

## THEOLOGICAL BASIS OF ETHICS

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*Systematic theology must serve as a foundation for any set of moral standards that pleases God and fulfills human nature. Establishing such a set is difficult today because of the emergence of the postmodernism which denies the existence of absolute truth, absolute moral standards, and universal ethics. Advances in science, medicine, and technology increase the difficulty of creating a system of Christian ethics. The inevitable connection between ethics and systematic theology requires that one have a good foundation in systematic theology for his ethics. A separation between the two fields occurred largely as a result of the Enlightenment which caused theology to be viewed as a science. Since the study of a science must be separate from a religious perspective, theology underwent a process of becoming a profession and the responsibility for educating theologians became the responsibility of the college rather than the church. This solidified the barrier between theology and ethics. Who God is must be the root for standards of right and wrong. God's glory must be the goal of ethics. Love for God must be the basis for one's love for and behavior toward his fellow man. Other doctrines besides the doctrine of God, especially bibliology, play an important role in determining right ethical standards.*

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One of the most popular American movies last year was based on a book by John Irving entitled *The Cider House Rules*. *The Cider House Rules* tells the story of a young man eager to discover what life is like outside of the orphanage in which he has spent his childhood years. He ends up working on an apple farm where numerous ethical and moral issues confront him. According to a glowing recommendation from the *Houston Post*, "*The Cider House Rules* is filled with people to love and to feel for. . . . The characters in John Irving's novel break all the rules, and yet they remain noble and free spirited."<sup>1</sup>

The story and the American public's positive reaction to it illustrate a number of serious ethical questions. Are rules often irrelevant? Are most standards

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<sup>1</sup>John Irving, *The Cider House Rules* (New York: Ballantine, 1985). The quote from the *Houston Post* is from the back dust jacket of this edition of the book.

out of date? Do standards of right and wrong vary according to the circumstances? How can one decide what is right and wrong in any given situation? Is it possible that different communities can have equally valid, but contradictory standards?

Ethicists have proposed answers to these questions. Some have insisted that the essence of ethics is obedience to laws (deontological ethics). Others have said that the essence of ethics is the pursuit of some human good, such as happiness or pleasure (teleological ethics).<sup>2</sup> Religious people believe that ethics is “the study of the way of life that conforms to the will of God—the way that is good, that pleases God and fulfills human nature.”<sup>3</sup> But how does anyone know what pleases God? Even Christians who claim that the Bible is their guide are seemingly able to derive different ethical systems from it.

The purpose of this essay is to emphasize that every Christian needs to be a student of Scriptures to the extent that he comprehends a systematic theology that becomes the foundation for his moral standards, decision-making process, and manner of living. Douglas Groothuis says it well:

Theology is not merely an endeavour of academic theologians, but the concern of every Christian who desires to understand and apply God's truth for life and make it known to others. Consequently, our theology affects all that we do, whether or not we have thought it through systematically. It directs our sermons, our evangelism and apologetics (or lack thereof), and our personal and social ethics. In other words, it is indispensable and inescapable. This underscores the urgency of developing a theology that is both faithful to Scripture and which speaks forcefully and truthfully to our postmodern situation.<sup>4</sup>

## **THE DILEMMAS CONFRONTING CHRISTIAN ETHICS**

### **The Dilemma of Postmodernism**

“When the foundations are being destroyed,  
what can the righteous do?” (Ps. 11:3)<sup>5</sup>

Many observers of the social scene have concluded that the Western world has been going through a change from modernism, based on the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, to postmodernism. Neither modernism nor postmodernism is a

<sup>2</sup>For helpful surveys of ethical systems, see John S. and Paul D. Feinberg, *Ethics for a Brave New World* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 1993) 17-45; Norman Geisler, *Christian Ethics: Options and Issues* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989) 17-132; Morris A. Inch, “Ethics,” *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. by Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994) 375.

<sup>3</sup>David Clyde Jones, *Biblical Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994) 15.

<sup>4</sup>Douglas Groothuis, “The Postmodernist Challenge to Theology,” *Themelios* 25/1 (November 1999):4-5.

<sup>5</sup>All Scripture quotations are taken from the New American Standard Bible unless otherwise indicated.

friend to biblical Christianity, but “the transition from the modern era to the postmodern era poses a grave challenge to the church in its mission to its own next generation.”<sup>6</sup> Three foundational features of the belief system of postmodernism illustrate the complexities of developing a theology for ethics in the modern world.

### **No Absolute Truth**

First, postmodernists believe that there is no absolute truth. Truth is constructed, not revealed or discovered, and it is peculiar to each society. Postmodernist Michel Foucault writes:

The important thing here, I believe, is that truth isn't outside power, or lacking in power. . . . Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanism and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements; the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true.<sup>7</sup>

Seemingly this is what most Americans believe. According to recent Barna polls, sixty-six percent of Americans believe that “there is no such thing as absolute truth.” Among young adults, 72% do not believe absolutes exist. Even worse, however, is the fact that 53% of those who call themselves evangelical Christians believe that there are no absolutes.<sup>8</sup> This would mean that about half of those say that they believe in salvation through Jesus Christ, and who might be able to sign a doctrinal statement proclaiming the inerrancy of Scripture, do not believe in absolute truth.

### **No Absolute Moral Standards**

The moral standards of Americans are as alarming as their epistemological views. Specifically, 68% of Americans, according to a 1969 Barna poll, believed that sexual relations before marriages were wrong. But in 1992, only 33% rejected the idea of premarital sex. One study reported in Veith claimed that 56% of single “fundamentalists” engaged in sex outside of marriage, which is only 1% less than those who considered themselves theologically liberal. Forty-nine percent of Protestants and 47% of Catholics consider themselves “pro-choice.” Some 49% of evangelicals and an amazing 71% of Roman Catholics say that they believe in

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<sup>6</sup>Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996) 10.

<sup>7</sup>Michel Foucault, “Truth and Power,” in *From Modernism to Postmodernism, An Anthology*, ed. by Lawrence Cahoon (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1996) 379.

<sup>8</sup>Gene Edward Veith, Jr., *Postmodern Times* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 1994) 16.

euthanasia.<sup>9</sup>

### **No Universal Ethics**

Since there is neither absolute truth nor absolute moral standards, universal ethics no longer exist, according to postmodernists. Ethics have shifted from universal to community. Each community, each group, each sub-group, each minority segment of society, should operate on the basis of an ethical system which best suits it.<sup>10</sup> Stanley Grenz, an evangelical observer of postmodernism, comments,

[T]he center of ethics is shifting away from the individual actor and the quest for the one true, universal ethical society. The new focus is on the community in the midst of which and according to the ideals of which personal character finds its reference point. In the end, the newer voices assert, ethical judgments arise from and must be articulated in accordance with the belief structures of the community in which a person lives.<sup>11</sup>

Ideally, this would mean that the supreme ethical value in society is tolerance. "Under the post-modernist way of thinking," writes Gene Veith, "the principle of cultural diversity means that every like-minded group constitutes a culture that must be considered as good as any other culture."<sup>12</sup> In the long run, though, tolerance will certainly be smothered by each community's pursuit of power.

### **The Dilemma of Scientific, Medical, and Technological Advances**

The perplexities of ethics in a society impacted by postmodernism are magnified by the advances in science, medicine, and technology. Timothy Demy writes,

Science and technology have brought enormous medical advances and benefits to humanity. The ability to diagnose, prevent, and treat many medical conditions has enriched and saved millions of lives. . . . No reasonable individual would suggest abandoning such progress. Yet advances in medicine and technology do raise new

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 17. According to a recent *Christianity Today* article, American young people are engaging in sex at younger ages. In 1972, 5% of 15 year-old girls and 20% of 15 year-old boys had engaged in sexual intercourse. In 1997, 38% of 15 year-old girls and 45% of 15 year-old boys had engaged in sexual intercourse. According to this article, however, "As bleak as this picture appears, some encouraging trends can be seen" (Paula Rinehart, "Losing Our Promiscuity," *Christianity Today* 44/8 (July 10, 2000):37).

<sup>10</sup>See for example, Sandra Harding, "From Feminist Empiricism to Feminist Standpoint Epistemologies," in *From Modernism to Postmodernism*, 616-37, and Susan Bordo, "The Cartesian Masculinization of Thought," in *From Modernism to Postmodernism*, 638-64.

<sup>11</sup>Stanley J. Grenz, "Christian Integrity in a Postmodern World," in *New Dimensions in Evangelical Thought*, ed. by David S. Dockery (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1998) 399.

<sup>12</sup>Veith, *Postmodern Times* 195.

ethical issues that need to be continually refined.<sup>13</sup>

New ethical dilemmas include genetic engineering, genetic testing, gene therapy, cloning, fetal-tissue research, and euthanasia. These have been added to other issues such as abortion, capital punishment, war/pacifism, civil disobedience, sexual morality, homosexuality, pornography, penology, birth control, divorce, and remarriage. The specific questions that come with the new ethics of modern life are complicated, sometimes bizarre, and almost unending. Grenz says,

In short, we are confronted by the greatest issues humankind has ever faced at a time when the moral fiber of our society appears to be at its weakest. Ethical questions are assaulting us at breakneck speed at a time when people have lost their sense of mooring, their sense of stability and their sense of possessing some platform on which to stand as they make moral decisions.<sup>14</sup>

How then can we confront and solve the dilemmas of postmodernism and the advances in technology and science? How must a Christian formulate a correct ethical system?

### **ETHICS: THEOLOGY IN ACTION (Prolegomena)**

The answer to these questions is the thesis of this essay. Every Christian needs to commit himself to understanding the basics (at least) of a systematic theology, drawn carefully from the Bible,<sup>15</sup> which becomes the foundation for his moral standards, decision-making process, and manner of living.

### **The Pre-Enlightenment Idea of Theology**

We live in an era, however, when systematic theology is denigrated, minimized, and ignored. Theology to some is only the handmaid of experience. Margaret Poloma, for example, in an article on the "Toronto Blessing," writes that "religious experiences . . . can shake our ecclesiastical walls and cast a glaring light on the inadequacy of our theologies."<sup>16</sup> Moreover, theology is often considered as irrelevant for Christian living and ministry. David Wells' account of the incident

<sup>13</sup>Timothy J. Demy, "Technology and Theology: Reality and Hope for the Third Millennium," *Issues 2000*, ed. by Mal Couch (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999) 45.

<sup>14</sup>Stanley J. Grenz, *The Moral Quest* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1997) 17.

<sup>15</sup>Some Bible teachers believe that systematic theology has multiple sources. Though this paper is not the place to take up this issue, this writer believes that systematic theology ultimately has only one source—the Christian Scriptures (2 Tim 2:15; 3:16-17).

<sup>16</sup>Margaret Poloma, "The Spirit and the Bride: The 'Toronto Blessing' and Church Structure," *Evangelical Studies Bulletin* 13 (Winter 1996):1.

that motivated him to write *No Place for Truth* is all too familiar to those who teach beginning theology. After Wells' introductory lecture on the importance of theology, "an obviously agitated student who had come forward" told him how grateful he was for the lecture.

He told me that he was one of those I had described who felt petrified by the prospect of having to take this course. As a matter of fact, he said, he had had a mighty struggle with his conscience about it. Was it right to spend so much money on a course of study that was so irrelevant to his desire to minister to people in the Church? He plainly intended no insult. As a matter of fact, this confession, which I rather think he had not intended to blurt out, had begun as a compliment. That was the day I decided that I had to write this book.<sup>17</sup>

What is the origin of the idea that theology is irrelevant for Christian living? Certainly not the Scriptures. The apostle Paul makes the case for the practical value of theology when he groups together "reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness" with "doctrine."<sup>18</sup> Doctrine is part of the Scriptural process that makes the man of God "perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim 3:16-17).

To hear that theology is irrelevant to Christian living and ministry also would have bewildered the pre-Enlightenment theologians. To many of them, ethics was theology in action. In the Pietist tradition, William Perkins wrote, "Theology is the science of living blessedly forever. . . ."<sup>19</sup> William Ames, the student of Perkins and the teacher of many of the Puritans, wrote that theology is the teaching of "living unto God."<sup>20</sup>

Many of the pre-Enlightenment theologians, in fact, had major sections in their theology books on ethics.<sup>21</sup> The great Baptist theologian, John Gill, for

<sup>17</sup>David F. Wells, *No Place for Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993) 4.

<sup>18</sup>Systematic theology is larger than "doctrine," in that systematic theology synthesizes the doctrines of Scripture and demonstrates how they are related. "To systematize," writes Thomas Oden, "is to arrange, coordinate, organize discrete aspects of a system into a meaningful or working arrangement" (Thomas C. Oden, *Systematic Theology: The Living God* [Peabody, Mass.: Prince, 1998] 328). But doctrine is the essence of systematic theology.

<sup>19</sup>William Perkins, *A Golden Chain*, 1616 edition, 11, quoted in F. Ernest Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971) 53.

<sup>20</sup>William Ames, *The Marrow of Theology*, trans. by John D. Eusden (reprint of 1629 ed., Boston: Pilgrim, 1968) 77.

<sup>21</sup>According to David Jones, "Ethics and dogmatics have been treated as separate disciplines only since the late sixteenth century. In the Reformed tradition Lambertus Danaeus published his *Christian Ethics* in 1577. The better-known Lutheran theologian Georgius Calixtus followed suit with *Epitomes Theologiae Moralis* in 1634. The same development may be observed in Roman Catholic moral theology around 1600" (David Clyde Jones, *Biblical Christian Ethics* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994] 7 n.1). Of course, during this era specialized books on ethics were not intended to minimize theology or separate theology from ethics. On the other hand, another possible cause for the distancing of ethics from

example, divided his *Body of Divinity* into two parts. The first section was entitled, “A Body of Doctrinal Divinity.” This section, over 600 pages in length, developed the various doctrines as might be expected. Following “A Body of Doctrinal Divinity” came a 300-page section entitled “A Body of Practical Divinity.” In this section, Gill discussed such issues as worship, contentment, patience, sincerity, prayer, duties of husband and wife, and the duties of parents and children.<sup>22</sup>

Many readers of John Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion* are also pleased to find so many insights into practical Christian living—not what they might have expected from a great work on systematic theology. In fact, one of the finest devotional books available today is the little *Golden Booklet of the Christian Life*<sup>23</sup> that is excerpted from the *Institutes*. Though Calvin, Gill, and the other pre-Enlightenment theologians could not foresee the technical ethical issues of the twenty-first century, they were committed to the value of theology for life.

### The Enlightenment Idea of Theology

The Enlightenment, however, “transformed the intellectual map of Europe.<sup>24</sup> In brief, the Enlightenment was an eighteenth-century European intellectual development which continued the scientific spirit of the thought of Descartes, John Locke, and Isaac Newton. Enlightenment thinkers distrusted tradition (including the Bible) “in matters of intellectual inquiry, and believed that truth could be attained only through reason, observation, and experiment.”<sup>25</sup> The result for theology was that theology began to be treated as an academic science. The word, “science,” (*scientia*) has been used in defining theology at least as far back as Augustine. But it is clear that the pre-Enlightenment theologians understood science in the sense of the analyzed and synthesized doctrines of Scripture studied in connection with Christian living. Perkins’ definition above is a prime example: “Theology is the science of living blessedly forever.”

### The Definition of Theology

In the post-Enlightenment era, “science” took on the connotation of a specialized field—that which is called “science” today. And some of the definitions

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theology might be the theological studies of the post-Reformation Protestant scholastics, both Reformed and Lutheran. For a study of these Lutheran theologians, see Robert D. Preus, *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1970). The German Pietist movement arose in part as a response to their lack of emphasis on Christian living.

<sup>22</sup>John Gill, *A Body of Divinity* (London: Tegg and Co., 1839; reprint, Atlanta: Turner Lassetter, 1965).

<sup>23</sup>John Calvin, *The Golden Booklet of the True Christian Life* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995).

<sup>24</sup>*The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed., s. v. “The Enlightenment,” ed. E. A. Livingstone (Oxford: Oxford University, 1997) 547.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 546.

of theology, even those devised by evangelical heroes, describe theology in terms of inductive science, rather in relation to living. W. G. T. Shedd wrote that theology “is a science that is concerned with both the Infinite and Finite, with both God and the Universe. The material, therefore, which it includes is vaster than that of any other science. It is also the most necessary of all the sciences.”<sup>26</sup> Charles Hodge writes, “Theology, therefore, is the exhibition of the facts of Scripture in their proper order and relation, with the principles or general truths involved in the facts themselves, and which pervade and harmonize the whole.”<sup>27</sup> Lewis Sperry Chafer wrote: “Systematic Theology may be defined as the collecting, scientifically arranging, comparing, exhibiting, and defending of all facts from any and every source concerning God and His works.”<sup>28</sup>

This writer has no desire to minimize the greatness of these theologians and their books. They all wrote much about Christian living and regularly applied theology to ethics. They have been greatly used by God in the lives of Bible-believing Christians. But is systematic theology a science? In some ways, yes. Thomas Oden writes,

Insofar as it seeks to make accurate observations, test evidence, provide fit hypotheses, arrange facts in due order, and make reliable generalizations, the study of God may be called a science. It employs both inductive and deductive argument. It relies upon the same primary laws of thought and the same categories of reason upon which all scientific inquiry depends.<sup>29</sup>

But in other ways, theology ought not to be thought of as a science. For one reason, “science means for so many the ruling out of all forms of evidence that do not submit to naturalistic observation, quantification, and measurement.”<sup>30</sup> For another reason, defining theology as a science misses the emphasis on living blessedly through theology, and seems to relegate the study of theology to the mythical ivory tower of the academic world. In this way, defining theology as a science misses the needed emphasis on living blessedly through theology and too much reflects Enlightenment thought.

