a strict patterning, even a rationalization of the Reformation” (133). But Muller believes that to emphasize significant differences in the content of the theology of the first generation Reformers and the scholastics is a major error of historical interpretation.
Moreover, Muller thinks that scholars have often overemphasized the differences between the Reformed scholastics and the Reformed pietists. Two orthodox Reformed theologians, for example, “often remembered for their dexterity in the use of scholastic method, William Perkins and Gisbertus Voetius, also inspired the great development of Reformed piety in the seventeenth century” (31). Muller, however, does acknowledge that among the Reformed, “it is far less easy than among the Lutherans to draw a firm line between scholasticism and pietism” (91).

Muller also argues that “much to the discomfiture of those who identify ‘scholasticism’ and ‘humanism’ as neatly designed and utterly separate pigeon holes into which to thrust recalcitrant historical subjects, ‘Renaissance humanism’ appears to be one of the sources of ‘Protestant scholasticism’” (33). These essays therefore serve to defend the post-Reformation scholastics against charges of being overly rationalistic, philosophical, proof-texters, different from the Reformers, and medieval. In Muller’s opinion, “the claims made by the modern theologians” against the scholastics “are either utterly wrong and undocumentable or they are simplistic in the extreme” (49).

It is evident that Muller knows the primary Reformation and scholastic sources thoroughly and has also meticulously researched the modern-day interpreters of these primary sources. Some of his insights are pertinent to the modern-day theological scene. After reading these essays, for example, it would be most difficult to argue that Reformers held to a doctrine of Scripture akin to neo-orthodoxy, but that the scholastics, though producing “a more rigid doctrine” of inspiration (155) invented the orthodox doctrine of inerrancy. Both Reformers and scholastics were orthodox. No such discontinuity in bibliography existed.

Another helpful insight is Muller’s analysis of the scholastics’ (William Perkins, Francis Turrell, et al.) use of the term, “science,” to describe theology. Unlike nineteenth and twentieth-century evangelical and Reformed theologians, the scholastics used “science” in its classic sense. “The rise of modern science was certainly evident in the seventeenth century, but the term scientia had not yet been restricted to the empirical and inductive disciplines. It still indicated a disciplined body of knowledge resting on evident principles” (138).

One might question the continuity thesis in a couple of points. Methodology sometimes turns theology in a slightly different direction. In this reviewer’s opinion, the Reformed scholastics tended to stress some doctrines, such as limited atonement, much more than did Calvin himself, for example. Moreover, Muller tries to convince the reader that developed covenant theology was not an answer to the problem of “determinism brought about by the doctrine of predestination” (99). But covenant theology certainly is paraded as a solution to the problem of a super-sovereign, arbitrary God in the writings of the English and American Puritans, including the Westminster Confession itself.

The serious student of historical theology will learn much from a Reformation and post-Reformation specialist like Muller. The historical insights in the book are worth the effort spent reading these essays.

Mark A. Noll. The Rise of Evangelicalism. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity,
This book is the first volume in a projected series entitled, “A History of Evangelicalism.” General editors for the series are David W. Bebbington and Mark Noll. Bebbington, who is to write the third volume in the series, previously published a defining volume focusing especially on British evangelicalism (Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730’s to the 1980’s). Noll, the author of this first volume is a well-known religious historian at Wheaton College. Projected volumes include “The Expansion of Evangelicalism” (The Age of More, Wilberforce, Chalmers, and Finney); “The Dominance of Evangelicalism” (The Age of Spurgeon and Moody); “The Disruption of Evangelicalism” (The Age of Mott, Machen, and McPherson); and “The Global Diffusion of Evangelicalism” (The Age of Graham and Stott).

The Rise of Evangelicalism is a detailed chronological analysis of evangelicalism in the eighteenth century. Noll explains in his introduction that in this series the term “evangelical” is to be understood in the sense that it arose in eighteenth-century Britain, not in the sense of Continental Protestantism where it means “protestant.” To describe the essence of evangelicalism, Noll recommends Bebbington’s four key ingredients: conversion, the Bible, activism (especially demonstrated in evangelism), and crucicentrism (the centrality of the atonement). Noll also follows Bebbington’s thesis that evangelicalism is an eighteenth-century religious development from the Enlightenment. Emphasis in the series, writes Noll, is on “people and movements descended from the eighteenth-century British and North American revivals, but also on the Christian movements in the English-speaking world that...have embraced the historic evangelical principles” (19). Noll concludes his introduction by giving his purpose: “The major effort of this book is to provide a coherent, multinational narrative of the origin, development and rapid diffusion of evangelical movements in their first two generations” (24).

The first two chapters demonstrate the historical antecedents that led to evangelicalism. Basically these include political expansion, ecclesiastical expansion, and spiritual renewal among some religious groups. Chapter one of the book sets the stage for the study with a somewhat statistical analysis of the politics, populations, ecclesiastical geography, and religious situations of England, Wales, Ireland, Scotland, and the American colonies during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Noll notes in passing that “evangelicalism would eventually flourish best in the kind of deregulated religious environment witnessed in the American middle colonies” (37). Chapter two develops what Noll considers to be the three main roots of evangelicalism: “an international Calvinist network in which English Puritanism occupied a central position, the pietist revival from the European continent and a High-Church Anglican tradition of rigorous spirituality and innovative organization” (50).