### **The Neutrality of Theology**

One of the main theses of the Enlightenment was that every discipline of academic study should be studied from a neutral, non-religious perspective. J. Andrew Kirk, in his discussion of liberation theologians, makes this point:

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<sup>26</sup>W. G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1889) 1:16.

<sup>27</sup>Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, (reprint of 1885 ed., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.) 1:19.

<sup>28</sup>Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, (Dallas: Dallas Theological Seminary, 1947) 1:16.

<sup>29</sup>Oden, *Systematic Theology* 351.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 354.

Since the Enlightenment, theology, like every other discipline, has sought to gain independence from the control of the church in order to pursue its studies according to its own canons and methods. To do this it unhesitatingly accepted the 19th-century emphasis on the inviolability of the scientific method. It isolated itself in the theological faculties of the state universities (especially in Germany) and insulated its work from the daily life and mission of the Christian community.<sup>31</sup>

Postmodernists today do not advocate neutrality, to be sure. Still the modernist idea that academic disciplines, including theology, should be approached from a neutral perspective has had long-lasting results.

### **The Professionalization of Theology**

One result of the Enlightenment idea of academic neutrality was the professionalization of theology. The change to academic professionalization in America was dramatic around the end of the nineteenth century. As Mark Noll has shown, “as late as 1875, virtually every American who could be called an expert in the study of Scripture sustained some kind of a denominational connection and devoted the results of biblical scholarship primarily to the ongoing spirituality of the church. Change was dramatic.”<sup>32</sup> After the change to professionalization, by and large theologians no longer felt responsible to their religious constituency, but looked to their academic peers for approval. In many instances, theology became an essential part of the academy rather than the church. The trend was therefore to divorce ethics from theology. Thus in the present era, “morality has come to be construed as independent of God, so much so that the majority of moral philosophers today would without hesitation affirm that even if God exists, morality can exist apart from God—an ontological critique—and, if the precepts or dictates of morality can be known at all, they can be known apart from religious orthodoxy or theological reflection—an epistemological critique.”<sup>33</sup>

### **The Education of Theologians**

Accompanying the divorce of ethics from theology was a significant change in the education of pastors in America.<sup>34</sup> Before the Revolutionary War, young men prepared for the ministry by living in the homes of older ministers. Though this kind of pastoral training was somewhat successful, not all of the older ministers could provide the breadth of training the younger pastors needed. Gradually, therefore, church leaders turned to the college to provide the theological education. The change to the academy for theological education also increased the impact of

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<sup>31</sup>J. Andrew Kirk, *Theology Encounters Revolution* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1980) 127.

<sup>32</sup>Mark Noll, *Between Faith and Criticism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986) 33.

<sup>33</sup>David J. Baggett, “Theistic Ethics: Toward a Christian Solution,” *The Asbury Theological Journal* 54 (Fall 1999):5.

<sup>34</sup>Haddon Robinson, “The Theologian and the Evangelist,” *JETS* 28/1 (March 1985):3-4.

theological liberalism. Professors in the colleges and seminaries were often enamored with the latest scholarship that came from the Continent, and the critical views taught in the classroom filtered down through the students to the churches.

Eventually, many earnest Christians became disgusted with the attacks on the Bible and the fundamentals of the faith by those who called themselves Christian theologians. For these, theological seminaries were perceived as cemeteries, and theology was viewed as something significant only to the philosophers.

The point of this survey is to clarify that it was the negative external influences that made theology irrelevant to ethics, not theology itself. As Allister McGrath says, "It is . . . important to appreciate that the tension is . . . not primarily between *theology* and spirituality, but between *modern western concepts of theology* and spirituality."<sup>35</sup> Theology should be the foundation of all correct living. "Like Siamese twins, ethics and doctrine are closely connected. How we should live and what we should believe are in fact inseparable."<sup>36</sup>

## **ETHICS: THEISTIC IN ESSENCE (Theology Proper)**

### **The Source of Ethics: God's Being**

According to postmodernism, standards of right and wrong are power issues. Rules and regulations have been invented by some power group, often the white European males, to maintain the power of their community over other communities. To cover up their power grab, the power group often pretends that their ethical system comes from a god. But, "if morality is rooted in a God who doesn't exist," writes David Baggett, "then morality is largely illusory; . . . [M]orality is either purely conventional, or a way to keep the proletariat in line, or a repression of our best instincts, and the list goes on."<sup>37</sup> In other words, if truth and values are free-floating, disconnected from God, people can create truth and values for preservation and self-promotion. This eventually will lead, not to toleration, but "warring factions and isolated depraved individuals,"<sup>38</sup> where everyone does what is right in his own eyes (cf. Judg 21:25).

According to biblical Christianity, however, God decrees standards of right and wrong. The Creator God actually determines ethical values. "As the one who values truly, God is the standard for value, and this God calls us to value after the manner our Creator values."<sup>39</sup> This answers the age-old question of the philosopher: Is "the . . . holy . . . beloved by the gods because it is holy, or holy because it is

<sup>35</sup>Allister E. McGrath, *Christian Spirituality* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999) 27.

<sup>36</sup>Roy B. Zuck, ed., *Vital Contemporary Issues* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1994) 9.

<sup>37</sup>Baggett, "Theistic Ethics" 6.

<sup>38</sup>Veith, *Postmodern Times* 198.

<sup>39</sup>Grenz, *The Moral Quest* 258.

beloved of the gods.”<sup>40</sup> Robert Reymond replies,

Now the Christian has a ready answer to this question. Not only is the God of Christian theism the Governor of the world; He is also the final Legislator. It is His will that establishes the rightness or wrongness of all human deportment. His will determines the norms of morality. *Nothing is right or wrong in and of itself.* An act is right if God says it is right, wrong if God says it is wrong. There is *no* law outside of or above God which distinguishes between piety and impiety. Hence, for the Christian the answer is obvious—a thing is holy *because* God loves (decrees) it as such.<sup>41</sup>

What God decides is holy and moral and required of human beings is thus neither based on some standard outside of God, nor arbitrary. God wills certain values because they reflect His nature. Because He is just and merciful, for example, He requires these values in human beings. Christians are to be holy because God is holy (1 Pet 1:16).

### The Goal of Ethics: God’s Glory

Not only is God the source of ethical standards, His glory is the goal of ethics. We are familiar with the catechism’s questions and answer: “What is the chief end of man?” “Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.”<sup>42</sup> Paul encouraged the Corinthians, “Whether therefore you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” And how do believers glorify God? In what has been called “the most profound treatise on the glory of God,”<sup>43</sup> Jonathan Edwards explains that God’s supreme end in creating the universe was that there might be “the emanation of God’s glory; or the excellent brightness and fullness of the divinity diffused, overflowing, and as it were enlarged; or in one word, *existing ad extra.*”<sup>44</sup> God wanted to share His knowledge, holiness, and happiness with humans. Edwards continues,

In the creature’s knowing, esteeming, loving, rejoicing in, and praising God, the glory of God is both exhibited and acknowledged; his fullness is received and returned. . . . The beams of glory come from God, and are something of God, and are refunded back again to their original. So that the whole *is* of God, and *in* God, and *to* God; and God is the

<sup>40</sup>Plato, “Euthyphro,” *The Works of Plato*, ed. by B. Jowett (New York: Dial, n.d.) 3:77.

<sup>41</sup>Robert Reymond, *The Justification of Knowledge* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979) 82.

<sup>42</sup>“The Westminster Shorter Catechism,” *Creeds of Christendom*, ed. by Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977) 3:676.

<sup>43</sup>Jones, *Biblical Christian Ethics* 21. Jones’ discussion of the glory of God and his use of Jonathan Edwards’ works are very helpful.

<sup>44</sup>Jonathan Edwards, “Concerning the End for Which God Created the World,” *Ethical Writings*, vol. 8 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, ed. by Paul Ramsey (New Haven, Conn.: Yale, 1989) 527.

beginning, middle and end in this affair.<sup>45</sup>

We glorify God, therefore, by enjoying His Godness—by coming to know Him in a personal way through Jesus Christ His Son, and by sharing His values.<sup>46</sup>

### **The Motive of Ethics: Love for God and Man**

The motive for proper ethics is also theistic. When Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment was, He replied, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments” (Matt 22:37-40). Theologians have pointed out that love for God is composed most perfectly of a complex of affections traditionally referred to as satisfaction and good will. In William Ames’s explanation, “The Love which is satisfaction is that affection by which we approve of all that is in God and rest in his supreme goodness. . . . The love which is good will is the affection which bids us yield ourselves wholly to God.”<sup>47</sup>

On the basis of our love for God, we can then love man. In other words, love for mankind is not free-floating, but is grounded in our love for God. Jonathan Edwards writes,

Love to God is the foundation of gracious love to men. Men are loved either because they are in some respect like God, either they have the nature or spiritual image of God; or because of their relation to God as his children, as his creatures, as those who are beloved of God, or those to whom divine mercy is offered, or in some other way from regard to God.<sup>48</sup>

### **ETHICS: TRANSCENDENT IN DOCTRINE**

The other doctrines of theology also play a vital part in the foundation of one’s ethical system. These include bibliology, anthropology, hamartiology, soteriology, pneumatology, ecclesiology, and eschatology. A brief description of their roles follows.

#### **Bibliology**

The doctrine of the Bible is vital to ethics. The second question of the

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 531.

<sup>46</sup>See also John Piper’s discussion, *Desiring God* (Sisters, Ore.: Multnomah, 1986) 14-50.

<sup>47</sup>Ames, *Marrow of Theology* 251.

<sup>48</sup>Jonathan Edwards, *Ethical Writings* 133-34.

Westminster Shorter Catechism asks, “What rule hath God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him?” And the answer is, “The Word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him.”<sup>49</sup>

As certain as this is, a few important problems yet confront the student of Scripture developing his ethics.<sup>50</sup> The Bible does not deal directly with numerous ethical problems that exist in the twenty-first century. Many new societal structures such as trade unions and the internet, and ethical problems such as genetic engineering, have only recently surfaced. The writers of Scripture obviously could not have considered these issues. Moreover, the Bible is not written to be an ethical textbook, systematically dealing with every legal, social, and ethical problem that can be imagined. Furthermore, the changing of dispensational conditions raises the question of what in the OT Mosaic Law continues as a law code for the NT Christian.

So how does the Bible give ethical direction?<sup>51</sup> First, there is prohibition. The Bible says, “Don’t do something,” and we must not. “Thou shalt not murder,” for example, is an important prohibition for medical ethics. Second, the Bible records permission. This can be complex because many things are permitted which Scripture does not specifically mention. Whether believers are permitted to smoke a pipe, or to attend a rock and roll concert, for examples, must be based on broader biblical principles. Third, there are commands, such as Gal 6:10: “While we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.” Fourth, there is precedent: “Have you never read what David did when he became hungry, he and his companions; how he entered the house of God and they ate the consecrated bread, which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those with him, but for the priests alone?” (Matt 12:3-4). Fifth, there is example. David’s mighty men were praised for their courage in bringing water from the well in Bethlehem (2 Sam 23:13-17). An action is thus condoned by praise.

### **Anthropology and Hamartiology**

Anthropology is also vital in ethics, specifically in discovering the meaning and importance of being made in the likeness and image of God. Hamartiology, the doctrine of sin, explains that we live in a society that has been devastated by man’s fall into sin. All the ills of society, all the injury of man to man, all of the criminality

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<sup>49</sup>“Westminster Shorter Catechism,” *Creeeds of Christendom* 3:676.

<sup>50</sup>See I. Howard Marshall, “Using the Bible in Ethics,” in *Essays in Evangelical Social Ethics*, ed. by David F. Wright (Wilton, Conn.: Morehouse-Barlow, 1979) 40 ff.

<sup>51</sup>John Frame suggests four specific ways in *Medical Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988) 12-18; David Jones gives seven in *Biblical Christian Ethics* 62-68.

and disorder can be traced back to the Fall (Genesis 3).<sup>52</sup> Moreover, because of sin in the universe, we have to deal with what sometimes appears as conflicting duties—another major problem in constructing a proper ethical system.

### **Soteriology**

Because of personal sin and depravity that infects every part of our beings, we cannot meet God's standards without His grace. Ken Boa writes,

The Bible reveals God's character and it also shows that all men have true moral guilt—they fall short of God's standard. However, the Bible also reveals that God himself has provided a solution to this moral dilemma through the substitutionary work of Christ. He offers release from sin's dominion and provides a way of reconciliation with the holy God.<sup>53</sup>

Then through the process of sanctification, God renews the redeemed into the image of Christ.

### **Pneumatology**

Meeting God's ethical standards is more than just legalistically trying to follow biblical laws or principles. The indwelling Holy Spirit reminds believers of biblical principles and enables them to fulfill them with the proper heart attitude. Thus, walking in the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit are integral parts of godly ethics.

### **Ecclesiology**

God has provided the local church as a means of helping Christians to live the godly life. Public prayer, the ordinances, teaching of the Word, and other means of worship, help them to live as God desires. Even church discipline has as one of its major goals the conforming of the believer to the image of Christ. Perhaps nothing is more important for one's personal ethics than fellowship with a loving covenant people, encouraging, admonishing, and holding one another accountable.

### **Eschatology**

In the millennial kingdom, God's ethical program will find its pre-eternal state culmination as Jesus Christ Himself rules over this earth. But even then, men

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<sup>52</sup>See further, Harry Blamires, *Recovering the Christian Mind* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1988) 55.

<sup>53</sup>Ken Boa, "What Is Behind Morality?" in *Vital Contemporary Issues* 23.

and women will show themselves as sometimes unwilling to live as God requires. At the end of the kingdom, Satan will lead unregenerate mankind in a massive rebellion against the King. In the eternal state, however, redeemed men and women will no longer sin. Their values and ethical systems will be without flaw, because of the marvelous grace of God.

### CONCLUSION

We live in a society that increasingly is denying the existence of God, absolute truth, and absolute moral standards. What should be our response to our society's deteriorating value system? I have argued in this essay that the true and universal ethical system is based on a theology based on the Christian Scriptures. I have also argued that we cannot sell out to the culture. As Alister McGrath has written,

[G]ood doctrine makes for good ethics. . . . And doctrine seeks to preserve Christian distinctiveness, to present Christianity from submerging in the swamp of liberal American culture. We must not be afraid to be distinct. As Paul wrote to the church at Philippi, we must shine out as stars in the darkness of the night sky.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>Alister McGrath, "In What Way Can Jesus Be a Moral Example for Christians?" *JETS* 34/3 (September 1991):298.

## HOMOSEXUALITY AND THE CHURCH

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*Developments in the secular society in its acceptance of the homosexual lifestyle have put pressure on the evangelical church to respond in some way. Homosexual spokespersons have advocated varying principles of interpretation to prove from the Bible the legitimacy of their lifestyle. They have resorted to either subjectivism, historic-scientific evolving of society, or cultural biases of the biblical writers to find biblical backing for their position. Scripture condemns homosexuality in such passages as Genesis 19; Lev 18:22; 20:13; Rom 1:18-32; 1 Cor 6:9; 1 Tim 1:10; 2 Pet 2:7; and Jude 7. The true biblical teaching on the subject requires the church to condemn the sin of homosexuality, convert the homosexual, confront erroneous teaching, and cleanse itself. The church must be careful not to adopt the customs of the world.*

\* \* \* \* \*

Is homosexuality condemned or condoned by the Holy Scriptures? Are homosexuals guilty of practicing a sinful lifestyle, or are they simply living out their God-ordained functions? Are homosexuals to be excluded from the church, or should they be included in the assembly of God's people?

These are questions facing the evangelical church today.<sup>1</sup> Secular society has more or less capitulated to the pressure from the gay and lesbian community to accept homosexuality as a viable and legitimate lifestyle. Aligning themselves with Blacks, Hispanics, women, and the disabled, the homosexual community has won over large segments of society to their side. In fact, as this article is being written, the three big automobile manufacturers in America just voted to recognize gay unions as legitimate for the purposes of granting spousal rights. All this simply puts more pressure on the evangelical church to yield to its secular counterparts.

The evangelical church must take a courageous and intelligent stand on this vital moral issue, and thus halt the erosion of morality in the church. Unfortunately, some evangelicals have already embraced the gay lifestyle. Others have affirmed their right to exist as practicing homosexuals while still claiming to be Christians. The following discussion will describe the manner in which certain pro-homosexual

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<sup>1</sup>James R. Beck, "Evangelicals, Homosexuals, and Social Science," *JETS* 40/1 (March 1997):83-85.

proponents arrive at their conclusions about what the Bible teaches on homosexuality. Then it will examine the key biblical passages dealing with the subject of homosexuality. Following this will come a discussion of the implications both for the homosexuals themselves and for the evangelical church.

## **THE HERMENEUTICS OF THE HOMOSEXUAL MOVEMENT**

Much of the debate which has arisen over the issue of homosexuality comes from the approaches homosexual advocates have used in interpreting the Scriptures. In fact, the battle raging in the church "is really about hermeneutics, about the interpretation and use of Scripture."<sup>2</sup> Various forms of interpretation have been used to arrive at conclusions which support the homosexual lifestyle. However, unless a consistent hermeneutic is applied to the interpretation of Scripture, each interpreter will arrive at his own conclusion. The text will say whatever the interpreter wants it to say. Unless the literal, historical-grammatical approach to the interpretation of the Scriptures is held strictly, the Scriptures will cease to speak and thus cease to be authoritative (cf. 2 Tim 3:15-17). Consider what approaches the homosexual movement uses to arrive at its conclusions.

### ***Subjectivism***

According to homosexual advocates, the reader imparts his meaning into the biblical text, making subjective, personal experience the ultimate test of truth. One gay proponent writes, "Our discussion on whether queers have the Holy Spirit can only be answered by meeting queer Christians, then bringing that information back to the Bible and informing the Bible of truths it may or may not have already known."<sup>3</sup> Another proponent argues that the "basis for discerning what is sexually right or wrong is probably more a matter of intention and responsibility than anything else."<sup>4</sup>

### ***Historic-Scientific***

Others liken the church's position on homosexuality as evolving in the same way as its position on slavery changed. As more information surfaced, the church's attitude changed. Similarly, the anti-homosexual bias is obliterated by the progress of society. Such a view is epitomized by this statement: "What influences lead us to new ways of understanding Scripture? New scientific, social changes, and

<sup>2</sup>Kathryn Greene-McCreight, "The Logic of the Interpretation of Scripture and the Church's Debate over Sexual Ethics," in *Homosexuality, Science, and the "Plain Sense" of Scripture*, ed. David L. Balch (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000) 245.

<sup>3</sup>Chris D. Kramer, "The Apostolic Council of Jerusalem: A Model of Liberation of Queer Christians Today," *Gay Theological Journal* 1/2 (January-April 1998):23.

<sup>4</sup>Tim Phillips, "Why I Don't Believe Romans 1 Is Talking About Homosexuality," *Gay Theological Journal* 1/1 (September-December 1997):37.

personal experiences are perhaps the greatest forces of change in the way we interpret the Bible and develop our beliefs.”<sup>5</sup>

### *Cultural Biases of the Biblical Writers*

Most pro-homosexual theologians argue that the biblical authors were culturally biased against homosexuality. Such proponents would argue that the apostle Paul was a product of the Judaism of his time, and thus had cultural “blind spots,” most noticeably regarding women and gays.<sup>6</sup> John J. McNeill, in *The Church and the Homosexual*, asserts that “the Scriptures are ‘historically and culturally limited’ so that one cannot merely transpose a text of Scripture to the contemporary circumstances of life.”<sup>7</sup> Hence, because the biblical authors wrote from such a distant and culturally irrelevant setting, gay proponent Robin Scroggs concludes, “The conclusion I have to draw seems inevitable: Biblical judgments against homosexuality are not relevant to today’s debate.”<sup>8</sup> “Paul’s arguments,” states Marti Nissinen, “are based on certain Hellenistic Jewish moral codes that are culture-specific and that had their own trajectory of tradition.”<sup>9</sup> In fact, Paul may have needed sexual therapy himself.<sup>10</sup>

The following statement sums up well the revisionist’s view of the biblical teaching on homosexuality:

[S]exuality as we understand it today *is not addressed in the Bible*. It is a modern concept. The Bible treats sexuality only in limited forms of actualization. . . . The terms of Israel’s culturally shaped understanding will not satisfy our present need. *In this field we must look to the ongoing revelation of science and of newly emerging voices of experience.*<sup>11</sup>

The conclusions reached by gay proponents rely upon hermeneutical rules that do violence to the traditional and historic approach to biblical interpretation. As will be seen below, if interpreted by a consistent, literal hermeneutic, the Bible does not condone homosexuality in any of its forms, but in fact condemns it as a deviant

<sup>5</sup>Donald Eastman, “Homosexuality: Not a Sin, Not a Sickness; What the Bible Does and Does Not Say,” *Gay Theological Journal* 1/1 (September-December 1997):12.

<sup>6</sup>Ray Hammond, “Paul’s Use of ΑΡΣΕΝΟΚΟΙΤΗΣ in 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10” (ThM thesis, The Master’s Seminary, Sun Valley, Calif., 2000) 19.

<sup>7</sup>John J. McNeill, *The Church and the Homosexual* (Kansas City: Sheed Andrews and McMeel, 1976) 37.

<sup>8</sup>Robin Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983) 127.

<sup>9</sup>Marti Nissinen, *Homeroiticism in the Biblical World* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998) 124.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>11</sup>Phylis A. Bird, “The Bible in Christian Ethical Deliberation Concerning Homosexuality: Old Testament Contributions,” in *Homosexuality, Science, and the “Plain Sense” of Scripture* 168 [emphasis added].

and damning sin. With the prospects of sure damnation, the church must with compassionate conviction declare such to be sin, yet a sin which—when repented of—is covered by the grace of God displayed in the propitiatory sacrifice of His Son Jesus Christ upon the cross of Calvary. The biblical case comes next.

### **HOMOSEXUALITY CONDEMNED IN HOLY SCRIPTURE**

When considered contextually and objectively, the Scriptures are not silent concerning homosexuality. They always treat homosexuality as a violation of the divine order. The major references to homosexuality in Scripture are: Lev 18:22; 20:13; Rom 1:18-32; 1 Cor 6:9; 1 Tim 1:10; Genesis 19; 2 Pet 2:7 and Jude 7. As expected, pro-homosexual scholars have interpreted each of these texts in such a way as to eliminate its applicability to the current ethical debate on the issue. However, a literal, objective approach yields a much different conclusion.

#### ***Leviticus 18:22; 20:13***

Moses gives two clear prohibitions of homosexuality in the Book of Leviticus:

You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination (18:22).

If there is a man who lies with a male as those who lie with a woman, both of them have committed a detestable act; they shall surely be put to death. Their bloodguiltiness is upon them (20:13).<sup>12</sup>

Various interpretations are given for the non-applicability of these references to the church today. Some invoke the liberal, multi-source contamination of the passage.<sup>13</sup> Others say that the section is a specific warning against cultic prostitution and the idolatrous practices of the Canaanites.<sup>14</sup> Scroggs suggests that the prohibition may be against the wasting of human semen.<sup>15</sup> Boswell, a popular advocate for homosexuality, argues that the Book of Leviticus is concerned about ceremonial uncleanness, not with moral impurity. He states that

the levitical enactments against homosexual behavior characterizes it unequivocally as ceremonial uncleanness rather than inherently evil. . . . The irrelevance of the verses was further emphasized by the teaching of Jesus and Paul that under the new dispensation it was not the physical violation of the levitical precepts which constituted 'abomination'

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<sup>12</sup>All Scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible unless otherwise noted.

<sup>13</sup>Lindsay Louise Biddle, "Deciphering the Holiness Code," *Gay Theological Journal* 1/1 (September-December 1997):29.

<sup>14</sup>McNeill, *The Church* 57-58; Nissinen, *Homoeroticism* 37-44.

<sup>15</sup>Scroggs, *The New Testament* 13.

(*bdelugma*) but the interior infidelity of the souls.<sup>16</sup>

These arguments receive an adequate answer in asserting that the biblical writers did not divide the prohibitions in Leviticus into ceremonial and moral codes.<sup>17</sup> Impurity in the Old Testament was a violation of God's law and God's holiness. The basis of NT holiness is found in the very moral code stipulated in the OT. The condemnation of incest in 1 Cor 5:1 goes back to Lev 18:18 and 20:11. The list of vices in 1 Cor 6:9-11 and 1 Tim 1:9-11 go back to Leviticus 19-20. The moral separation of the Christian from unbelievers as emphasized in the NT is but an extension of the separation of God's people from the immoral practices of the heathen nations surrounding the nation of Israel. Leviticus forms the basis for Peter's injunction for holy living, "You shall be holy for I am holy" (1 Pet 1:16; cf. Lev 11:41; 19:2; 20:7).

The very existence of these prohibitions in Leviticus argues for the existence of these sexual vices in the pagan world which God expressly calls "abominations." Wold concludes that the words used in Leviticus conclusively show that "all same-gender sexual relations are categorically forbidden by the Hebrew terms. The biblical writer leaves no room for compromise. The language is emphatic."<sup>18</sup>

### ***Romans 1:18-32***

The most extensive treatment of homosexuality is found in Rom 1:18-32 in the context of the apostle Paul's argument that the whole world, Gentile and Jewish, is under sin and thus in need of the righteousness of God provided in Jesus Christ (cf. Rom 3:9-26). In his description of the sin of the Gentile world, Paul shows God's response to mankind's infidelity. Three times Paul states that God "gave them over" (1:24, 26, 28). God judges sin with further sin. Homosexuality is a consequence of mankind's abandonment of the truth, a just punishment for exchanging the truth for a lie (1:24) and thus a revelation of the wrath of God upon unrighteousness (1:18). The context reveals homosexuality as a further manifestation of the "ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness"(1:18). The matter could not be clearer.

Yet revisionists have found ways to circumvent Paul's assessment of homosexuality as sin and a violation of the ordinance of God. They have offered numerous arguments to explain away the supposed condemnation of homosexuality. The proponents of homosexuality say that Paul is looking at the Gentile world and

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<sup>16</sup>John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality* (Chicago: University Press, 1980) 101.

<sup>17</sup>Thomas E. Schmidt, *Straight and Narrow* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1995) 90-91.

<sup>18</sup>Donald J. Wold, *Out of Order: Homosexuality in the Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998) 119.

judging it by what would not be proper according to Jewish law or custom.<sup>19</sup> McNeill asserts, "Because of his Jewish background Paul obviously found rampant homosexuality in Greece very shocking."<sup>20</sup> Others argue that "Paul's description may be intentionally indeterminate. . . . His vague presentations . . . may also be simply a part of Paul's rhetorical strategy. Therefore, it is wise to refrain from drawing detailed conclusions from Paul's terminology about the nature of same sex conduct in Romans 1."<sup>21</sup> Scroggs insists that Paul is not condemning homosexuality, but the infidelity of the Gentile world: "Paul has a major *theological* goal in mind; ethical concerns or abominations lie far from his purposes."<sup>22</sup>

Probably the most accepted pro-gay explanation of homosexuality in Romans 1 comes from Boswell who states that Paul is not condemning homosexuality but homosexual acts committed by heterosexual persons.<sup>23</sup> He explains away "against nature" or "unnatural" (*παρὰ φύσιν*, *para physin*, v. 26) as not referring to natural law as God's original purpose for mankind, but as the natural character of the heterosexual pagan. Boswell argues for the existence of inverts (those who are by nature homosexuals) and perverts (heterosexuals who commit homosexual acts). Hence, he concludes that *para* does not mean "against," but rather "more than," or "in excess of."<sup>24</sup> Thus "beyond nature" does not mean "immoral."<sup>25</sup> This leads him to redefine the explicit terms where "dishonoring passions" must have very broad interpretations, where "error" is a mistake and never moral turpitude, and where "indecent" is merely not making a good appearance.<sup>26</sup>

Wold and Hays have made a formidable rebuttal of Boswell's thesis.<sup>27</sup> Wold shows that the use of *physin* in Rom 11:1-14 and 1 Cor 11:4 cannot be imported into Romans 1. The contexts are totally different.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, *para physin* occurred commonly in Hellenistic Jewish usage to speak of that which was against the divine design.<sup>29</sup> Hays concludes that

though he offers no explicit reflection on the concept of 'nature,' it is clear that in this

<sup>19</sup>McNeill, *The Church* 55.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Nisseinen, *Homoeroticism* 110-11.

<sup>22</sup>Scroggs, *The New Testament* 109.

<sup>23</sup>Boswell, *Christianity* 109.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 111.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 112.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 112-113.

<sup>27</sup>Wold, *Out of Order* 114 ff.; Richard B. Hays, "Relations Natural and Unnatural: A Response to John Boswell's Exegesis of Romans 1," *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 14 (1986):190.

<sup>28</sup>Wold, *Out of Order* 185.

<sup>29</sup>Hays, "Relations" 193.

passage Paul identifies ‘nature’ with the created order. The understanding of ‘nature’ in this conventional language does not rest on empirical observation of what actually exists; instead, it appeals to an intuitive conception of what ought to be, of the world as designed by God. Those who indulge in sexual practices *para physin* are defying the creator and demonstrating their own alienation from him.<sup>30</sup>

Although the main thrust of Romans 1 is the sin of Gentile infidelity, the discussion of homosexuality is not a mere illustration. Rather, it is a symptom of their problem, which is the sin of idolatry.<sup>31</sup> One therefore cannot dismiss this reference to homosexuality as unimportant. Furthermore, the world of Paul knew nothing of classes of people distinguished as “inverts” and “perverts.”<sup>32</sup> Paul is not singling out a particular class of pagans. Rather he is showing the consequences of idolatry upon their persons, even though all do not practice the same sin. Paul is showing that homosexuality is revolting because “it epitomizes in sexual terms the revolt against God. It is sinful because it violates the plan of God, present from creation, for the union of male and female in marriage.”<sup>33</sup>

It is difficult to understand how one can read Romans 1 and not conclude that homosexual behavior is wrong and antithetical to the divine order. Paul, like Moses in Leviticus, clearly uses terms and expressions which leave no doubt as to what he means. He states that God has given the Gentile world over “in the lusts of their hearts to impurity” (1:24). In this he identifies both lesbianism and the gay lifestyle. The list of expressions used for these vile affections clearly condemns homosexuality:

- “dishonored among them” (1:24)
- “degrading passions” (1:26)
- “exchange the natural function” (1:26)
- “unnatural” (1:26)
- “burned in their desire” (1:27)
- “indecent acts” (1:27)
- “penalty of their error” (1:27)
- “worthy of death” (1:32)

Perhaps what homosexual advocates do with Romans 1 is what Peter meant when he condemns those who take Paul’s letters and “distort, as they do also the rest of Scripture, to their own destruction” (2 Pet 3:16; cf. Rom 1:32).

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 194.

<sup>31</sup>Marion L. Soards, *Scripture and Homosexuality: Biblical Authority and the Church Today* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1995) 21.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 22.

<sup>33</sup>Schmidt, *Straight and Narrow* 85.



**1 Corinthians 6:9; 1 Timothy 1:10**

Two other references in the NT make explicit condemnation of homosexuality: 1 Cor 6:9 and 1 Tim 1:10. The pro-gay advocates main contention from these two texts lies with the interpretation of the word ἄρσενοκοῖται (*arsenokoitai*), and with the accompanying terms μαλακοί (*malakoi*) in 1 Cor 6:9 and πόρνοις (*pornois*) in 1 Tim 1:10.

They argue that the term “homosexual” is a modern word coined by Karoly M. Beakert in 1869 for people erotically oriented toward the same sex. As an invention of the nineteenth century, it should not be read into *arsenokoitai*.<sup>34</sup> The three other main arguments against the condemnation of homosexuals in these texts follow two lines of reasoning. One is that Paul is not condemning all homosexual activity but only that behavior which abuses the body, whether done by homosexuals or heterosexuals.<sup>35</sup> However, that Paul is not speaking of excesses (for how can covetousness be done in moderation?) but of that which is in itself “unrighteous” is obvious.

The other line of reasoning falls in the interpretation of the term itself. Boswell asserts that it should mean “male prostitute,”<sup>36</sup> whereas Scroggs argues for the interpretation “pederasty.”<sup>37</sup> Boswell contends that *arsenokoitēs* is never used for homosexuality either before or after Paul. He also argues that ἄρσην (*arsēn*) is used adjectivally, describing the person engaged in the sexual activity. Hence, a male prostitute.

Scroggs’ reason for translating the word “pederasty” is its close association with *malakos*, which is an effeminate call boy, and thus the active partner is the *apsenokoitēs*.<sup>38</sup> In this interpretation *arsēn* is adverbial. Thus Paul is not against homosexuals but against the abuse of the younger partner.<sup>39</sup> Hence neither text contains a modern-day application of Paul’s warning to homosexuality.

The views put forth that *arsenokoitēs* cannot refer to a homosexual fail both historically and linguistically.<sup>40</sup> Homosexuality was not something new in Paul’s day but was prevalent in the ancient world. The rare use of the word may be due to the coining of the word by the apostle Paul himself. The reading of the LXX shows the use of *arsēn* and *koitai* in the prohibitions of Leviticus 18. Wold states,

When the question of homosexuality came up for him in the church at Corinth, we can

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<sup>34</sup>Hammond, “Paul’s Use of ΑΡΣΕΝΟΚΟΙΤΗΣ” 81.

<sup>35</sup>David E. Malick, “The Condemnation of Homosexuality in 1 Corinthians 6:9,” *BSac* 150 (October-December 1993):480-81.

<sup>36</sup>Boswell, *Christianity* 107.

<sup>37</sup>Scroggs, *The New Testament* 83.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, 36-37.

<sup>40</sup>See Wold, *Out of Order* 189-96; Malick, “The Condemnation of Homosexuality” 482-92.

accurately suppose that Paul's understanding would be influenced by the Old Testament homosexuality law. And it is on this basis that he uses the term *arsenokoitai*, because it accurately reflects the Hebrew of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13.<sup>41</sup>

Furthermore, Paul's use of  *pornos* and *malakos* lends credence to the view that Paul had homosexuals in mind when he wrote *arsenokoitēs*.<sup>42</sup>

Paul is condemning sins and vices practiced by the unbelieving world, which should not be practiced by God's people. These are characteristics of the "unrighteous" (1 Cor 6:9) and the "lawless and rebellious" (1 Tim 1:9). In light of what some have done to these texts, the Holy Spirit's warning, "Do not be deceived!" (1 Cor 6:9), is understandable.