Chapters three through five survey the events leading to the emergence of evangelicalism. Chapters three and four explain the revivals in Britain and America from 1734-1745. Chapter five is Noll’s analysis of the evangelical revival and upsurge. He writes about the role of the Holy Spirit, the main revivalists, the flow of history, the rapid social and commercial expansion, and intellectual and
psychological developments. Noll comments, “Awakeners were not cynical manipulators artificially crafting a new message for the sake of merely personal gain. They were rather adapters who themselves had found ‘true religion’ hidden within the older establishmentarian Protestantism, but who then displayed an almost intuitive ability to analyze the desires of others for whom the inherited ecclesiastical structures were proving irrelevant or inadequate. . . . By setting aside earlier religious forms, the evangelicals did not think they were setting aside the faith once delivered, but rather adjusting it to the new social realities of the age” (149).

Chapters six through eight trace the dramatic growth of early evangelicalism. In chapter six, Noll explains the developments in evangelicalism from 1745-1770 in several English countries and denominations. Noll rightfully points out the significance of John Wesley and George Whitefield. He says, “Never again would there be a single individual who, like Whitefield, enjoyed such full and beneficial connections with such a wide range of evangelicals” (191). Chapter seven describes the diversification of evangelicals, especially outside church boundaries. Chapter eight evaluates the approaches to social issues and the kind of social concerns (slavery, for example) to which evangelicals devoted themselves in the eighteenth century. Chapter nine, “True Religion,” points out some of the features and characteristics of eighteenth-century evangelicalism: gender, theology, hymns, and Christian experience.

The Rise of Evangelicalism is a good start to the five-volume series. Noll has researched hundreds of primary and secondary sources, and the footnotes are full of information on how to learn more about the particulars. He includes dozens of interesting tidbits—like the eleven most reprinted hymns of early evangelicalism (175). Or, though all students of church history have heard of the Aldersgate experience of John Wesley, probably most have not known that this experience did not necessarily settle Wesley’s doubts, but that “often in later life Wesley would return to doubt the conclusive character of his Aldersgate experience” (97). With this information comes a footnote referring the reader to a source, Aldersgate Reconsidered. In addition, the contributions of many early evangelicals—the famous and the not so famous—are clearly presented in the narrative with just enough detail to whet the reader’s appetite for more study. Only once does Noll return to his oft-repeated criticism of evangelicalism that “the remarkable effects from concentrating on Christian experience as depicted in Scripture were often matched by the deliberate devaluation of intellectual tradition” (261).

The weakness of the book is its breadth. By focusing on both British and American evangelicalism, the work occasionally becomes tedious, and reads like a textbook—which it probably is. Still, the afore-mentioned “interesting tidbits” preserve its vitality, at least to some degree. This book is recommended for those who are serious about learning their evangelical heritage.
Contemporary historians are largely unanimous in their assessment of the historic fundamentalists as being a cadre of cobelligerents who were indifferent to the plight of humanity. As “theologically ‘challenged,’ politically indifferent, socially uncaring, and economically only one small step above a Social Darwinian Neanderthal,” fundamentalists are often portrayed as a bucolic people deserving of our pity (xv). Jim Owen challenges this calcified interpretation with meticulous attention to the words and deeds of the historic fundamentalists during the era of the Great Depression and Holocaust (sorely missing is a bibliography to catalogue his massive research). Confessing an apologetic agenda, Owen seeks to “set the record ‘straighter’ because it has been bent scandalously beyond recognition,” while recognizing “I may be playing Don Quixote to the nearest postmodern windmill” (365).

The negative caricatures of fundamentalists are challenged on several fronts. Academically, Owen belies the charge that all fundamentalists were devoid of a “life of the mind” by documenting their love for literature, language, politics, education, and culture. Politically, generous attention is given to the running political commentary found in fundamentalist journals where tremendous insight was brought to bear on current events such as the New Deal, Zionism, labor disputes, communism, prohibition, fascism, minimum wage, capitalism, anti-Semitism, civil liberties, segregation, socialism, and so on. Confronted with the question of political involvement, there was an understanding that “politics is an intoxicatingly perfumed whore,” but, as Keith Brooks wrote, “certainly the act that one has the ‘blessed hope’ will not lessen his loyalty as a citizen of the United States of America. May every reader . . . daily seek divine guidance as to how he can most effectively serve his country. Now is the time to prove that Premillennialists are something more than dreamers” (12, 35). Socially, Owen cites (almost to a fault), how fundamentalists impacted the social welfare of humanity around the world, even during the worst depression in American history. During WWII, fundamentalist organizations raised millions of dollars (in today’s standard) to provide food, medical care, shelter, clothing, and even visas for those suffering from the ravages of war.

Owen’s chapters chronicling fundamentalism’s response to the Jews, anti-Semitism, and the Holocaust are invaluable. Though historians have charged fundamentalists with being ambivalent toward the Jews, passive toward their suffering, and even anti-Semitic, Owen’s research provides ample evidence to the contrary. As early as 1931, fundamentalist journals began reporting the treatment of the Jews in Europe, and Germany in particular. As the war began and the horrors of the Holocaust became known, the popular journals incessantly ran stories of the atrocities, many of them graphic in their details in order to convey the solemnity of the ontological event. Additionally, many prominent leaders visited these countries to report atrocities first-hand, numerous journal articles and books were published on the issue of anti-Semitism, and various relief organizations were formed to provide aid to suffering Jews (believing and unbelieving). One cannot help but agree with Owen when he concludes, “The evidence of the historic fundamentalists’ concern for the Jews of Europe is so abundant that ignorance of it, or the deliberate
ignoring of it, or an unwillingness to investigate it, is inexcusable” (197).