### **Genesis 19; 2 Peter 2:7; Jude 7**

The last set of texts to examine involve the description of homosexual behavior in Genesis 19 with the commentaries given in 2 Pet 2:7 and Jude 7. The revisionist argues that the Sodomites were not punished for their homosexuality but for their *inhospitality*.<sup>43</sup> The fivefold thesis of Boswell's argument is: (1) "know" in Genesis 19:5 cannot refer to homosexual relations; (2) the offering of Lot's daughter was a bribe with no sexual overtones; (3) the story of Judg 19:22-30 is also inhospitality; (4) the LXX uses an expression without carnal knowledge; and (5) the reference to Sodom in Ezek 16:48-49 does not list the sin of homosexuality.<sup>44</sup> Each of these arguments has been adequately refuted by Wold in *Out of Order*. He rightly shows that "know" is used in Genesis 19:5 as sexual relations because in 19:8 the same word is used unquestionably for sexual relations. In addition, Ezek 16:50 refers to the abominations of Sodom, which in Ezek 16:27 and 16:58 are clearly sexual sins (cf. Lev 18:22; 20:13). Wold concludes that the LXX rendering of Gen 19:5 *does* include sexual intercourse.<sup>45</sup>

The comments of 2 Peter 2:7 and Jude 7 refer back to the sin of homosexuality in Genesis 19. There is no doubt that Peter and Jude are referring to the sins much more grievous than pride and inhospitality.

The expression, "in the same way," points to the violation of the divine order by the angels in Jude 6, and so the men of Sodom trespassed their divine order. That sexual sin is at the root of Sodom's condemnation is proven by the expressions, "indulged in gross immoralities," "went after strange flesh," and "the sensual conduct of unprincipled men." Bauckham's conclusion that the Sodomites sin was their desire to have relations with the angels is reading into the text what the

<sup>41</sup>Wold, *Out of Order* 193.

<sup>42</sup>Malick, "The Condemnation of Homosexuality" 497.

<sup>43</sup>Boswell, *Christianity* 341-42.

<sup>44</sup>Wold, *Out of Order* 80-81.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, 87.

Sodomites never knew.<sup>46</sup>

The sin of Sodom is everywhere described as impudent and shameless. According to Gen 13:13, the Sodomites “were wicked exceedingly and sinners before the Lord.” In Gen 18:20, the LORD said, “The outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah is indeed great, and their sin is exceedingly grave.” They were by no means “closet homosexuals” (cf. Isa 3:9). Jenkyn aptly writes,

The sin of these miscreants abhorred secrecy; they blushed not, though the sun was a blushing witness of their filthiness. They gloried in their shame because they had outsinned all shame. Their hands were the organs and their tongues the trumpets of wickedness. Would any but a company who had more of monsters than men in them, have made such a demand in the open streets, as is mentioned in Gen. xix. 5, “Bring them out to us, that we may know them”<sup>47</sup>

### THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CHURCH

Every debate on Christian ethics must end with the implications for the church. All truth must lead to moral action. This discussion on homosexuality has some very serious and challenging implications for the evangelical church which appears to be stalling in the mire of debate. These implications are four in number.

#### **The Church Must Condemn the Sin of Homosexuality**

In an age of religious pluralism and philosophical tolerance, for the church to concede its duty to stand for truth is easy, but then it will be the proverbial trampled spring and polluted well, which symbolizes the righteous who give way before the wicked (cf. Prov 25:26). The church cannot behave as though it did not possess a blueprint for life, as though it too was subject to the changing winds and waves of ideas. The church has a sure word of truth which is not only able to save, but also able to equip for every facet of life (cf. 1 Tim 4:15-17; 2 Tim 3:16-17).

The church must take a stand on the divine order stated in the opening chapters of Genesis and affirmed throughout the rest of the Scriptures whenever the Holy Spirit endeavors to teach on marriage and family. The Lord Jesus Himself referred to the divine order when asked about the legality of divorce and the permanence of marriage: “Have you not read, that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh’?” (Matt 19:4-5). The Lord referred back to the divine order not only for its permanence, but also for its sexual nature: a man for a woman!

The Scriptures clearly condemn any violation of the divine order, whether

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<sup>46</sup>Richard J. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, vol. 50 of *WBC* (Waco, Texas: Word, 1983) 54.

<sup>47</sup>William Jenkyn, *Exposition Upon the Epistle of Jude* (reprint; Minneapolis: James and Klock, 1976) 139.

through divorce (cf. Matt 19:6-9), through immoralities (cf. 1 Cor 6:16-20; 1 Thess 4:1-8; Heb 13:4), through violation of God's ordained roles (cf. Eph 5:21-33), or through perversion of the sexual roles (cf. Rom 1:18-32; Lev 18:27; 20:13). "Have you not read" is not a mandate for the church to adjust its theology of sex and marriage to the opinion polls of the godless masses or the conflicting and prejudicial scientific conclusions of depraved minds.<sup>48</sup>

Homosexuality is a perversion of the divine order. Period. There is no way biblically or naturally to arrive at a different conclusion. True, man is fallen. Man is depraved and beset with many infirmities, but "from the beginning it has not been this way" (Matt 19:8). It should be the creature's goal to live life the way the Creator intended it.

Hence, to stand and condemn homosexuality in all its forms as a perversion of the divine order is not a symptom of homophobia, heartless prejudice, or narrow-minded bigotry. It is to stand on the side of righteousness and truth and to obey the One who said, "You shall be holy, for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16). For the church, God is the only One to please.

### **The Church Must Convert the Homosexual**

The church is not an agent of condemnation alone, but it is primarily an agent of change, for it is the vehicle by which God shares His love, mercy, and grace with a sinful world. This is the Great Commission. The church is to preach the gospel to the whole world, including the homosexual. That is what Paul purposed to do in the Book of Romans. He is commissioned to preach the gospel to both Jews and Gentiles because the gospel alone is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes (Rom 1:15-17).

Evangelism involves a number of steps. First, evangelism implies preaching repentance from sin, which includes an admission of guilt and the awareness of the need to be forgiven. To be saved, one needs to be in danger of perishing (John 3:16). To be found, one must be lost. That is the thrust of Paul's polemic in Romans 1-3, that "every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God . . . for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:19, 23). That includes homosexuals.

In evangelizing homosexuals, the church must be careful to warn them, as any other sinners, of the danger they face if they do not repent of their rebellious lifestyle. The Scriptures are very unwavering in pronouncing that unconverted homosexuals will not inherit the kingdom of God (cf. 1 Cor 6:9-10; Rev 21:27; 22:15). Although homosexuality is no worse than lying or other sins, it damns just as certainly. The church does the homosexual no favor when it condones his behavior based on some ingenious interpretation or on some sentimental relationship

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<sup>48</sup>See Helmut Thielicke's incorrect conclusions on homosexuality in *The Ethics of Sex* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964) 261-91, where he argues that homosexuality is abnormal, "but in the same way that disease, suffering and pain are abnormal" (282-83).

it has with him. Homosexuals do not deserve a weakened spirituality, much less a sentimental pity. They need raw honesty from the church about their doomed state unless they come to repentance and faith in Christ.

Much rhetoric is wasted on the inverted nature of homosexuals and of their inability to change their lifestyle. The truth is that no sinner can change his or her life apart from the power of God displayed in the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are all “dead in our trespasses and sins and by nature children of wrath,” and the only solution is to be born again by faith in the provision made at the cross of Christ Jesus (Eph 2:1-6). The gospel alone has the power to transform lives, to transfer a sinner from the power of darkness into the kingdom of Christ, and to empower people totally for a life no longer lived for the lust of the flesh but for the glory of God (cf. 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 5:24). Inability to change behavior is *never* a reason to condone such behavior. Inability simply humbles the sinner before God, declaring his or her absolute dependence upon God’s grace and power to convert (cf. Matt 22:29).

Such is Paul’s loving reminder to the Corinthians who were redeemed out of the vileness of Gentile unbelief when he states, “Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor 6:11). He does not say, “such *are* some of you,” but “such *were* some of you”! There is hope, mercy, grace, forgiveness, and a new life for homosexuals. But such is found only in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. If homosexuals wish to be forgiven, they can be. If homosexuals wish to be changed, they can be. But they must come by way of the cross.

The church must see in its task of evangelizing the homosexual the importance of helping those who convert to become full and integral disciples of the Lord in the local church. Unfortunately some do make homosexuality an unpardonable sin, or at least a sin forgiven but not forgotten. The church must extend a compassionate hand to those who would be saved by the power of God, and disciple them into the fullness of their inheritance in Christ and in the fellowship of the saints. Conversion to Christ has many attractions which should not be withheld from converting homosexuals. The added scourge of AIDS demands from the church an extra portion of compassion, energy, and wisdom. After all, the church has always been and always will be the vanguard in dealing with humanity’s griefs and sorrows. We dare not do less.

### **The Church Must Confront Error**

Although the church is God’s primary instrument in evangelism, it also serves as the salt of the earth, to preserve the truth of God and defend it against error (cf. Matt 5:13; 1 Tim 3:15). The Scriptures teach that error will come from within (cf. Matt 13:37-43; Acts 20:29-30). Some would perceive the church as some passive institution floating along the river of history, awaiting its apocalyptic end. Yet the Scriptures everywhere reveal a militant church, not in the sense of conquering human kingdoms, but of confronting error and destroying human speculations and philosophies (cf. 2 Cor 10:3-5; Col 2:8-10). Jude admonishes,

“Contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints” (Jude 3). According to Jude, false teachers will distort the truth to promote a licentious lifestyle (Jude 4). Deviant behavior is never far from deviant doctrine. Furthermore, God does not guarantee all will respond to His grace and repent. Many will reject the truth and proceed to further lawlessness, and on these believers should “have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh” (Jude 23). Peter likewise exhorts the church to be on guard so as not to be carried away by the error of unprincipled men and thus fall from its steadfastness (cf. 2 Pet 3:17).

The church does not become heretical by itself. It is deliberately led astray by the devil and his emissaries (cf. Gen 3:1; 2 Cor 11:13-14). Satan’s agents dressed as angels of light (i.e., theology professors, pastors, the Metropolitan Community Church, etc.) harass the true character of God through deception (cf. 1 Cor 6:9), through distorting God’s Word (cf. 2 Pet 3:16), through perverse and persuasive arguments (cf. Acts 20:30), and through a libertine and licentious lifestyle (cf. 2 Pet 2:2, 4; Jude 4, 8).

Thus the church of the present is following in the steps of the apostolic church when it contends for truth by opposing those who would teach that homosexuality is a lifestyle fully acceptable to God. The church has always stood against every form of immorality and will continue to do so because it can do no other. It is the guardian and defender of truth. The coming out of homosexuality in America is but one facet of the sexual revolution of the 60s and 70s. Other immoralities are pounding at the church’s door, such as pornography, pedophilia, cohabitation, abortion on demand, and rampant divorce (i.e., legalized adultery). Should the church give way before these because the populace approves them?

### **The Church Must Cleanse Itself**

The interesting feature about Paul’s teaching on homosexuality in 1 Cor 6:9 is that it is found in a section dealing with the Corinthian church’s problem with immorality in its ranks, as well as the relationships Christians should have with the professing believer who is indulging in sins, and with pagan unbelievers. The church at Corinth is told to rid itself of fornicators within its ranks with the practice of church discipline or excommunication (cf. 1 Cor 5:1-8, 13). The church is under strict restrictions not to fellowship with professing believers whose lifestyles are anything but Christian (cf. 1 Cor 5:9-13).

The implications for the church are obvious. The solution to the problem of homosexuals in the church is not dialogue or toleration, but excommunication and separation. Granted, there is a need today to educate the rank and file of the evangelical church, but having done this, the church must insist on the biblical mandate of separation from professing Christians who endorse the homosexual lifestyle for themselves. This obviously precludes the inclusion of homosexual churches into denominations or ecumenical unions. The church’s unwillingness to clean up its ranks will simply hasten its moral decline, for “a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough” (1 Cor 5:6).

Implied in this text is also the responsibility of the church not to abandon

the homosexual community. The Christian needs to befriend and witness to the homosexual with such love, compassion, and wisdom that such will respond to the saving grace of God. Militant homosexuals should be handled with gentleness, praying that God may grant them forgiveness and deliverance from the snare of the devil (cf. 2 Tim 2:24-26).

Finally, the church must be careful not to adopt the customs of the world. What it tolerates today, its children will practice tomorrow. In an age of accommodation and compromise, when churches are more interested in numbers than genuine conversions, the church is in danger of ceasing to make holiness and truth the motivation for its existence. The words of the apostle Paul are a fitting conclusion to this debate on homosexuality:

Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them; for you were formerly darkness, but now you are children of light in the Lord; walk as children of light. . . . Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret (Eph 5:6, 8, 11-12).

## THE ABORTION DILEMMA

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*In recent years Supreme-Court actions legalizing abortion have crystalized two ethical positions: pro-choice and pro-life. A series of cases resulted in decisions granting women the right to choose whether or not to have abortions. As a consequence, several methods of aborting unborn children have come into prominence: suction aspiration, dilation and curettage, dilation and evacuation, saline injection, hysterotomy, prostaglandin chemical, RU-486, and partial-birth abortion. Viewpoints on abortion break down into four categories. Some say abortion is always right, others say sometimes, still others rarely, and some say never. The Bible gives several reasons why abortion is wrong because it does not distinguish between a person's state before and after birth, because it indicates God "knew" certain ones before birth, because it indicates King David was a sinner from conception, and because John the Baptist reacted while still in his mother's womb. Both sides in the debate have used Exodus 21:22-25 to prove their cases, but the passage has a number of exegetical difficulties that keep it from being a strong argument. Though several Ancient Near Eastern law codes are similar to the Exodus passage, the biblical law is distinguishable from these in several ways. Questionable situations when some would use the mother's health, pregnancies caused by rape or incest, and pregnancies facing fetal handicaps do not furnish sufficient grounds for abortion.*

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The Supreme Court's decision in 1973 to legalize abortion at almost any time in a woman's pregnancy and for a wide variety of reasons thrust the issue onto the platform of heated national debate. Discussion and debate over the abortion issue occurs within families, in and among churches, in communities, in legislatures on the state and federal level, throughout the court system, and in the Executive Branch of each state and in the federal government. Proponents on both sides of the issue feel great passion for their position and expend great energy defending the legitimacy of their perspective on the issue. Organizations, publications, billboards, and websites that advocate a certain position concerning abortion abound. As with a number of ethical issues, believers are on both sides of the fence. Though some Christians fiercely oppose abortion in any circumstance, others just as fervently

defend the right of a woman to have access to an abortion.

What does the Bible have to say about the practice of abortion? How should that belief affect Christian conduct in a world given over to paganism? In other words, how does a believer flesh out his belief about abortion in his life and ministry?

By definition, an abortion involves the “expulsion of the human fetus . . . before it is capable of surviving outside the womb.”<sup>1</sup> The two general categories of abortion are the spontaneous and the induced. A spontaneous abortion is one that takes place naturally, with no external intervention. It represents a situation over which the mother has no control. In a number of cases, a fertilized egg never implants in the mother’s womb and passes out of her body during her monthly period. Another kind of a spontaneous abortion involves a miscarriage. In this instance, the mother’s body expels the developing fetus before the baby is able to live outside the womb.<sup>2</sup> The second category of abortion involves an induced abortion, i.e., one brought about by medical means (discussed at length below).

Statistically speaking, since the Supreme Court’s decision of 1973 (*Roe v. Wade*), the annual number of abortions has risen from 744,600 to a peak of 1.6 million (approximately 1.6 million abortions were performed annually from 1980-1992). After 1992 the number of abortions performed annually slowly dropped to 1.4 million in 1996.<sup>3</sup> From 1973 through 1996, an estimated 34.4 million unborn babies have died in hospitals and abortion clinics throughout America. In the past 4 years, abortions terminated between one-quarter and one-third of all pregnancies in America. Approximately 52% of women obtaining abortions in the U.S. are younger than 25.<sup>4</sup> Over half of unintended pregnancies worldwide end with induced abortion.<sup>5</sup> It has become the second most common surgical procedure in our country, circumcision being the first.<sup>6</sup>

The basic question in this debate is “Are you in favor of abortion (pro-abortion) or opposed to it (anti-abortion)?” Or to put it another way, “Are you pro-

<sup>1</sup>Charles C. Ryrie, *Biblical Answers to Contemporary Issues* (Chicago: Moody, 1991) 85.

<sup>2</sup>John S. Feinberg and Paul D. Feinberg, *Ethics for a Brave New World* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 1993) 50.

<sup>3</sup>These statistics are available on numerous web sites dealing with the issue of abortion. For two examples, see the home page for the Alan Guttmacher Institute, a pro-choice research center ([www.agi-usa.org/pubs/fb\\_induced\\_abortion.html](http://www.agi-usa.org/pubs/fb_induced_abortion.html)) and the Ohio Right to Life home page ([www.ohiolife.org/stats/us1996.htm](http://www.ohiolife.org/stats/us1996.htm)).

<sup>4</sup>Women aged 20-24 obtain 32% of all abortions while teenagers obtain 20% ([www.agi-usa.org/pubs/fb\\_induced\\_abortion.html](http://www.agi-usa.org/pubs/fb_induced_abortion.html)).

<sup>5</sup>According to the Alan Guttmacher Institute, this involves 46 million pregnancies (and abortions) worldwide ([www.agi-usa.org/pubs/fb\\_0599.html](http://www.agi-usa.org/pubs/fb_0599.html)).

<sup>6</sup>According to J. Kerby Anderson (*Moral Dilemmas: Biblical Perspectives on Contemporary Issues* [Nashville: Word, 1998] 227 n. 1, drawing on material from the National Center for Health Statistics, Atlanta, Ga.), abortion is the most frequently performed surgery on adults in America.

choice or pro-life?" The foundation for this decision is this: Does a woman have the right to do whatever she wishes with her body (choice), or is the human responsibility to preserve life at all times (life)?