Acceptance of The Protocols of the Elders of Zion is a point of contention in fundamentalist history. Conceding the blatant anti-Semitism of Gerald Winrod, Owen does not satisfy the reader with his statement on William Bell Riley: “I simply am not familiar enough with him and his work to have an opinion” (268). Evidence supplied by Timothy Weber and others suggests that Riley was anti-Semitic, just as the FBI file on him that Owen perused suggested (320). While Owen successfully defends James Gray and Arno Gaebelain against anti-Semitic charges (and in refuting several other accusations made by Weber), he omits a few of the statements made by these men that drew such heat, and does not go far enough in his criticism of them for their caricatures of apostate Jews, right or wrong. For example, omitting the fact that Gaebelein praised the Russian publisher of the Protocols, Serge Nilus, as “a believer in the Word of God, in prophecy, and [therefore] must have been a true Christian” bolsters the claims of Gaebelein’s detractors (Conflict of the Ages [1933], 99).

In his final chapter, “Historic Fundamentalism and the Supernatural: A Non-Conformist Historiography” with Addendum, “The Unseemly Death of Providentialism at the Hands of Evangelical Historians,” Jim Owen seeks to answer why historians have ignored the evidence that vindicates many charges against fundamentalism. By attacking the historical method of modern evangelicals, his answer is certain to raise the ire of his peers. Specifically, Owen charges that “historical agnosticism” is advocated so as to secure the respect and a place at the table with non-evangelical academia, typifying the words of Marchant King that scholarship is “a fine servant, but a bad master” (39). Throughout his oeuvre, Owen challenges the conclusions of notable historians such as Mark Noll, George Marsden, Joel Carpenter, and Timothy Weber. Such an attack on the establishment is not likely to win him favor, but his research has justified the questions he is asking.

In the opinion of this reviewer, Owen has effectively challenged the “hoary cliché that the historic fundamentalists withdrew into the closet of personal piety and ignored the world during the 1930s” (109). While Owen’s history is not altogether uncritical of fundamentalism, often admitting to “serious, serious failings” on various issues, this work is understood to be an apologetic for their actions during critical points in the 20th century (126). Hence, the reader should expect a positive presentation of their contributions, not a balanced show of successes and failures. Admitting in the Preface, “History should not always have to be written in polite academic monotones,” Owen passionately and unabashedly defends his heritage in a flavorful style that gives this history a personality that is lacking in many of today’s more sterile versions (xvi). Unfortunately, Owen’s style may confirm the militant fundamentalist stereotype by those who oppose it. Regardless of the reader’s understanding of Owen’s civility, the depth of his research is no doubt a contribution to knowledge of the field, a corrective to many misrepresentations of fundamentalist behavior, and is thus deserving of a wide readership.

Thom S. Rainer. Breakout Churches: Discover How to Make the Leap (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004). 259 pp. $34.99 (cloth). Reviewed by Dennis M.
In more conservative and Calvinistic circles the “Church Growth Movement” and constructs of Church Growth have been roundly, and in many instances, rightly criticized. The emphasis on methodology and pragmatism has often been at the expense of theology and a biblical view of the sovereignty of God. The perceived excesses of the Willow Creek and Saddleback models of ministry, the theological aberrations of Robert Schuller and the Crystal Cathedral model, and some of the unguarded statements of C. Peter Wagner (along with his own problematic theology) have caused many to view the movement with a jaundiced eye.

The author of this work has been a leader in the conservative wing of the Church Growth Movement for many years. He is the author of several significant books in the area of church growth, and is the Dean of the Billy Graham School of Evangelism and Church Growth at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He is also the president of The Rainer Group, a church consulting firm.

This work is modeled after the template of Jim Collins’ bestselling business book, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap and Others Don’t* (HarperCollins, 2001). Rainer acknowledges his debt to that model work (13-14). A reader might think this is just another so-called Christian book borrowing from the pragmatism and secularism of American business, but this is wrong.

Church growth and effective evangelism is entirely in the hands of a sovereign God, but God does not override poor planning, bad methodology, and outright ineptitude (or sinfulness) on the part of church leaders to grant successful evangelism and growth. John MacArthur, well known for decrying pure pragmatism in church ministry (e.g., *Ashamed of the Gospel: When the Church Becomes like the World* [Crossway, 1993]), has noted that one cannot ignore the practical aspect of ministry if a local church desires to be successful (e.g. “Marks of an Effective Church,” in *The Master’s Plan for the Church* [Moody, 1991] 103-16).

Rainer’s work examines 13 churches that made the transition of a “Breakout Church” using the criteria established by Rainer’s study. The 13 churches studied were selected from an initial group of over 50,000 churches. The sample churches had to meet five criteria (213-15). Key among the criteria was a church’s need to experience the breakout under the same pastor (214). This requirement was key because, following Collins’ work, Rainer also emphasizes what he calls “Acts 6/7 Leadership” (5-67) as foundational to “Breakout Churches.”