Neither set of proponents finds total agreement with the titles given them. The pro-abortionist does not regard herself/himself as anti-life even though he or she does not view the fetus as a person. A number of women regard themselves as pro-choice but not pro-abortion. Nor is the anti-abortionist really anti-choice. A woman does have the responsibility to take care of her body. However, the issue of abortion touches two lives, those of the mother and of the unborn child. Those who oppose abortion contend that the mother's preferences should not have preeminence over the unborn child's life. Consequently, the debate over abortion is normally categorized by two basic positions: pro-choice and pro-life.<sup>7</sup>

### ***THE LEGAL BACKGROUND OF ABORTION***

Various sources document the legal history of the abortion debate. As part of their discussion of the larger issue, numerous volumes that focused on the issue of abortion or ethics in general provide a helpful overview of this legal history.<sup>8</sup> More recently, various websites offer the full text of the various legal decisions as well as links to other related websites.<sup>9</sup> One has only to type the word "abortion" in one of the major web search engines to find hundreds of places to find information of this kind.

#### ***Roe v. Wade (1973)***<sup>10</sup>

On January 22, 1973, the Supreme Court ruled that an unborn child is the property of the mother. It concluded that she might dispose of it for any reason during the first six months of pregnancy, and at any other time (last trimester) if, in the opinion of a single licensed physician, it is necessary to preserve her life and health. During the first three months of pregnancy, abortion may not be regulated. During the second trimester, it may be regulated only with reference to the protection of the "mother's" health.

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<sup>7</sup>The complaint of this writer about media coverage of this issue is the frequent use of unequal terms for the two sides. Those in favor of abortion are said to be pro-choice (not pro-abortion or anti-life). But those opposed to abortion are referred to as anti-abortion or anti-choice (not pro-life).

<sup>8</sup>Feinberg and Feinberg, *Ethics* 48-50; Scott B. Rae, *Moral Choices: An Introduction to Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995) 118-22; Curt Young, *The Least of These* (Chicago: Moody, 1984) 21-32.

<sup>9</sup>Abortion Law Homepage (<http://members.aol.com/abtrbng/index.htm>); cf. [www.abortioninfo.net/facts](http://www.abortioninfo.net/facts).

<sup>10</sup>410 U.S. 113 (1973).



***Doe v. Bolton (1973)***<sup>11</sup>

In a companion case decided on the same day as *Roe v. Wade*, the Supreme Court struck down a Georgia law that placed several limitations on abortion. Any attempts to place limits on a woman's right to an abortion had to conform to "a compelling state interest." It is important to note that the Supreme Court justices interpreted the mother's health to include her psychological and emotional health in addition to her physical health.

***Planned Parenthood v. Danforth (1977)***<sup>12</sup>

This case removed some of the limits that had been placed on abortion by *Roe v. Wade* (e.g., spousal consent, parental consent for a minor child). The woman and her physician were the only ones legally involved in the decision-making process.

***Webster v. Reproductive Health Services (1989)***<sup>13</sup>

This case represented one of the first significant limits on an individual's right to an abortion. Reversing certain lower court decisions, the Supreme Court upheld a Missouri law that prohibited the use of public funds or medical facilities for "non-therapeutic" abortions. Building on the Hyde Amendment that dealt with the use of federal funds for abortions, this case concerned the right of states to limit or prohibit the use of tax funds to pay for abortions.

***Planned Parenthood v. Casey (1992)***<sup>14</sup>

Pro-choice proponents brought this case to the Supreme Court to protest limitations placed on abortion in the state of Pennsylvania (Casey was the governor of the state). The state law in question required that a woman seeking an abortion give informed consent after receiving certain relevant information 24 hours before the procedure (explanation of procedure, risks of abortion, probable gestational age of fetus), informed parental consent for a minor child, and evidence of spousal notification. Pro-life advocates regarded this case as the best opportunity to overturn *Roe v. Wade* and pro-choice proponents hoped that the Supreme Court would strike down all the limitations. Neither side was totally satisfied with the outcome. The Supreme Court did not overturn *Roe v. Wade* but retained all the limitations except

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<sup>11</sup>410 U.S. 179 (1973).

<sup>12</sup>428 U.S. 52 (1977).

<sup>13</sup>109 S. Ct. 3040 (1989).

<sup>14</sup>112 S. Ct. 2791 (1992).

the spousal notification feature.

### ***Clinton's Withdrawal of Executive Support for the Unborn***

Although it does not belong to the legal/court history of the abortion battle, one should remember President Clinton's contribution to this debate. On January 20, 1993, while the annual protest against *Roe v. Wade* was going on outside the White House, President Clinton reversed more than a decade of executive support for the unborn with one stroke of the pen.<sup>15</sup> He signed an executive order that did three things:

- He lifted the "gag rule" that had prohibited workers in federally funded health clinics from mentioning abortion as an alternative to dealing with an unwanted pregnancy.
- He lifted the federal prohibition against performing abortions on military bases and in military hospitals.
- He ended the moratorium on federal funding for research that utilizes fetal tissue procured from induced abortions.

### ***Stenberg v. Carhart (2000)*<sup>16</sup>**

At least 30 states have passed a ban on partial-birth abortions. Shortly after Nebraska passed a law of this kind (June 1997), a physician who performs abortions, Leroy Carhart, filed a complaint challenging the constitutionality of the statute. In September of 1999, the 8th Circuit of the U.S. Court of Appeals declared Nebraska's partial-birth abortion law unconstitutional.<sup>17</sup> On January 14, 2000, the Supreme Court agreed to hear its first partial-birth abortion case, *Stenberg v. Carhart*. Attorneys for both sides presented oral arguments for the case on April 25, 2000, and the court rendered a decision on June 28, 2000, overturning Nebraska's ban on partial-birth abortions by a 5-4 vote. Supreme Court justice Stephen Breyer, writing for the majority, affirmed that the Nebraska law results in an "undue burden upon a woman's right to make an abortion decision."<sup>18</sup>

## ***THE METHODS OF ABORTION***

"Abortion" describes the act of bringing forth young prematurely. A spontaneous abortion is one that takes place naturally, a situation over which the

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<sup>15</sup>Rae, *Moral Choices* 117.

<sup>16</sup>99-830. For a brief summary of this case and the perspective of Planned Parenthood, see <http://www.plannedparenthood.org/library/facts/stenberg.html>.

<sup>17</sup>For the full text of this case presented at the state level to the U.S. District Court, see <http://lw.bna.com/lw/19970909/3205a.htm>.

<sup>18</sup>[http://abcnews.go.com/sections/us/DailyNews/scotus\\_partialbirthing\\_000628.html](http://abcnews.go.com/sections/us/DailyNews/scotus_partialbirthing_000628.html).

mother has no control. An induced abortion is one that is brought about by medical means. The various methods of induced abortion receive brief attention in the following paragraphs.<sup>19</sup>

### *Suction Aspiration*

This procedure is used in 80 percent of the abortions up to the 12th week of the pregnancy (1st trimester). The mouth of the mother's cervix is dilated. A hollow tube with a knifelike edged tip is inserted into the womb. A suction force 28 times stronger than a vacuum cleaner literally tears the developing baby to pieces and sucks the remains into a container.

### *Dilation and Curettage (D & C)*

The cervix is dilated with a series of instruments to allow the insertion of a curette—a loop-shaped knife—into the womb. The instrument is used to scrape the placenta from the uterus and then cut the baby apart. The pieces are then drawn through the cervix. An attending nurse must then reassemble the tiny body to make sure no parts remain in the womb to cause infection.

### *Dilation and Evacuation (D & E)*

This procedure occurs at 12-20 weeks. Since by week 12 the baby's bones are hardening and can no longer be sucked apart, abortion is achieved by dismemberment. After dilating the cervix, forceps with sharp metal teeth tear the baby apart. The head is usually too large to be removed whole and must be crushed and drained before it is removed from the womb. As with the above procedure, an attending nurse inventories the body parts to avoid infection in the womb from parts left behind.

### *Saline Injection*

This procedure is also called "salt-poisoning" or hyper-natremic abortion and is generally used after 13 weeks of pregnancy (2nd trimester). A long needle is inserted through the mother's abdomen to remove some of the amniotic fluid surrounding the baby and to replace it with a toxic, saline solution. The baby then breathes and swallows this solution. In most cases, the unborn child dies in one or two hours from salt poisoning, dehydration, and hemorrhaging. The mother goes into labor about 24 hours later and delivers a dead (or in a few cases, dying) baby.

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<sup>19</sup>Numerous sources provide an overview of these techniques. For two examples, see Feinberg and Feinberg, *Ethics* 51-53, and Young, *Least of These* 83-99.

### *Hysterotomy*

During the last three months of the pregnancy (3rd trimester) this procedure is used. The womb is opened surgically and the baby is removed, as in a cesarean section. However, the purpose of this procedure is to end the infant's life. Instead of being cared for, the baby is wrapped in a blanket, set aside, and allowed to die.

### *Prostaglandin Chemical Abortion*

This procedure involves the use of chemicals recently developed by the Upjohn Pharmaceutical Company. Prostaglandin hormones, injected into the womb or released in a vaginal suppository, cause the uterus to contract and deliver the child prematurely—too young to survive. A saline solution is sometimes injected first, killing the baby before birth. A self-administered tampon has been going through clinical testing. The procedure has several side effects and live births have been common (when saline solution is not used). This procedure is most common in India, China, and Eastern Europe.

### *RU-486 (The Abortion Pill)<sup>20</sup>*

After receiving approval for distribution in France, Great Britain, Sweden, and the People's Republic of China, the RU-486 drug caught the attention of pro-abortionists around the world. After RU-486 became a viable alternative as an abortion technique, numerous countries considered allowing distribution within their borders. In 1994, a research organization (The Population Council) began conducting the first nationwide study of the French abortion pill (RU-486) in a number of different clinics throughout the United States. In September of 1996 the FDA gave RU-486 tentative approve for distribution in the United States (after an amazingly short 6-month approval process). Final approval depended on FDA's inspection of the company chosen to manufacture the drug in the United States. Danco Laboratories LLC have agreed to serve as the distributors for the RU-486 drug, but have not named their manufacturing source.

Although proponents of the RU-486 drug expected final approval in late spring or early summer, the FDA made an important decision in June 2000. In a letter to The Population Council, the FDA set September 30, 2000 as a tentative deadline for approving the drug. To the dismay of the drug's proponents, the FDA

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<sup>20</sup>Supporters and opponents of RU-486 have debated the potential complications of the drug. For a recent study that highlights some of those negative side-effects (written by advocates of the drug), see a recent article written in the following well-known medical journal: Irving M. Spitz, C. Wayne Bardin, Lauri Benton, and Ann Robbins, "Early Pregnancy Termination with Mifepristone and Misoprostol in the United States," *New England Journal of Medicine* 338/18 (April 30, 1998):1241-47. The following website provides an abstract of the article and gives careful attention to those potential medical complications: [www.lifeissues.org/ru486/ru98-05.html](http://www.lifeissues.org/ru486/ru98-05.html).

placed three key restrictions on the distribution of the RU-486 drug.

- Only health professionals trained in surgical abortion, medical abortion, and sonography can distribute the drug.
- Any physician who administers this drug must have admitting privileges at a hospital within one hour of their office in case something goes awry.
- An accredited agency must verify that all doctors who intend to administer this drug meet the training requirements stated above.<sup>21</sup>

In the summer of 1999 the RU-486 drug received approval in eight other European countries (Germany, Greece, Belgium, Finland, Austria, Denmark, Spain, and the Netherlands). The drug has been registered in Switzerland and Russia. Canada is waiting for final approval in the U.S. before they give approval to the drug. A Canadian doctor in Vancouver recently began that country's first clinical trial of the RU-486 drug.

A woman first takes RU-486, which blocks the action of progesterone, a hormone that prepares the lining of the uterus for pregnancy and is essential to maintain a pregnancy. Two days later she then takes two tablets of a prostaglandin, which causes the uterus to contract. In most cases, the embryo is expelled in four hours. RU-486 is normally taken no later than 63 days after pregnancy and is supposedly successful in about 96% of the cases. Complications increase after 49 days of pregnancy.

### ***Partial-Birth Abortion***

In a partial-birth abortion the person performing the abortion partially delivers (legs, arms, and torso only) a living unborn child before killing the unborn child and completing the delivery. Before the delivery is completed, the person performing the abortion punctures the back of the skull with scissors or another instrument, inserts a suction curette into the skull, and suctions the contents of the skull so as to collapse it.

### ***IS ABORTION EVER RIGHT?: A SPECTRUM OF VIEWS***

A survey of the voluminous pages written about this debate from all perspectives demonstrates that people answer the question, "Is Abortion Ever Right?," in four ways: always, sometimes (under certain circumstances), rarely, and never.

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<sup>21</sup>Shari Roan, "The Abortion Pill: Finally at Hand?," *Los Angeles Times*, August 14, 2000, S6.

***Always (“abortion on demand”)***

In the original *Roe v. Wade* decision (1973) the Supreme Court ruled that an unborn child is not entitled to legal protection of his or her life and can be aborted at anytime up until the moment of birth. Though several pro-abortionists limit abortion to the first two trimesters of pregnancy, some abortion clinics will perform an abortion at *any time* before birth.

Various factors contribute to a woman's decision to have an abortion. Some of these are very complicated and make the issue of abortion even more difficult. Here are some of the reasons proposed by those who advocate abortions:

*Therapeutic* - the life of a mother may be at risk should she carry a child to term.

*Eugenic* - the baby is retarded, deformed, or handicapped in some way.

*Psychiatric* - the mother's mental health.

*Socio-economic* - to ease economic pressures on an individual/family.

*Violation* - in cases where the pregnancy resulted from rape or incest.

*On demand* - for any reason important to the mother.

***Sometimes (under certain circumstances)***

Within the anti-abortion movement, there is disagreement whether abortion might be legitimate in certain cases. For the most part, pregnancies that threaten the mother's health and those caused by rape or incest are the ones debated and discussed within the pro-life movement as possible instances where an abortion may have legitimacy.

***Rarely***

This reason applies only when the mother's life is actually at stake, primarily in the case of ectopic or tubal pregnancies. With an ectopic or tubal pregnancy the fertilized egg implants in the fallopian tube rather than the mother's uterus. The doctor has only two options. On the one hand, he can intervene and take the baby's life by surgically removing the fetus from the fallopian tube and save the mother's life. His other option is to do nothing and let both mother and baby die. There is abundant medical information available that no ectopic/tubal pregnancy ever resulted in childbirth.

This is an issue to which pastors and potential parents must give careful attention. Over the last twenty years the number of ectopic pregnancies has increased fourfold. It now accounts for about eleven percent of maternal deaths. Sexually transmitted diseases (that damage the fallopian tube), a retained IUD,<sup>22</sup> a

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<sup>22</sup>IUD stands for “intra-uterine device,” a formerly popular birth control device.

tubal ligation, and tuboplasty<sup>23</sup> appear to be causes for this significant increase in the occurrence of ectopic pregnancies.

With regard to the “Sometimes” and “Rarely” positions, the concerns for the mother’s health are normally limited to genuine medical health risks. This could involve the discovery of an aggressive form of cancer, a serious heart condition, or some other serious disease. In all of these cases, the attending physician has a legitimate desire to safeguard the life and health of the mother. In each of these instances the husband and wife must wrestle with the doctor’s evaluation of the probable course of the ailment and the life of their baby. Since these circumstances have life and death in the balance, they require decisions that are far from easy. This writer seeks to limit a legitimate use of abortion to the case of an ectopic pregnancy. This kind of circumstance appears to be clear. In the other cases, this writer would do everything possible to preserve both the mother’s and child’s life. In the end, unless it was clear that both mother and child would die, he would not end the life of the child for the sake of the mother’s health.

### *Never*

According to the proponents of this perspective, no extenuating circumstances legitimize an abortion. Those who take this position would even exclude an ectopic pregnancy as a legitimate cause for agreeing to an abortive procedure.

### ***THE FOUNDATIONAL ISSUE: WHEN DOES LIFE BEGIN? (WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?)***

#### *No Difference Whether before or after Birth*

The Bible recognizes no essential difference between the being in the womb and the being after birth. From the point of conception and forward, the individual is a person. According to Genesis 4:1, “Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, ‘I have acquired a man from the LORD.’”<sup>24</sup> The passage views Cain’s life as a continuity, and his history extends back to his conception. Eve makes no distinction between his conception, birth, and life. Eve regards conception and life as part of the work of God. Job affirms, “May the day perish on which I was born, And the night *in which* it was said, ‘A male child is conceived’” (Job 3:3). Job’s life has become an intolerable burden to him. As Job laments his existence, he connects his birth and his conception as parallel items in a poetic unit. Both his conception in his mother’s womb and his birth from his mother’s womb form an integral part of his existence.

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<sup>23</sup>Feinberg and Feinberg, *Ethics* 414 n. 18.

<sup>24</sup>Scripture quotations are taken from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

### ***God "Knew" Certain Persons before Birth***

The Bible speaks of God "knowing" certain persons *before* their birth, indicating that God regarded them as persons that early. The psalmist writes,

For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And *that* my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, *And* skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, when *as yet there were* none of them (139:13-16).

David rejoices over Yahweh's careful watchcare over him even in his mother's womb. Verse 13 points to God's personal regard for the psalmist that began when he was yet in his mother's womb. Verses 14-15 highlight that David was the product of God's creative work in his mother's womb. Ronald Allen writes:

The Bible never speaks of fetal life as mere chemical activity, cellular growth, or vague force. Rather, the fetus in the mother's womb is described by the psalmist in vivid pictorial language as being shaped, fashioned, molded, and woven together by the personal activity of God. That is, as God formed Adam from the dust of the ground, so He is actively involved in fashioning the fetus in the womb.<sup>25</sup>

God affirmed to the prophet Jeremiah, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations" (Jer 1:5). God "knew" Jeremiah even *before he was conceived*. God "sanctified" Jeremiah and "ordained" him a prophet *before he came from the womb*. Also, God Himself is the One who forms the fetus and orchestrates the natural processes that bring about the miracle of life (cf. Job 31:15; Ps 119:73; Eccl 11:5, which suggest that God's providence rules throughout the gestation period of a fetus).