Rainer notes that, “it is a sin to be good if God has called us to be great” (34) and this work details the biblical principles that undergird greatness. He details a six-stage process that the “Breakout Churches” he studied went through. Initially, they were churches in decline, from there the pastor committed to “Acts 6/7 Leadership,” which emphasizes the “called leader,” the “contributing leader,” the “passionate leader,” the “bold leader,” and the “legacy leader.” The first five concepts are built on the leadership qualities seen in the apostles in Acts 1–5 and the final state is demonstrated in a large measure by the leadership qualities of Stephen in Acts 6–7. From there the church moved to what Rainer calls the “ABC Moment,” that is the realization that something is not right in the church (Awareness), that the leader acknowledges this and confronts it (Belief), and the willingness to face the
opposition from those satisfied with the status quo (Crisis). The next step is the “Who/What Simultrack” where, to paraphrase Collins’ work, the wrong people got off the bus, the right people were put on the bus, even the right people who were there are put into the right seats. Next he details the “VIP Factor” where the “leaders discovered vision through the intersection of three factors: the passion of the leader, the needs of the community, and the gifts, abilities, talents and passions of the congregation” (30). The next step is a development of “Culture of Excellence” where the good is eschewed in favor of the best. Finally comes the feature of “Innovation Accelerators.” Rainer notes that methodologies and innovation are the end-result, not the solution, to declining churches. “How many church leaders have divided and demoralized congregations by introducing innovative methodologies and approaches before the church was ready to accept them?” (31).

The results of Rainer’s research and study of his 13 churches was eye-opening, particularly to those who have an inclination against “Church Growth” type of studies and materials. One was the centrality of biblical preaching as a foundational factor in the “Breakout Churches.” Rainer notes that all pastors involved in “breakout” renewed emphasis on the study and preaching of the Word. As he notes:

The evidence of our research is convincing. These churches never abandoned the basics in their transition to greatness. There were obviously many methodological issues that were of great importance in their breakout. But any methodological factors were secondary to biblical fidelity, preaching and prayer. The Big Mo cannot be sustained by methods. The breakout churches are truly Acts 6:4 churches: “[We] will give ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word” (173).

Rainer notes several other factors and details a group of comparison churches that did not “breakout.” There is a helpful series of appendices, including a “Frequently Asked Questions” section as well as a detailed subject index. The work is well noted. A detailed bibliography would have been a helpful addition to the work, however.

As the author repeats throughout the work, this is not a book of methodology. He rejects the notion that A+B+C must always equal D. “I have attempted throughout this book to be very careful not to imply that the churches that moved to greatness did so with some magical, methodological, quick-fix formula. To the contrary, the opposite was true” (172). He debunks the myth that churches can grow simply through methods and innovations or the securing of a “great pastor.”

This is a book that pastors and church leaders serious about fulfilling the Great Commission and leading effective and God-honoring and biblically sound churches need to read and digest thoroughly.

Robert Rapa (pronounced ruh-PAY) has been Associate Professor of Biblical and Systematic Theology at Grand Rapids Baptist Seminary of Cornerstone University in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He is currently in transition to the faculty of Asia Baptist Theological Seminary in Singapore. This book originated as his doctoral dissertation at the University of South Africa. Although the volume is focused on the phrase “works of the law” (ἦργα νόμου) in Galatians and Romans, Rapa deals with the identity and character of the apostle Paul’s opponents, the differences between their respective “gospels,” the problems of the law for the early church, and first-century rhetorical constructs. Each chapter has copious endnotes.

Chapter One (3-13) sketches the general parameters and aspects of the problem in determining the meaning of “works of the law.” In Chapter Two (15-51) Rapa provides a brief survey of the views of Luther and Calvin regarding Paul and the law, demonstrating that the “traditional” view is directly tied to the Reformers’ views (19). Then he discusses the modern perspective on Paul and the law relating to four problems: the “Lutheran” Paul (22-24), “legalistic” Judaism (24-31), Jewish “identity” (32-35), and “works” (35-37). For the first three problems, discussion focuses primarily on the views of Sanders and Dunn. Gaston’s view is the focus on the fourth problem. Rapa also investigates the views of Hübnner and Räisänen regarding the apparent inconsistencies of Paul’s view of the law (38-45). He concludes that “there is as yet no consensus as to how to approach the problem of Paul and the law” (45).

In his analysis of the terms and expressions related to “works of the law” (Chapter Three, 53-70), Rapa demonstrates that all occurrences possess a negative connotation. Indeed, Paul speaks against such works (68). Turning to Galatians, the author examines the evidence for the date of the epistle, the identity and message of Paul’s opponents, and the situation in the Galatian church (Chapter Four, 73-99). Rapa presents one of his more significant contributions in “Epistolary and Rhetorical Considerations” (Chapter Five, 101-22). Rhetorical analysis leads to the observation that the apostle refers to “works of the law” in the “Rebuke Section” of his epistle (108). Wisely recognizing the limitations inherent in applying secular rhetorical principles to the study of the NT (112), Rapa demonstrates how Paul employed typical rhetorical constructs to shape his argumentation in Galatians.

Having set the rhetorical context for the use of “works of the law” in Galatians, the author presents his exegetical analysis (Chapter Six, 123-85). He concludes that Paul intends “both the relational forensic category of acquittal for sins and the consequent ethical ‘right’ behavior pattern of God’s people” (134, emphasis in the original). At first reading this might appear to apply two simultaneous meanings to a single occurrence of the term (“justification” or “justify”); Rapa’s point is that the behavioral sense of justification rises out of the forensic sense. In addition, he concludes that the judaizers must have believed the law to be salvific. Without citations from contemporary Judaism to prove the point, Rapa suggests that the judaizers were in accord with “mainstream Judaism of Paul’s day” (167). He seems to contradict this conclusion when he writes that “it is an injustice to the greater Judaism of Paul’s day to attribute indiscriminately the attitude of one part to the whole” (173 n. 18). To which part do the Galatian judaizers belong? A partial answer comes in another note in which the author indicates that Paul’s judaizers were perhaps Pharisees and represented one faction outside of what might be termed
“normative” Judaism (176 n. 37). In other words, segments or groups existed within first-century Judaism that were “legalistic.”

Generally speaking, it appears that Rapa perceives a broad, rather than a narrow, application of “works of the law” since both the salvific and ethical are included. Part of his conclusion is due to the conflict between Peter and Paul that is introduced in Galatians as the catalyst for Paul’s letter. Both apostles knew that salvation was by faith, not by works. Therefore, their disagreement could not be limited to soteriological issues alone. However, Paul chooses to address the soteriological implications of Peter’s actions because of their greater significance.

Romans consumes the next major section of the volume (Chapters Seven through Nine, 189-260). Employing the same approach that he applied to Galatians, Rapa proceeds to conclude that those “who opposed Paul’s gospel expected Gentile converts to Christianity to become ‘practical’ Jews, believing the nomistic regulations of the Mosaic covenant to be requisite for salvation” (254). In other words, the judaizers in both Galatia and Rome were virtually identical in their views of the law.

Rapa’s volume deserves a wide reading. He is eloquent in his argumentation, detailed in his exegesis, and balanced in his treatment of the differing views of Sanders and Dunn. The great appeal of his book is that it is a solid exposition of the biblical text. He treats the biblical evidence as primary. Regardless of what might have existed in “normative Judaism” in the first century, the biblical text represents one faction (the so-called “judaizers”) as adherents to a salvific role for the “works of the law.”


Allen P. Ross is Professor of Old Testament and Hebrew at Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, Alabama. As in the case of Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis (Baker, 1996; see the review in TMSJ 11/2 [Fall 2000]:269-70), this volume is not a commentary, but a guide to the study and exposition of Leviticus (9). A detailed exegetical analysis of the text of Leviticus is left for the reader to pursue in preparation for exposition.

For each section of the text of Leviticus, Ross provides a brief introduction, a discussion of theological ideas, an analysis of structure, a synthesis and outline, the development of the exposition, and concluding observations. Most of the fifty chapters close with a bibliography of books, essays, and journal articles focused on the topic or theme of the passage under discussion. The bibliographies vary in length in relationship to the availability of resources on the topic (e.g., 66-69, 97, 390). The most lamentable aspect of the book is the absence of indexes, which was also true of his earlier work on Genesis.

In the first chapter (“The Study of Leviticus” 15-69) Ross defends Mosaic authorship and defines critical views and mediating views of authorship. His treatment of the theology of Leviticus (42-58) emphasizes what the book reveals
about God, the people of God, and the covenant. Under “Interpretation and Application of the Law in the Church” (58-65), Ross concludes that the NT believer is not under the Law, because Christ has fulfilled the Law and we are under the law of Christ. This means “that for those who are ‘in Christ’ the law has no power to condemn, because Christ has fulfilled it; but it also means that those who are ‘in Christ’ died to sin and now must live in the righteousness of Christ” (64).

Comparing Ross’s volume to various commentaries on Leviticus is not out of line with its focus on exposition. Although the author has centered his attention on how to expound Leviticus, he has not neglected what the book says. Commentaries such as Mark Rooker, Leviticus, NAC (Broadman & Holman, 2000), R. K. Harrison, Leviticus: An Introduction and Commentary, TOTC (InterVarsity, 1980), Gordon J. Wenham, The Book of Leviticus, NICOT (Eerdmans, 1979), and John E. Hartley, Leviticus, WBC (Word, 1992) will provide greater exegetical details on issues like the “strange fire” offered by Nadab and Abihu (Lev 10:1-7). However, those commentaries (all of them excellent) will not develop the key expository points as lucidly as Ross, who spends nearly two pages (237-39) developing those points. The nearest to this approach would be that of Wenham, who concludes his exegesis of each chapter of Leviticus with a discussion of its relationship to the NT and Christianity. However, Wenham’s commentary occasionally suffers from exegetical malnutrition. This reviewer would recommend that the expositor use the commentaries by Hartley, Harrison, and Rooker (see the review in TMSJ 21/1 [Spring 2001]: 123-24) alongside Ross’s expository guide.

Holiness to the LORD belongs in the library of every serious expositor. Its level-headed approach to exegetical and expositional difficulties, clear theological comment, and practical guidance are a welcome breath of fresh air for a book that too many have allowed to grow stale. We can only hope that Allen Ross will produce similar volumes on the remainder of the Pentateuch, to provide a complete guide for expounding the Torah.


When Brent Sandy writes about “pulling an octopus from its hiding place among the rocks in the Aegean Sea” (9), he knows what he is talking about. He has been there and done it. From the first page of Plowshares and Pruning Hooks he captures the reader’s attention and infects us with his enthusiasm for the biblical text. Through his talented pen (or laptop?) his exploration becomes our adventure as well. Sandy is Professor and Chair of the Department of Religious Studies at Grace College (Winona Lake, Ind.) and is perhaps best known for co-editing Cracking Old Testament Codes (Broadman & Holman, 1995) together with Ronald L. Giese. He and Martin Abegg co-authored the “Apocalyptic” essay in that volume. The current book is an expansion of that study.