### ***King David Was a Sinner from Conception***

King David himself acknowledged that he was a sinner from the moment of his conception. In Psalm 51:5 (NIV) he affirms, "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me." In reflecting on the sin in his heart, David recognizes that the sin of his heart is not something recent but goes back to the point of his conception in the womb of his mother. Such a moral state could be ascribed only to a person. It is also important to note that the psalmist links his birth with his conception.

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<sup>25</sup>Ronald B. Allen, *In Celebrating Love of Life* (Portland, Ore.: Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, 1977) 6.

***John the Baptist Reacted Personally While Inside Elizabeth's Womb***

John the Baptist is said to have reacted personally when he was yet in the womb of Elizabeth (in the sixth month of her pregnancy). According to Luke 1:44, Elizabeth told Mary, "For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy." When Mary entered the room to see her cousin Elizabeth, her cousin exclaimed that her unborn child leaped for joy in her womb.

***Exodus 21:22-25: Accidental Miscarriage or Premature Birth?***

Proponents of a pro-choice as well as a pro-life perspective have used this verse to support their interpretations of the Bible's contribution to this issue. Since it is a difficult passage and it finds a place in the argumentation of both sides of the issue, it deserves careful attention. The NIV and the NASB translations provide a good comparison of the two primary interpretations of these verses.

***NIV:*** "(22) If men who are fighting hit a pregnant woman and *she gives birth prematurely* (הַיָּדָרִי? יִנְצָר, yāšē'û yēlādēhā), but there is *no serious injury* (יִסְדָּן, 'āsôn), the offender must be fined whatever the woman's husband demands and the court allows. (23) But if there is *serious injury* (יִסְדָּן, 'āsôn), you are to take life for life, (24) eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, (25) burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise."

***NASB:*** "(22) And if men struggle with each other and strike a woman with child so that *she has a miscarriage* (הַיָּדָרִי? יִנְצָר, yāšē'û yēlādēhā), yet there is *no further injury* (יִסְדָּן, 'āsôn), he shall surely be fined as the woman's husband may demand of him; and he shall pay as the judges decide. (23) But if there is *any further injury* (יִסְדָּן, 'āsôn), then you shall appoint as a penalty life for life, (24) eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, (25) burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise."

***Interpretive Options***

Pro-abortion/pro-choice interpreters customarily contend that these verses present the occurrence of an accidental miscarriage, while anti-abortion/pro-life interpreters suggest that the passage depicts a safe, premature birth.

***Accidental Miscarriage (Normal Pro-Abortion Interpretation).*** According to this interpretation,<sup>26</sup> verse 22 depicts an accidental miscarriage for which only

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<sup>26</sup>Some proponents of this interpretation are Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974) 471-72; R. Alan Cole, *Exodus: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOT (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1973) 169; Robert N. Congdon, "Exodus 21:22-25 and the

a fine is levied. Verse 23 refers to a mortal injury inflicted on the mother and the fetus for which an “eye for an eye” punishment is required (see NASB translation). Since the punishment for accidentally killing an unborn child is less severe than the punishment for killing an adult, some proponents of this interpretation conclude that the unborn baby must be considered less than human (that is, of less value than an actual person). According to this view, the “harm” does not happen or happens to the mother, not the premature child.

***Safe, Premature Birth (Normal Anti-Abortion Interpretation).*** In this view,<sup>27</sup> verse 22 presents a safe premature birth for which a fine is levied. The next verse describes some kind of harm brought upon the mother and/or child for which the judges require an “eye for an eye” punishment (see NIV translation). According

Abortion Debate,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 146/582 (April-June 1989):132-47; Dolores E. Dunnett, “Evangelicals and Abortion,” *JETS* 33 (1990):217-18; Russell Fuller, “Exodus 22:22-23: The Miscarriage Interpretation and the Personhood of the Fetus,” *JETS* 37 (1994):169-84; J. Philip Hyatt, *Exodus*, NCB (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 233-34; Stanley Isser, “Two Traditions: The Law of Exodus 21:22-23 Revisited,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 52 (1990):40-45; Dale Patrick, *Old Testament Law* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1985) 76-77; Shalom Paul, *Studies in the Book of the Covenant in the Light of Cuneiform and Biblical Law* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970) 70-77; Nahum M. Sarna, *Exodus*, JPS Torah (New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1991) 125-26; Joe M. Sprinkle, “The Interpretation of Exodus 21:22-25 (*Lex Talionis*) and Abortion,” *WTJ* 55 (1993):233-53; Bruce K. Waltke, “Old Testament Texts Bearing on the Problem of the Control of Human Reproduction,” in *Birth Control and the Christian: A Protestant Symposium on the Control of Human Reproduction*, eds. W. O. Spitzer and Carlyle Saylor (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House, 1969) 10-13; R. Westbrook, “*Lex Talionis* and Exodus 21:22-25,” *Revue Biblique* 93 (1986):52-69.

<sup>27</sup>Some proponents of this view are Anderson, *Moral Dilemmas* 7-8; Gleason L. Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982) 247-49; Francis J. Beckwith, “Abortion and Public Policy: A Response to Some Arguments,” *JETS* 32 (1989):512-15; Walter Brueggemann, “The Book of Exodus,” in the *New Interpreter's Bible*, ed. Leander E. Keck et al. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990) 1:864; Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1983) 275-77; Jack W. Cottrell, “Abortion and the Mosaic Law,” *Christianity Today* 17/13 (March 16, 1973):6-9; John J. Davis, *Moses and the Gods of Egypt: Studies in the Book of Exodus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1971) 225-26; R. du Preez, “The Status of the Fetus in Mosaic Law,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 1 (1990):5-21; John I. Durham, *Exodus*, WBC (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1987) 323-24; John Ellington, “Miscarriage or Premature Birth?,” *Bible Translator* 37/3 (July 1986):334-37; Feinberg and Feinberg, *Ethics* 63-65; Paul B. Fowler, *Abortion: Toward an Evangelical Consensus* (Portland, Ore.: Multnomah, 1987) 149; Victor P. Hamilton, “הררה,” in the *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. W. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997) 1:1059; James K. Hoffmeier, “Abortion and the Old Testament Law,” in *Abortion: A Christian Understanding and Response*, ed. James K. Hoffmeier (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987) 57-62; H. Wayne House, “Miscarriage or Premature Birth: Additional Thoughts on Exodus 21:22-25,” *WTJ* 41 (1978):108-23; Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward Old Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983) 102-4, 168-72; C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch*, 3 vols, translated by James Martin, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament* (reprint; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949) 2:135; Rae, *Moral Choices* 124-25; Ronald F. Youngblood, *Exodus*, EC (Chicago: Moody, 1983) 105. Meredith G. Kline (“*Lex Talionis* and the Human Fetus,” *JETS* 20 [1977]:197-98) and John J. Davis (*Abortion and the Christian: What Every Believer Should Know* [Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1984], 51-52) propose a variation of this position by relating verse 22 to the mother alone and verse 23 to the infant.

to this perspective, when harm of any kind comes to the mother or child, the payment of a fine is not a severe enough penalty. A penalty appropriate to the “harm” is required. Notice that the “harm” does not happen or happens to the premature child and/or the mother.

***Primary Issues Involved in Interpreting This Text***

Since this passage is used as support for both sides of the debate, an overview of some key issues related to this text is in order: the term “child,” the verb “to go out,” the term “mischief/harm,” the *lex talionis* principle, and the medical feasibility of an infant in biblical times surviving a premature birth caused by trauma.

**The term “child” (יָלֵד, yeled).** Customary lexical sources point out that יָלֵד (*yeled*) refers to living people. It often occurs in a manner similar to בֵּן (*bēn*, “son”), though with less emphasis on relationship to parents.<sup>28</sup> It occurs with regard to family relationships, political administration, prophetic ministry, and eschatology.<sup>29</sup>

Hamilton demonstrates that the nuances of this noun range from newborns (Exod 1:17, 18; 3:6-9), to children who have been weaned (Gen 21:8), to teenagers (Gen 21:14-16), to youths (2 Kgs 2:24), to young men old enough to serve in foreign courts (Dan 1:4, 10, 15, 17), and to descendants (Isa 29:23).<sup>30</sup>

The noun *yeled* never refers elsewhere to a child unrecognizable as human or incapable of existence outside the womb. In fact, two Hebrew terms might have been used if Moses had a miscarriage in mind: גֹּלֵם (*gōlem*, “embryo” or “fetus,” Ps 139:16) or נֶפֶל (*nēpel*, “stillborn child,” “miscarriage,” Job 3:16; Ps 58:9 [English 58:8]; Eccl 6:3).

A final issue that deserves some attention is the plural form of the noun *yeled*. Of the 89 occurrences of this noun, 47 instances are plural. The noun occurs with a pronominal suffix 17 times and appears exactly as it occurs in Exodus 21:22 in four other verses (Gen 33:2, 7; Exod 21:4; Ruth 1:5). Outside of Exodus 21, *yeled* refers to the children of woman (Leah, a slave woman, Naomi). The reason for a plural form of *yeled* has mystified many interpreters.

The passage depicts a single pregnant woman who seeks to break up a fight between men. In the midst of the chaos of the conflict, the men strike her, causing her to go into labor prematurely. The Hebrew text reads, “and her children go out.” What is the significance of this plural form in this context? Scholars have suggested five interpretive alternatives.

<sup>28</sup>J. Kühlewein, “יָלֵד,” in the *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, edited by E. Jenni and C. Westermann (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1997) 2:545.

<sup>29</sup>Victor P. Hamilton, “יָלֵד,” in the *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. W. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997) 2:457-78.

<sup>30</sup>Hamilton, “יָלֵד” 2:457.

In the first place, some scholars conclude that this form of the noun is a plural of abstraction “with the sense ‘the product of her womb,’ an apt term for an inadequately developed baby.”<sup>31</sup> Sprinkle adds that the plural of abstraction “is used proleptically in anticipation of, or foreshadowing, the fatal outcome.”<sup>32</sup> Secondly, the plural could allow for several children and either sex.<sup>33</sup> Thirdly, some regard it as a generic plural used with a view to including both contingencies (vv. 22-23).<sup>34</sup> Fourthly, it might refer to a woman’s capacity for childbearing.<sup>35</sup> If this is the case, the verse is not relevant to the issue of abortion. Finally, it could indicate “natural products in an unnatural condition.”<sup>36</sup> None of the above options has abundant examples outside of this passage that would serve to provide support. For contextual reasons, the present writer prefers the second or third alternative.

**The verb יָאָסַף (yāšā’).** The term “depart” (יָאָסַף, yāšā’) means literally to “go out” and is ordinarily used to describe normal human births (Gen 25:26; 38:28-30; Job 3:11; 10:18; Jer 1:5; 20:18). This verb does occur for a miscarriage in Num 12:12 and possibly Deut 28:57. However, in Num 12:12 “the dead one” precedes the verb, making clear that a live birth is not in view. In fact, Num 12:12 refers to a stillborn birth rather than a miscarriage. The Deuteronomy passage does not clarify whether a live birth or miscarriage is in view. This verbal root does appear one time in the OT with the idea of a miscarriage with reference to oxen (a fem. sing. participle, Ps 144:14).

The normal Hebrew verb for miscarriage, both in animals and humans, is שָׁכַל (*škl*, Exod 23:26; Hos 9:14; Gen 31:38; Job 2:10). The verb also refers to God’s punishment of His people by allowing an invading force to take away their children by violent means (Deut 32:25; 1 Sam 15:33; Lam 1:20) or by wild animals (Lev 26:22; Ezek 5:17).<sup>37</sup>

**The term אֲסוֹן (’āsôn).** The term “mischief” (אֲסוֹן, ’āsôn) means “harm”

<sup>31</sup>Sprinkle, “Interpretation of Exodus” 249; cf. L. Schwienhorst-Schönberger, *Dad Bundesbuch* (Ex 20,22-23,33) BZAW 188 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1990) 81-83.

<sup>32</sup>Sprinkle, “Interpretation of Exodus” 250. Sprinkle points out that this interpretation does not necessarily imply that a live, unaborted fetus is subhuman. It simply implies that a corpse is subhuman.

<sup>33</sup>Cassuto, *Book of Exodus* 275; Ellington, “Miscarriage or Premature Birth?” 336; Kaiser, *Toward Old Testament Ethics* 103; Keil and Delitzsch, *Pentateuch* 2:135; John M. Frame, *Medical Ethics: Principles, Persons, and Problems*, (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1988) 99.

<sup>34</sup>Kline, “*Lex Talionis*” 198-99.

<sup>35</sup>A. Schenker, “Drei Mosaiksteinchen: ‘Königreich von Priestern’, ‘Und ihre Kinder gehen weg’, ‘Wir tun und wir hören’ (Exod 19,6; 21,22; 24,7)” in *Studies in the Book of Exodus*, ed. M. Vervenne (Louvain: Leuven University, 1996) 367-80.

<sup>36</sup>House, “Miscarriage or Premature Birth” 114.

<sup>37</sup>Victor P. Hamilton, “שָׁכַל,” in the *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* 4:106.

in a general sense. It is interesting to note that in cognate languages (e.g., Akkadian and post-biblical Hebrew) this term connotes healing or refers to a physician. Its five occurrences (Gen 42:4, 38; 44:29; Exod 21:22, 23) in the OT appear to be euphemistic references to serious or even fatal injury.<sup>38</sup> In other words, it highlights circumstances in which medical attention is required.<sup>39</sup>

Proponents of the premature birth position contend that since no preposition and nominal suffix (“to her”) is included, the harm cannot be restricted to the mother. Unlike the ANE law codes, where the mother receives the focus of the attention and no “child” is mentioned, Exodus 21:22 refers to the pregnant woman and the “child” that prematurely leaves the womb. A natural reading of the passage would suggest that the “no harm” or “harm” applies either to the child or the mother. Also, it is difficult to understand how Moses could describe a violently induced miscarriage as “no harm.”<sup>40</sup>

***Lex Talionis.*** This Latin phrase literally means “the law for retaliation.” It sought to establish a standard of justice and to limit retaliation to the exact extent of the injury inflicted.<sup>41</sup> It countered the tendency of unlimited revenge.<sup>42</sup> This concept of retaliation ensured quality of treatment for the less privileged members of Israelite society.

The legal principle of *lex talionis* advocated, first, the principle of equal justice for all and, second, the penalty must be commensurate with the crime, nothing more or less.<sup>43</sup> The statement of the *lex talionis* principle in Exodus 21 permits no misunderstanding as it lists eight illustrative equivalences.

Several proponents of the view that a miscarriage takes place in both instances (verses 22 and 23) argue that the *lex talionis* principle was not necessarily understood literally. In many instances, the demanded punishment (whether execution or damage to a certain part of the body) was often replaced by a punitive fine or “ransom.”<sup>44</sup> Building on that conclusion, Sprinkle contends that the fine demanded in the wake of the death of the fetus in verse 22 and the *lex talionis*

<sup>38</sup>Eugene H. Merrill, “רָפָא,” in the *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. W. Van Gemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997) 467.

<sup>39</sup>Sprinkle, “Interpretation of Exodus 21:22-25” 246.

<sup>40</sup>Proponents of the miscarriage view contend that since the ANE law codes (see below) only refer to the mother and not the fetus/infant, there is no reason to expect Moses to refer to anyone other than the mother (e.g., Fuller, “Exodus 22:22-23” 183).

<sup>41</sup>Kaiser, *Toward Old Testament Ethics* 72-73, 299-301.

<sup>42</sup>Robin Wakely, “כֹּוֹה,” in the *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* 2:607.

<sup>43</sup>Hamilton, “שָׁכַל” 4:106; cf. Childs, *Book of Exodus* 472.

<sup>44</sup>Sprinkle, “Interpretation of Exodus” 237-43.

verdict in the verse are both monetary in nature.<sup>45</sup> Although a difference in degree is present, this law demands no distinction in the quality or kind of punishment.

**Medical Feasibility.** A number of proponents of the miscarriage position contend that in the medically primitive time of the OT, it is unlikely that any infants survived a premature birth under severe duress caused by blunt force trauma.<sup>46</sup> Although this observation has validity, it does not pose an insurmountable obstacle to the premature birth view. By giving this law, Moses is not implying that many infants born prematurely as the result of blunt force trauma will live. However, he could be establishing a law that stands distinct from the ANE law codes of his day. Not only is there severe punishment in the wake of unintentional mortal injury to a mother or a fetus, but even forcing an early delivery of an infant through violence, in the event that the infant lives, faces a demanding penalty.

***What about the Input/Example of Other ANE Law Codes?<sup>47</sup>***

A number of Ancient Near Eastern law codes contain scenarios similar to that found in Exodus 21. An overview of the data found in those law codes and a brief evaluation of its impact on the issue at hand follows below. For the sake of brevity, the law codes are presented in chart form.

***The Code of Hammurabi (ANET, 175, laws 209-14).***

- ▶ An injury causing a *gentleman's daughter* to miscarry 10 shekels
- ▶ An injury causing a *gentleman's daughter* to miscarry and die life for life
- ▶ An injury causing a *commoner's daughter* to miscarry 5 shekels
- ▶ An injury causing a *commoner's daughter* to miscarry and die 30 shekels
- ▶ An injury causing a *gentleman's slavewoman* to miscarry 2 shekels
- ▶ An injury causing a *gentleman's slavewoman* to miscarry and die 20 shekels

***The Hittite Laws (ANET, 190, laws 17-18).***

- ▶ An injury causing a *slave woman* to miscarry (in the 10<sup>th</sup> month) 5 shekels
- ▶ An injury causing a *free woman* to miscarry (in the 5<sup>th</sup> month) 5 shekels
- ▶ An injury causing a *free woman* to miscarry (in the 10<sup>th</sup> month) 10 shekels

***The Middle Assyrian Laws (ANET, 181, 184-85, laws 21, 50-53).***

- ▶ An injury causing a *daughter* to miscarry a punitive fine, public flogging, and royal service

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 243.