In his preparatory remarks, the author explains his acceptance of biblical authority and divine inspiration (11-12). He also denies any intent either to defend
or to dismantle dispensational premillennialism (12). Concern about the negative impact of prophetic sensationalism hyping Y2K predictions and attempts to identify the Antichrist fuel Sandy’s desire to call evangelicals back to sounder principles of interpretation (9-10, 155-56). Questions, not answers, are his primary focus (13). Key questions driving his investigation (10) include “How Have Prophecies Been Fulfilled?” (Chap. 6, 129-54) and “How Will Prophecies Be Fulfilled?” (Chap. 7, 155-94).

A significant characteristic of Hebrew prophetic literature is the employment of a wide range of literary devices. As Sandy notes, the prophets were “word-smiths, master carpenters” (24). Creative language is clearly evident in the writings of the Hebrew prophets. The author recalls that a reader of OT prophetic books must pay attention to the artistry of their poetic language so as to understand their messages.

Yet that very artistry creates problems for interpretation. Seven problems expressed in two-part questions occupy center stage: 1. Predictive or poetic (34-37)? 2. Literal or figurative (37-41)? 3. Exact or emotive (41-44)? 4. Conditional or unconditional (44-47)? 5. Real or surreal (47-50)? 6. Oral or written (50-54)? 7. Fulfilled or unfulfilled (54-56)? Underlying such questions is a greater pair: Can we understand OT prophecies literally (40)? And, is it possible, as Abraham Heschel suggests, for those prophecies to be “inaccurate” (41)? Sandy cautions the reader about jumping to conclusions regarding his intent. He claims not to be “questioning the truthfulness of the prophets but simply seeking to understand the intent of their words” (42). Indeed, he concludes that biblical prophecy “is always accurate in what it intends to reveal” (154, 197).

This reviewer found some of Sandy’s exploratory observations less than complete and, therefore, less than satisfying. For example, he cites Zeph 1:2-3 as a possible example of hyperbole, yet the language is nearly identical with that employed by Moses to describe the universal Flood in Noah’s day (Genesis 6–8). If Zephaniah’s description of a future universal judgment is potentially hyperbolic, what might the interpreter conclude about the Flood or about Peter’s description of the dissolution of all creation in 2 Pet 3:11-12? Perhaps one might use the author’s own paradigm to examine how literally God fulfilled His pre-Flood announcement (Gen 6:7) in order to determine how literally He might fulfill a pronouncement like Zeph 1:2-3.

Sandy’s exploration of the process of oral transmission prior to inscripturation (51) raises more questions. Is it necessary for the modern interpreter to “distinguish between oral and written features in the prophets” (54)? Does the biblical ascription of “inspired” (or, “God-breathed”) as the quality of inscripturated revelation dismiss the need to consider the problems of oral transmission? Due to the focus of this volume, Sandy writes, “I will lay aside those issues for another time” (53). In personal communication the author affirms that no matter what might have transpired during oral transmission, the final written product is what is conclusive and authoritative. A similar question arises when Sandy writes concerning the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation, “Some details may in the end match up with a precise event, but it would have been impossible to see that in advance” (128). Were such details impossible for God Himself to see? Is divine revelation limited by the extent of human perception? Though it may be true, from the human perspective,
that “knowing in advance how prophecy would be fulfilled was generally impossible” (154), are we able to know how God might choose to fulfill His prophetic revelations? Perhaps God has and will fulfill prophecies in ways that humans have failed to remember, note, or anticipate. Sandy emphasizes that the problem that such questions raise must not cause us to diminish either God’s omniscience or the accuracy and authority of the prophetic text itself: “The biggest problem, of course, is not prophecy. Unless we enter into the world of prophecy and learn to think like prophets, the primary problem will be our ignorance” (196).

Chapter 3 (“How Does the Language of Prophecy Work?,” 58-74) is an excellent discussion of metaphors and figures of speech in Scripture that stays pretty much within the boundaries of traditional historical-grammatical hermeneutics. However, Chapter 4 (“How Does the Language of Destruction and Blessing Work?,” 75-102) gets to the nub of the current debate in prophetic interpretation. Sandy employs ANE treaty curses as one of the criteria by which to judge whether the reader of Scripture can take biblical curses and language of judgment at face value (89).

In the spirit of Sandy’s own method of inquiry, this reviewer offers his own questions regarding what might prove to be an overemphasis on the presence of hyperbole in biblical prophecy. Should Ezek 5:10, referring to apparent cannibalism (79), be interpreted as hyperbole, when accounts like 2 Kgs 6:28-29 prove that cannibalism did occur during severe sieges? Are we to understand that ANE armies never slaughtered infants or mutilated pregnant mothers the way Hos 13:16 describes (79)? Is it possible that the piling up of a series of punishments might be intended to apply distributively across a population rather than being heaped upon a single individual (88)? Are not Homer Heater’s eight “stock motifs” (94) actually an accurate description of what was perpetrated against conquered peoples in the ANE, rather than hyperbole? All of these so-called “stock motifs” reflect actual practices (cf. William H. Stiebing, Ancient Near Eastern History and Culture [Longman, 2003], 277; Pierre Briant, “Social and Legal Institutions in Achaemenid Iran,” in Civilizations of the Ancient Near East, ed. Jack M. Sasson [Hendrickson, 1995], 525-26). Psychological warfare and mass intimidation in Assyrian practice consisted of more than mere verbal rhetoric (cf. A. Kirk Grayson, “Assyrian Rule of Conquered Territory in Ancient Western Asia,” in ibid., 961). Is not the language of desolation exemplified by texts like Isa 13:20 (96) and 34:13 (219) an accurate picture of ANE practices in the conquest of cities (cf. Richard H. Beal, “Hittite Military Organization,” in ibid., 553)? Sandy’s apparent conclusion that references to “hyenas, ostriches and wild animals is apparently metaphoric, not predicting that these specific animals would inhabit Babylon” (166) causes this reviewer to remember a 15-year residency in the Third World in which he witnessed such things actually occurring. It is not metaphor; it is reality. Is it really irresponsible interpretation to understand that the judgments of prophecy will match exactly what was normative in ANE siege tactics and conquest? Were the past fulfillments of those prophetic judgments really evidence of a kinder and gentler generation? Will the eschatological (yet future) fulfillments really be less dramatic and shocking?