<sup>46</sup>Robert N. Condon, "Exodus 21:22-25 and the Abortion Debate," *BSac* 146 (1989):140-43; Sprinkle, "Interpretation of Exodus 21:22-25 " 249.

<sup>47</sup>For a more complete explanation of this issue (from an accidental miscarriage view), see Fuller, "Exodus 22:22-23" 171-74.

- |   |                 |
|---|-----------------|
| ▶ An injury causing a <i>free wife</i> to miscarry          | life for life   |
| ▶ An injury causing a <i>prostitute</i> to miscarry         | life for life   |
| ▶ An injury causing a <i>wife</i> to miscarry <sup>48</sup> | a punitive fine |
| ▶ A <i>self-induced</i> miscarriage                         | life for life   |

Numerous scholars argue that since these and other significant ANE law codes address the occurrence of miscarriages and not premature births in their legislation and since the OT legal stipulations frequently are quite similar to ANE legal statements, one can assume that Moses is dealing with miscarriage and not premature birth. If Moses was introducing a new, unique law, he would have avoided any misunderstanding by utilizing precise terminology to distinguish his legislation from that of other ANE law codes.

In response, it is essential to observe that although numerous scholars contend that the Exodus passage must be interpreted in light of the various ANE law codes (where miscarriage appears to be in view),<sup>49</sup> the biblical law dealing with this issue is different in some key areas. For example, Exodus 21

- ◆ Makes no distinction concerning the age of the fetus
- ◆ Makes no distinction with regard to the social status of the injured woman
- ◆ Introduces a different fate depending on whether or not “harm” took place
- ◆ Specifies that a child (*yeled*) “comes out” from a pregnant mother’s womb. Most of the ANE law codes refer to a case where someone causes a woman “to drop that of her womb” (*ANET*, 175 n. 137) in a very generic fashion.

In summary, the Mosaic Law demanded that the unborn child be protected as a person and that the same penalties be assessed when the child was injured as when an adult person was injured. In the first instance, the men guilty of hitting the woman must render monetary compensation for the trauma of premature birth and any discomfort caused the mother. In the second place, the legal principle of *lex talionis* is invoked for the men guilty of striking a mortal blow, leading to the death of the child and/or the mother.

### ***Key Observations on Exodus 21:22-25***

- ▶ Opponents of abortion should not view this passage as one of their strongest biblical arguments against abortion (in light of the interpretive complexities).
- ▶ Although these verses do not provide an absolute prohibition of abortion, they

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<sup>48</sup>The phrase can be rendered “a wife with a history of miscarrying.” For this interpretation of the *ANET* translation, “who does not rear her children,” see G. R. Driver and J. C. Miles, *The Assyrian Laws* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1935) 114-15.

<sup>49</sup>E.g., Fuller, “Exodus 22:22-23 ” 171-74; Sprinkle, “Interpretation of Exodus 21:22-25 ” 250, et al.

clearly do not teach that an unborn child is less than human.

- ▶ Even if verse 22 presents the accidental miscarriage of an unborn child, this conclusion in no way legitimizes the intentional aborting of an unborn child.
- ▶ Even according to the accidental miscarriage view, since a fine is levied against the guilty parties for causing this tragedy, the death of an unborn child is not acceptable.
- ▶ If an accidental miscarriage results in a fine levied against the guilty party, how much more serious would be the intentional killing of an unborn child? It is totally inappropriate to use this passage to sanction abortion, an intentional killing of a child.
- ▶ The different penalties levied, a fine in one case and *lex talionis* in the other case, does not necessarily indicate anything about personhood and worth. As a rule, Moses did not impose a mandatory death penalty in cases of accidental killing (Exod 21:13, 20-21).
- ▶ The relatively “light” sentence in verse 22 in no way indicates that the fetus/infant is less important or less than a person. In the immediately preceding passage (21:20-21) a slave owner who kills his slave unintentionally escapes with no penalty at all. Does Mosaic law regard slaves as less than human persons? Legal status rather than personhood are in view in both instances.

This writer agrees with Youngblood who writes, “The complexities involved in attempting to interpret verse 22 make it unwise to press it into service in the abortion controversy, pro or con.”<sup>50</sup> McQuilkin affirms that “Such an unclear and hotly disputed passage could hardly be used to establish the status of the unborn with unassailable biblical authority.”<sup>51</sup>

### **WHAT ABOUT THOSE QUESTIONABLE CASES** (*e.g., mother's health, rape, incest*)?

Between the polar positions that suggest that abortion is always or never permissible, a number of people wrestle with the possibility that in some cases abortion might represent a potential consideration. The most common position among those who are generally against abortion is that abortion can serve as an acceptable option in the case of a pregnancy causing risk to the mother's health, or when the pregnancy is the result of an act of rape or incest.<sup>52</sup> Narrower still, there are people who would limit abortions to ectopic pregnancies (see above for explanation). The following paragraphs survey those possibilities.

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<sup>50</sup>Youngblood, *Exodus* 105.

<sup>51</sup>Robertson McQuilkin, *An Introduction to Biblical Ethics* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1989) 320.

<sup>52</sup>Most politicians who oppose abortion fall into this camp.

### ***The Mother's Health (Therapeutic Abortion)***

At the outset, it is important to note that the present writer intentionally limits this discussion to the mother's physical well-being. Many individuals include her psychological, social, and economic situation as part of the mother's health.<sup>53</sup> D. Gareth Jones rejects abortion on demand but contends that "unresolvable dilemmas" in which the fetus places the mother's life in great jeopardy provide an acceptable ground for abortion.<sup>54</sup> Most proponents of this position contend that the actual person (the mother) is of greater intrinsic value than the potential person (the fetus) she is carrying.<sup>55</sup>

First of all, statistically, this "dilemma" of facing the potential loss of a mother's life is a rarity, and when it occurs, the decision is not one of choosing whose life to take and whose life to save. Instead, it is a choice between losing both patients or saving the mother. In the rare case where a pregnancy must be abbreviated to protect the life of the mother, the proper procedure would be to give the child extraordinary care with the hopes of bringing it to maturity. C. Everett Koop, former Surgeon General of the U.S. and a leading pediatric surgeon, has stated, "In my thirty-six years in pediatric surgery I have never known of one instance where the child had to be aborted to save the mother's life."<sup>56</sup>

### ***Pregnancies Caused by Rape/Incest***

No doubt victims of these horrible crimes experience humiliation, fear, and anger. The unborn child is a tangible reminder of the abusive act that traumatized the woman. According to those who would allow abortions in the wake of this abuse, it is "unfair" that a woman who has endured rape or incest should have to carry the evidence of her tragedy through nine months of pregnancy and subsequent childbirth. Another complicating factor is that victims of incest are normally fairly young and are later along in their pregnancy before it is diagnosed. Because of their relative youth, their pregnancies may be more difficult and the childbirth more strenuous. Nevertheless, while it is "unfair" that the victim of rape/incest goes through the demands of pregnancy and childbirth, would it not be a greater injustice to kill the unborn child?

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<sup>53</sup>The 1973 Supreme Court case of *Doe v. Bolton* included a woman's emotional and psychological health with her physical health as elements to be considered as part of the woman's health (as it relates to justification for having an abortion).

<sup>54</sup>D. Gareth Jones, *Brave New People: Ethical Issues at the Commencement of Life* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985) 76-77.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, 177; Norman L. Geisler, *Ethics: Alternatives and Issues* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971) 117-18.

<sup>56</sup>C. Everett Koop, "Abortion: Deception-on-Demand," *Moody Monthly* 80:9 (May 1980):24. Koop is apparently referring to instances of aborting a fetus that has attached itself to the mother's womb. From the perspective of the current writer, an ectopic pregnancy provides the only clear and legitimate occasion for a therapeutic abortion. If a physician does not remove the fetus from the mother's fallopian tube, as a result both mother and infant will without question die.

***Pregnancies Facing Fetal Handicaps***

Some examples of fetal handicaps that serve as justifiable circumstances for abortion are anencephaly (part or all of the brain is missing), Tay-Sachs (severe enzyme deficiency causing blindness and paralysis), spina bifida, and Down's Syndrome. For example, D. Gareth Jones regards anencephaly as legitimate ground for abortion but rejects Down's syndrome as a viable occasion for abortion. He comes to this conclusion because anencephaly, where the major brain centers are lacking, signifies that "there is no prospect of anything remotely resembling human life."<sup>57</sup> He contends that Down's syndrome does not rob the fetus of the potential of having many personhood qualities.<sup>58</sup> The debate revolving around this "hard case" focuses on the following alternatives: *Quality of life vs. Sanctity/Value of life.*

**Quality of life.** Fundamental to this emphasis is the idea that human life is not possessed of any inherent worth, and thus the individual human being must *achieve* a serious right to life. Though some scholars suggest objective criteria to guide one's decisions when facing situations of this kind, for the most part the decision-making process has little objectivity. The projected "quality" of life for the fetus is the basis for the decision to abort or not.

Because of the untold suffering that might be experienced by the fetus as well as the agony, pressure, and financial strain that would come upon the parents, pro-abortionists will recommend abortion in certain instances.

**Sanctity/Value of life.** Those who give emphasis to life's sanctity regard human life as distinct from all other life, possessing an inherent dignity which renders it worthy of protection and preservation simply because it *is* human life.

According to Genesis 1:26-27, man is created in the image of God (Gen 1:26-27). At the very least that indicates two things. In the first place, God's image in man renders man distinct from all other created beings on this earth. Secondly, God's image in man renders man worthy of protection; to shed innocent blood is reprehensible *because* "in the image of God He made man" (Gen 9:6). This majesty or dignity is not acquired or achieved, nor is it affected by the individual's personal worth to society, but God endows it. It is part and parcel of our humanness.

Throughout Scripture, God invites man to enter into a personal relationship with Himself through His Son Jesus Christ. Since life has *sanctity* and *value* given by God Himself, we cannot judge its *quality* by our mortal standards.

Although life's realities are complex at times, from the perspective of this writer, very few situations provide an occasion to consider abortion as a legitimate option. An ectopic/tubal pregnancy provides the only clear justification for abortion

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<sup>57</sup>Jones, *Brave New People* 180.

<sup>58</sup>*Ibid.*, 181. Whether or not Tay-Sachs disease would warrant an abortion depends on the potential impact of the child on the rest of the family unit (*ibid.*, 181-82).

in the life of a believer. The instances of pregnancy caused by rape or incest or the potential of a fetus afflicted with a serious handicap place undue attention on the potential quality of life for the fetus or place an improper focus on the abuse experienced by the unwilling mother. The human “injustice” of those scenarios must be subordinated to God’s definition of justice.

### **CONCLUSION**

Since the Supreme Court case of *Roe v. Wade* in 1973, almost 40 million pregnancies have ended in abortion. Pro-abortion proponents enthusiastically lobby for the continued legality of abortion-on-demand. Those opposed to abortion fall into three general camps: abortion is acceptable sometimes (risk to life of the mother, in the wake of rape or incest), rarely (ectopic pregnancies), or never.

The Bible affirms the personhood of the fetus in a number of ways. Exodus 21:22-25 (which receives the bulk of this article’s attention) should not be used as a compelling “proof-text” for either the pro- or anti-abortion camps. One can draw certain important conclusions from this important passage. An unborn child is not less than human. Even if Exodus 21:22 depicts an accidental miscarriage (for which only a fine is levied), this conclusion in no way legitimizes the intentional aborting of an unborn child.

### **ADDENDUM**

After “The Abortion Dilemma” had gone through the editorial process for this issue of *The Master’s Seminary Journal*, the FDA announced their approval of the early abortion pill known as RU-486. Instead of implementing the potential restrictions mentioned above in this article (176), the FDA has granted almost unlimited approval. Any physician will be able to prescribe the drug if he/she has a backup who can provide surgical intervention in cases of complications. Consequently, this drug will find its way into family-practice clinics as well as into abortion clinics.

## EUTHANASIA

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*In the early part of the twenty-first century, euthanasia is destined to become the dominant ethical issue in American culture. It has become better known in the recent past because of several factors: the German euthanasia program, the cases of Karen Ann Quinlan and Nancy Beth Cruzan, and the activities of Dr. Jack Kevorkian. Recent responses to the growing acceptability of euthanasia are the Uniform Health-Care Decisions Act of 1993, the recognition of euthanasia in Holland in 1993, the Oregon Physician-assisted Suicide Initiative in 1994, and the U. S. Supreme Court's upholding of bans on physician-assisted suicide in 1977. A clear understanding of the vocabulary of euthanasia is vital because different sources are attaching differing meanings to the same words. Expressions that are especially significant are "active/passive euthanasia," "voluntary/involuntary/non-voluntary euthanasia," and "direct/indirect euthanasia." The Bible is clear in its condemnation of both homicide and suicide, which cover all types of euthanasia. The Scriptures also present guidelines for dealing with death and euthanasia.*

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That euthanasia will become the dominant ethical issue in American culture in the first decades of the twenty-first century is the conclusion of two leading figures in the contemporary euthanasia debate. In collaboration with Mary Clement, Derek Humphry, founder of the Hemlock Society and an avowed advocate of legalized euthanasia, writes,

The right to choose an assisted death has swiftly overtaken abortion as America's most contentious social issue. Indeed, activists and the media call it "the ultimate civil liberty." Some 60-75% of the general public supports the right to die. The establishment—government, churches, the American Medical Association, those powerful, exclusive groups that control or influence society—however, is adamantly and vocally opposed. . . . This being an issue everybody—from blue-collar worker to university intellectual—has strong and often fixed views, the next decade in the United States

promises to be a contentious one.<sup>1</sup>

Echoing Humphry's conclusions, C. Everett Koop, former Surgeon General of the United States and a vocal opponent of legalized euthanasia, states, "Suicide, assisted or otherwise, will replace abortion in the headlines as the ethical issue of the next decade."<sup>2</sup> The growing intensification of the debate over euthanasia in American society challenges the contemporary evangelical pastor and church leader to become aware of the issues and the biblical teaching surrounding this debate.

In addition to the public debate, the contemporary pastor/leader also finds himself being confronted continually with end-of-life questions. Some of the questions that the present writer has encountered in pastoral ministry include: "Is it unbiblical for me to ask for 'do not resuscitate' status?"; "May I as a Christian decline being hooked up to this machine since I am soon going to die anyway?"; "May we in good conscience before God ask that our comatose relative's pacemaker be turned off since it is the only thing that is presently keeping him alive?"; and the ultimate question, "What does God allow me to do to deal with the intensifying physical pain that I am experiencing?" These, and similar questions, led Donn Ketcham, M.D., to write,

Many of you will be called upon to counsel with families and, indeed, you may be called upon to face decisions in your own family which are scripturally and morally determined but so emotionally volatile that maintaining objectivity is most difficult. It is important to have certain guidelines laid down ahead of time—guidelines to which you can cling and hold firmly enough that they weather the storm of emotions in time of crisis. This is a matter in which your convictions must be hammered out on the anvil of scripture and moral principles before it is necessary to apply them in time of stress. They must be settled in the quietness of the study lest the maelstrom of the actual crisis cause you to be swayed and you find yourself with situationally determined standards—a crisis-originated form of situational ethics.<sup>3</sup>

This article will attempt to help the reader hammer out his scriptural and moral principles as he confronts the issue of euthanasia. It will seek to conclude

<sup>1</sup>Derek Humphry and Mary Clement, *Freedom to Die: People, Politics, and the Right-To-Die Movement* (New York: St. Martin's, 1998) 5-9. This work is the best, most up-to-date introduction of the euthanasia debate in American society from the pro-euthanasia viewpoint. The reader interested in probing the perspective of the proponents of euthanasia should begin by carefully interacting with this monograph.

<sup>2</sup>From C. Everett Koop's commendation of Timothy J. Demy and Gary P. Steward, eds., *Suicide: A Christian Response* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998) 1. Every pastor, and other readers interested in the topic, should secure and work through the articles in this excellent book. The present article, because of space limitations, can give only a broad introduction to the subject of euthanasia; the reader is encouraged to follow up his reading of the present article by using Demy and Steward to further his understanding of euthanasia and be informed of the Christian response.

<sup>3</sup>Donn Ketcham, "A Christian Physician Looks at Euthanasia," *The Baptist Bulletin* (June 1977):8.

with guidelines that can be applied when dealing with end-of-life issues. To accomplish this goal, an introduction to the issue of euthanasia in contemporary society will come first. A clarification of the terminology used in the contemporary discussion of euthanasia will then follow. Next, and most important, will come interaction with the biblical instruction relevant to the contemporary euthanasia debate. Finally, the article will present biblical guidelines applicable to end-of-life issues.