Having posed these questions and observations, this reviewer hastens to add that Sandy is correct in directing his readers’ attention to the significant role of metaphor in biblical prophecy. Due to our distance from the time, place, and
language of Hebrew prophetic announcements, he rightly admits, “Even with hindsight it may not be certain which statements in Jeremiah’s prophecy [re: Babylon] were metaphoric and which not” (166).

Sandy’s intent in writing this book is commendable. He has managed to come close to a means for bringing about unity: a common hermeneutic is a very good place to start. However, he does not clarify his hermeneutic sufficiently. He has not proven that the rhetoric of prophecy is as general, as non-specific, as metaphorical, as stereotypical, and as hyperbolic as he has assumed it to be. In the end, he neglected to identify what eschatological “system” results from his approach. True to the exploration he invited his readers to embark upon, our excursion has produced more questions with which to prepare ourselves for another expedition into the interpretation of prophetic revelation. Superbly written and illustrated with charts and diagrams, Plowshares & Pruning Hooks is a must read for anyone desiring to know the direction evangelicals are taking in the realm of prophetic studies. The volume is a sincere, transparent inquiry into the issues.


The pastor of Grace Bible Church in Mission Bend near Houston, Texas, devoted more than thirty years to study for this distinctly Christian encyclopedic theology of biblical counseling. He is the leading instructor in the Bachelor of Science program in Biblical Counseling at the College of Biblical Studies, Houston. Some former professors at Talbot Theological Seminary, who now teach at the Master’s Seminary—Robert L. Thomas and this reviewer—had Thomson as a student. John MacArthur, president at the Master’s Seminary and Pastor-Teacher of Grace Community Church in Sun Valley, California, endorses the book at its outset. He says that Thomson “takes the concepts of the ‘mental health’ world and defines them in Biblical terms. The author emphatically defines the importance of the sufficiency of God’s Word and how even the church is in a psychological strangle hold. I would recommend this great reference for the shelf of any pastor or minister who wishes to protect God’s flock from the lies and falsehoods that the ‘mental health’ world puts on unsuspecting parishioners, and to point them to the complete sufficiency of the Scripture and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit.”

In the late 1990s, Thomson’s son, Jon, graduated from The Master’s Seminary and now serves on the church staff with his father. Thomson himself, since seminary, has pastored and counseled on mental disorders of great span and variety. Here he focuses at the beginning on why Holy Scripture is sufficient (xiv–xxiii), then in the rest of the book on how it is. He reasons that God revealed through His Word all that people need to know to understand their inner being (xiv). Readers will agree or disagree, Thomson realizes. Certainly those will react negatively who use more of the normative secular approach in counseling, sometimes seeing man as really an evolved animal essentially explained by psychology. That bypasses the
Bible, or has it fit at points with secular reasoning, methodology, and research. And some Christians will differ whose orientation is impacted by aspects of knowledge outside Scripture that they see as valid, but who view the Bible as in harmony with these. In Thomson’s view, data from other fields should be appraised through Scripture’s “bureau of standards” for the immaterial, inner aspects of people, not Scripture in some way squeezed into conformity with conclusions allegedly established through the world’s secular methodologies, reports, tests, and perspectives. He agrees that biblical counselors can learn from things in any field that are true and in line with the Bible. Seeing God’s Word as superior to man’s reasoning, he lays out basic concepts in Chapter 1. He argues that mere human thinking, at times fallible, can be embraced as right, yet lead one astray, citing such verses as Isa 55:8-9 and 1 Cor 1:21, 25 and 3:20. He reasons that God’s truth can help a counselor be sure of the truthfulness of what he thinks about mental disorders (xviii).

The author allows that in physical, material things, men can, apart from Scripture, grasp right ways. Examples are in surgery, plumbing, and auto mechanics (xix). Later, other qualifications become clear. One section argues in twelve points that God’s Word covers all that is needed for mental soundness (xx–xxiii). An example is God’s promise to give inner peace (Isa 26:3; Phil 4:7), another is the offer that only in Christ can a person be assured of full, divine forgiveness and freedom from guilt (1 John 1:9). To build his case, Thomson follows a seven-page Table of Contents with twenty-seven chapters of explanation.

The book lists nine pages of counseling problems (987–95). It counsels audible prayer where necessary to help a person turn his thoughts to God to gain a solution (cf. 1 Pet 5:7, 997). Nine paragraphs enlarge on this. A bibliography (1009–26) lists at least ninety commentaries on biblical books and many works of theology, lexicons, medical books, works in psychiatry and psychology, prescription and non-prescription drugs, encyclopedias and dictionaries of medicine and nursing, neurology. An index of subjects at the end is a guide (1027–49).

The writer reasons on many points with copious biblical evidence. Some examples are arguments to support conscious life after death, identity of the self after death, and separate destinies for believers in Christ and non-believers (cf. 9 n. 9). He deals at some length with Scripture passages he feels are key, offering insight from respected commentators, linguistic scholars, theologians, and other writers.

Thomson sees a person who is capable as responsible to God for things which are root causes of mental disorders. In his view, such a person will find a true solution only in a proper adjustment with God through Christ, and in obedience to God’s Word through help of God’s Spirit (14). He reasons that people are not responsible to God for happenings over which they have no control. He cites Job losing his wealth through disasters or the apostle Paul suffering hardship and persecution as he preached Christ’s gospel (14-15). People are responsible to God, he says, for their inner responses so that they live in accord with God’s will, for example, in dealing patiently and purely with trials. They are accountable when tempted to do what Scripture shows is wrong (15-17). Thomson sees man’s personal choices to commit sin as the root of most mental disorders (27). But he sees a self-justifying society trying to feel good while turning its back on God will. Such people oppose what He says (27).
Some strengths of the book for those seeking to counsel biblically include the fluent writing, the attempt to discuss thoroughly and use scholarly sources, full listings and definitions on many of the disorders, a constant biblical focus on God’s sufficiency to enable, Thomson’s awareness of secular reasonings about many issues, yet his studied articulation of his own approach, and a rather thorough topical index.

Besides the book’s subjects listed above, others treated are sinful anger in moral choices, love, forgiving others, peace, confidence, how to draw near to God, fear in various scenarios, and fleeing from sin or from God due to a sense of guilt, or fleeing to God by trusting Christ. Still more of Thomson’s subjects are self-esteem, selfish self-love, being anti-social, being narcissistic, stuttering, autistic disorder, dementia, personality change due to a medical condition, drunkenness, substance-related disorders, and demonic activity. Further issues are anxiety, worry, panic, homosexuality, problems in eating, sleep, matters from dreams, and others. Thomson also deals with ramifications for various mental disorders, listing several hundred kinds.

As in many works, especially of monumental length, errors here evaded proofing and can be corrected if there is a later edition. Examples are spelling Hendriksen as Hendricksen (7) or Aalders’ as Aelder (21, 23), and saying “on wonders” where “one wonders” is meant (175).

Readers will differ on the work’s validity and value. For pastors and others wanting to counsel from a thorough stance of biblical adequacy, Thomson’s life effort will be much help. This is true for readers who agree with what the book’s author said in an e-mail to this reviewer, “The issue is not whether human wisdom can make observations or theorizations that are correct in some instances concerning human nature, motivation, and living. The issue is whether what human wisdom has to offer outside of Scripture is necessary in order for a person to be mentally sound in his inner, immaterial being—not driven by strange inner motivations, but experiencing peace, joy, confidence, and open loving relationships. Indeed, in some instances, human wisdom is correct in its psychological teachings. But the reason we know this is that these teachings are already revealed as true in the Word of God. For the same reason, we know that some teachings of human wisdom are not true. . . . Once we begin to operate in the inner person realm on principles that are not taught explicitly in Scripture (even if they appear to ‘work’), then we find ourselves on shaky, changing ground indeed (Prov 14:12; 16:25; cf. Prov 16:2; 21:2) and even in violation of God’s will for the believer (Col 2:8; Ps 1:1, cf. Introduction of book).”

The work is available by e-mail at www.BiblicalFrameworkCounseling.org or at the publisher above, P.O. Box 1852, Alief, Tex., 77411.


Anthologies or collections of quotations and sermon illustrations have been a staple of Christian publishing for the last 100 years. Almost every pastor has on
his shelf such a work. Illustrations become dated and often disconnected from a listening congregation, but a good quotation can be very effective in punctuating a sermonic point. Quotations have more of a timeless quality than illustrations.

In this volume are over 20,000 quotations, all dealing with themes related to Christian theology and practice. The editor states as his purpose to “encapsulate the rich heritage of Christian wisdom of the first 2,000 years of the Christian era” (vii), and in the pursuit of that purpose he has produced an extremely useful and thought-provoking volume. This volume is remarkably well indexed and cross-referenced. The entries are thematically arranged with a compete listing of the topic headings in the book’s beginning. An author index, listing the 2,500 plus sources and the topics on which they are quoted is at the end of the volume. The layout is excellent and the publisher was possessed of enough foresight to render this 1,200-page work in a hardback binding instead of the more common paperback mode.

One excellent and unique feature in this work is the inclusion of nearly 100 essay length entries dealing with what the editor calls the “basic teaching about the Christian faith” (viii). Those articles, included within the topical arrangement of quotations, range from Luther’s “Ninety-Five Theses” to the funeral sermon by John Wesley for George Whitefield. They include essays on key theological issues, such as repentance (by John Bunyan), Calvinism (by C. H. Spurgeon), faith (by Martin Luther), and predestination (by B. B. Warfield). The quotations reflect the full range of church history, even to the current time, but the essays are almost exclusively of the Reformation and Puritan eras, which is a bit too narrow in scope.

Though this work is of tremendous value and benefit to the busy pastor, one word of caution is necessary. This is a compilation in which the quotations have been lifted from other sources, sources that the editor does not list or refer to. This omission does not fault the editor, as such was not his purpose. Yet the sources and their contexts are unavailable in the work, meaning that the accuracy of English translations from original languages cannot be verified. With that warning in mind, the work’s benefit for its intended purpose make it very valuable.