## EUTHANASIA IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICA

In 1947 pollsters began asking Americans about assisted suicide. The question they posed was, "Should doctors be allowed to end the patient's life by some painless means if the patient and his family request it." In 1950 38% of the respondents answered "should" and 55% answered "should not." Twenty-five years later in 1975, the results had been reversed. In that year, 50% answered "should" and 30% answered "should not." The intervening twenty-five years have seen the positive response grow. Today 70% of the respondents answer "should" and only 20% answer "should not."<sup>4</sup>

### The Raising of Public Awareness Concerning Euthanasia

**The German Euthanasia Program.**<sup>5</sup> In the five years after World War II, the American public was exposed to what had happened in the nation of Germany under Hitler. Beginning in 1933 those deemed undesirable, handicapped children and psychiatric patients, were allowed to die by means of starvation. In 1939 active killing replaced this passive killing. Those patients who were judged incurable after a review of their condition were granted "mercy killing." This official euthanasia program came to an end in August 1941. Significantly, it was ended because of public opposition led by parents who opposed the active killing of their children; also significantly, there is no record of any physician protest. However, in the

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<sup>4</sup>These statistics are cited in Brian P. Johnston, *Death as a Salesman: What's Wrong with Assisted Suicide*, 2nd revised ed. (Sacramento: New Regency, 1998) 161. Humphry and Clement (*Freedom to Die: People, Politics, and the Right-To-Life Movement* 14) state their interpretation for the shift in American public opinion. "A number of factors have brought society to the point where a majority favors the voluntary termination of life to avoid unrelenting pain and suffering. Dramatic advances in technology since World War II, the rise of AIDS as a national plague, the decline of the doctor-patient relationship, the economics of health care, and the medical profession's lax attitude toward pain control and comfort care, combined with the expectations of entitlement and autonomy generated by the 'rights culture' of the 1960's, all give rise to the expectation of a quality death with personal input. The right-to-die movement is consistent, furthermore, with the baby boomer's increasingly influential creed: 'I want what I want when I want it, especially if it makes me feel better.'"

<sup>5</sup>This summary is taken from Nigel M. DeS. Cameron, *The New Medicine: Life and Death after Hippocrates* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 1991) 69-91. For a complete analysis of the German Euthanasia Program, see Robert Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide* (New York: Basic Books, 1986).

German concentration camps, those deemed undesirable by Hitler—incurable mental patients, homosexuals, and Jews—continued to be put to death. This mass killing was under the supervision of physicians.

When the knowledge of this German euthanasia program and its ultimate results became known in the United States, reaction to the concept of euthanasia was negative. Because the program began with the passive killing of those deemed undesirable, the medical professionals recommitted themselves not to be involved in the taking of life. The doctor's primary responsibility to help the sick and never to injure or wrong them was reaffirmed. With the memory of the German practice so fresh, in 1950 public opinion reacted negatively to any program or movement that had the name *euthanasia*.<sup>6</sup>

**Karen Ann Quinlan.**<sup>7</sup> By 1975 public opinion concerning euthanasia was dramatically reversed as shown by the reaction to the Karen Ann Quinlan situation. Quinlan was a 21-year-old young woman who grew up in a devout Catholic family in New Jersey. She had been on a starvation diet when she went to a party on the evening of April 15, 1975. At the party, she consumed alcohol and a small amount of valium. The combination of alcohol and valium on an empty stomach caused her to stop breathing for two separate periods of approximately 15 minutes each. Quinlan's friends delivered her to the emergency room of a community hospital in an unconscious condition. Doctors immediately placed the young woman on a respiration machine as they sought to save her life. Most patients in her condition would not have survived, but Quinlan was able to be kept alive with the help of the respirator.

Even though Quinlan remained alive, her unconscious condition remained. All the examining physicians agreed that she had suffered irreversible brain damage with no hope of recovery or improvement and that she was now in a persistent vegetative state (PVS).<sup>8</sup> PVS is a condition of upper-brain death. The upper brain

<sup>6</sup>Humphry and Clement (*Freedom to Die: People, Politics, and the Right-To-Die Movement* 7) assert, "Two decades of debate on the right to die have cleared away most of the general public's concern that legalizing an assisted death resembles Nazi crimes." However, Wesley J. Smith (*Forced Exit: The Slippery Slope from Assisted Suicide to Legalized Murder* [New York: Times Books, 1997] 68-89) warns that there are striking similarities between the German Euthanasia Program and what is being proposed by the contemporary American pro-euthanasia movements. Smith states, "Wicked ideas are hardest to detect in their own time, even when they are variations on a theme that has been tried before. For although there are many substantive differences between the values that drove the earlier German death culture and the ones emerging in our own day, a careful analysis of the *actions* being advocated—rather than just the words used to promote those actions—leads to the uncomfortable inference that the differences are not as profound as many would like to believe" (70).

<sup>7</sup>Information cited here comes from Humphry and Clement, *Freedom to Die: People, Politics, and the Right-To-Die Movement* 82-95.

<sup>8</sup>Mark Blocher (*The Right to Die? Caring Alternatives to Euthanasia* [Chicago: Moody, 1999] 188) argues appropriately for the following clarification: "Due to the fact that the term 'persistent vegetative state' suggests an individual is something less than human (some colloquially refer to such a

supports consciousness, and the brain stem controls certain bodily functions like breathing and heart rate. Upper brain death leads to a permanent loss of consciousness. But it does not always lead to the death of the brain stem. Sometimes a patient whose upper brain is dead will have a brain stem that still supports heart and lung activity. Upper brain death with the brain stem functioning was to be the experience of Quinlan.

After three months, the Quinlans, as devout Roman Catholics, consulted their family priest concerning the possibility of disconnecting the respirator. The priest advised them that they were under no obligation to use “extraordinary means” to prolong life. In this case the use of the respirator was deemed “extraordinary means.”<sup>9</sup> Thus, the priest advised the Quinlans that it would be within Catholic practice to ask the doctors to remove the respirator. When the hospital, at the advice of their attorney, refused to turn off the respirator, the Quinlans went to court to seek the removal of their daughter from the respirator. In November 1975, Judge Robert Muir ruled against the Quinlans in New Jersey’s trial court. The judge asserted that only physicians or the patient herself could make life and death decisions. He refused to allow the Quinlans the legal authority to make the medical decisions for their comatose daughter. The Quinlans immediately appealed this ruling to the New Jersey Supreme Court. The judges of the Supreme Court overturned the lower court ruling and said the respirator could be disconnected. The court stated that it was affirming the choice Karen herself would have made if she were able to do so. The court recognized the authority of the patient to overrule the physician in end-of-life decisions. On the basis of the court’s decision, and after her relocation to another hospital, Karen Ann Quinlan was removed from the respirator in June of 1976. However, she continued to live until July 1985. During these years, Quinlan continued to receive feeding and hydration since these were in accordance with Catholic understanding as “ordinary means” of medical treatment.

A consequence of the Quinlan litigation was the legislative institution of an advanced medical directive (AMD) known as “the living will.” This is a legal document in which a person indicates his wishes regarding treatment in order to guide medical personnel in a situation where he is unable to choose treatment. The New Jersey Supreme Court had ruled that the patient had the right to indicate his

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person as a ‘vegetable’), I prefer to use the term permanent state of unconsciousness or unawareness. Despite the loss of the higher brain, the part of the brain that controls thought, emotion, and consciousness, such individuals are still human beings to be treated with dignity and respect.” Though this present article speaks of PVS, the term is used in the spirit of Blocher’s clarification.

<sup>9</sup>Catholic ethicists have long held to the distinction between ordinary and extraordinary medical treatment. Scott B. Rae (*Moral Choice: An Introduction to Ethics* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995] 164) explains the distinction: “The term *ordinary means* refers to the course of treatment for a disease that offers a reasonable hope of benefit to the patient, without being excessively burdensome. Antibiotics for curing an infection is an example of this type of treatment. *Extraordinary means* are those that do not offer such hope and place undue burdens on the patient. For example, placing a patient on a respirator is normally considered extraordinary means. Ordinary means are considered morally obligatory and extraordinary means are morally optional.”

wishes regarding medical treatment. In September 1976, the California Natural Death Act was the nation's first statute giving legal status to living wills. In the intervening years, the majority of states have passed legislation authorizing such living wills.

**Nancy Beth Cruzan.**<sup>10</sup> The case of Nancy Cruzan furthered public awareness of euthanasia and legal and legislative determinations concerning end-of-life decisions. Cruzan was a 25-year-old young woman from Missouri who was thrown out of her car as it crashed in January 1983. It was estimated that Cruzan went about 15 minutes without breath or heartbeat before being resuscitated by paramedics. Her lungs and heart began to work again, but she remained in a coma, ultimately descending into a PVS.

In 1987 her parents requested that feeding and hydration be removed, allowing Nancy to die. However, the hospital and attending physicians denied the request. The Cruzans, like the Quinlans before them, petitioned the courts, but they went a step further, asking for the removal of the feeding tube. After the Missouri Supreme Court refused the Cruzans' request to make a medical decision on their daughter's behalf, they appealed to the United States Supreme Court. The Cruzan case was the first end-of-life case to come before the high court. In a 5-4 decision, the court stated that in this case, the U.S. Constitution would grant a competent person a constitutionally protected right to refuse all forms of life-sustaining medical treatment, including artificial hydration and nutrition. The court's statement inferred that competent patients have a constitutional right to refuse medical treatment. However, in the Cruzan case, the court also affirmed that the State of Missouri had to have clear and convincing evidence of a person's expressed decision while competent to have hydration and nutrition withdrawn. Because Nancy had left no such evidence, the Supreme Court sided with the state and returned the case back to Missouri. With the case returned back to the state, several of Nancy's friends suddenly remembered conversations in which she had expressed her wish not to continue in a condition like her then-present situation. Thus both her doctor and the court dropped their opposition to the removal of the tube providing nutrition and hydration to Cruzan. In December 1990, Nancy Cruzan died almost 12 days after her feeding had been withdrawn.<sup>11</sup>

In the aftermath of the Cruzan case, in 1990, Congress passed the Patient Self-Determination Act, which took effect on December 1, 1991. The act requires that all United States hospitals, nursing facilities, health maintenance organizations, and other health care delivery systems receiving federal funds must develop written

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<sup>10</sup>This material is gleaned from Humphry and Clement, *Freedom to Die: People, Politics, and the Right-To-Die Movement* 118-23.

<sup>11</sup>Joe Cruzan, the father of Nancy Beth, hung himself to death on August 17, 1996. The possible cause, remorse, is explored by John M Dolan, "Homicidal Medicine," in *Suicide: A Christian Response*, ed. by Timothy J. Demy and Gary P. Steward (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998) 237-38.

policies regarding advance directives. These provider organizations must make available education for the community and staff on advanced directives and documentation in the patient's chart as to the existence of advanced directives. Further, written information must be provided to the patient concerning the policy and philosophy of the medical institution.

**Dr. Jack Kevorkian.** During the 1990s the activities of Dr. Jack Kevorkian continually fanned public awareness on the question of euthanasia.<sup>12</sup> Kevorkian is a self-proclaimed agnostic. This former pathologist has had an interest in the dying process throughout his professional career. Kevorkian is the inventor of his so-called "suicide machine" which allows a patient to push a button when hooked up to the machine and brings death in approximately 6 minutes. The former pathologist advertises the use of his machine for those who want to relieve their suffering. However, it is questionable whether any of the over 40 documented individuals who have taken advantage of Kevorkian's death service were actually terminal cases. Kevorkian defends his practices based upon the principle of patient autonomy. Kevorkian believes that any "rational" person who wants to exercise his right to absolute autonomy can decide to end his own life, whether his medical condition is terminal or not.<sup>13</sup> Even though Kevorkian clearly was illegally assisting in suicides according to the statutes of his home state of Michigan, no jury has been willing to convict him on these charges. It seems as though a significant minority of the American public is willing to support the notion of physician-assisted suicide for any suffering individual whether his condition is terminal or not.

### **Recent Responses to the Awareness of Euthanasia**

**Uniform Health-Care Decisions Act.**<sup>14</sup> In 1993 the National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws combined all the then statutory developments concerning end-of-life decisions into its Uniform Health-Care Decisions Act. This Act is the basis for future state laws in this field. It allows an individual to designate in advance who could make treatment decisions for him if he becomes incapacitated; this is technically called a "durable power of attorney for health care" (DPA). A person can also make a living will which can guide the DPA or, if he designates no DPA, give instructions for health care providers that must be

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<sup>12</sup>Humphry and Clement (*Freedom to Die: People, Politics and the Right-To-Die Movement* 125) state, "The sudden appearance in 1990 on the right-to-die scene of Dr. Jack Kevorkian transformed the issue from polite debate and courteous informational assistance (Hemlock's way) to in-your-face, controversial death-on-request operated by the retired Michigan pathologist." Even fellow-supporters of euthanasia are not necessarily excited by Kevorkian's approach.

<sup>13</sup>For an evaluation of Kevorkian's principle of autonomy, see Francis J. Beckwith, "Absolute Autonomy and Physician-Assisted Suicide: Putting a Bad Idea Out of Its Misery," in *Suicide: A Christian Response*, ed. by Timothy J. Demy and Gary P. Stewart (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998) 223-33.

<sup>14</sup>The following information appears in Edward J. Larson and Darrel W. Amundsen, *A Different Death: Euthanasia & the Christian Tradition* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1998) 181-82.

followed in the patient's case. Also, these living will instructions can include the options of either receiving or rejecting life-sustaining treatment and offer a choice regarding artificial nutrition and hydration. If a person does not have an advanced treatment directive, the decision-making authority passes to the closest relative—spouse, adult children, parents, and adult siblings, in that order. When no such relative is available, then an adult who has exhibited special care and concern for the patient is to be the designated decision maker. Life-sustaining treatment is no longer automatically provided as previously; medical providers must now make each treatment decision in accordance with the direction of a surrogate who decides in accordance with the patient's instruction and wishes to the extent known to the surrogate or, when not known, in accordance with the surrogate's determination of the patient's best interest.

**Euthanasia in the Netherlands.** Although the penal code of the Netherlands outlaws euthanasia, a series of decisions by various Dutch courts recognized by the Dutch parliament has led to government-sanctioned euthanasia in the Netherlands. In 1973 a lower court ruling in Holland fashioned a general exception to the penal code concerning euthanasia. Since then the practice of euthanasia has rapidly spread across the country. To demonstrate the growth of euthanasia in Holland, Edward J. Larson and Darrel W. Amundsen cite the following data.

To ascertain more accurate figures, the Dutch government commissioned a survey of deaths for the year 1990. This official survey found that out of 129,000 deaths during the year, 2,300 were requested euthanasia, 400 were physician assisted suicide, and 1,000 were euthanasia without explicit request. Another 1,350 deaths were from pain medication administered with the explicit purpose of ending the patient's life, 450 of which occurred without explicit request. Combining these figures produces a total of about 5,000 cases, or nearly 4% of all deaths in the Netherlands that year. An official task force replicated the study from 1995, finding that the total had jumped by 27% in 5 years to nearly 6,400 cases, which represented nearly 5% of all deaths. Even these figures may understate the total, with some estimates running as high as 20,000 per year, or nearly 1 out of 7 deaths.<sup>15</sup>

In 1993 the Dutch parliament approved guidelines for doctors to report assisted deaths to the coroner, thereby officially recognizing the practice of euthanasia in Holland. The Dutch courts are favorable to physicians who practice euthanasia so long as they meet the following guidelines: "1) The patient must be terminally ill, suffering unbearably and must request it; 2) it must be a case in which no other treatment is possible; 3) the patient must consider the decision at length; and 4) only a physician in consultation with another physician can perform the

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 234-35.

act.”<sup>16</sup> Yet, even with these formal euthanasia guidelines, in some cases Dutch physicians intervene beyond the guidelines to hasten death.<sup>17</sup>

**The Oregon Physician-assisted Suicide Initiative.** In 1994 the voters of Oregon approved a ballot measure allowing physician-assisted suicide by a majority of 51% of the vote. Because of legal challenges, the proposition’s provisions did not go into effect immediately. In 1997 state legislators sent the measure back to the voters without change. By a 3-2 margin the voters of Oregon retained their physician-assisted suicide law. By means of this vote, the state of Oregon became the first jurisdiction in the Western world in over 1,500 years to enact a valid statute authorizing a form of euthanasia.<sup>18</sup> Some of the key stipulations of the Oregon law are as follows: (1) the patient must be a resident of Oregon; (2) the patient has to be diagnosed as suffering from a terminal disease as determined by two physicians; (3) the patient must make a written request for medication for the purpose of ending his or her life; (4) there must be a waiting period of at least 15 days from the written request to the actual prescription of the lethal drugs; (5) a physician must write the prescription for the lethal dosage of drugs to be used; and (6) the patient must both voluntarily request and take the drugs so as to precipitate his own death.<sup>19</sup>

**U.S. Supreme Court Ruling Upholding Bans of Physician-assisted Suicide.** On June 26, 1997, the United States Supreme Court handed down its unanimous decision that bans of assisted suicide enacted by the states of Washington and New York do not violate the 14th Amendment. Demy and Stewart have summarized the decision of the Supreme Court in this way:

While the opinions were unanimous, there were in both cases concurring opinions that reflected varying views of assisted suicide in certain circumstances that suggested that the decision is a tentative first step rather than a definitive final ruling on the issue. In his opinion in *Washington v. Glucksberg*, Chief Justice Rehnquist concluded by stating that, “throughout the nation Americans are engaged in an earnest and profound debate about the morality, legality, and practicality of physician-assisted suicide. Our holding permits this debate to continue, as it should in a democratic society.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>John S. Feinberg and Paul D. Feinberg, *Ethics for a Brave New World* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 1993) 101. The chapter on euthanasia in this volume has been republished as John S. Feinberg, “Euthanasia: An Overview,” in *Suicide: A Christian Response*, ed. by Timothy J. Demy and Gary P. Stewart (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998) 149. Further references will be noted from the latter source.

<sup>17</sup>Larson and Amundsen (*A Different Death: Euthanasia & the Christian Tradition* 234-35) note 1,000 cases of euthanasia in 1990 without explicit request, which is contrary to the formal guidelines.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, 199-202.

<sup>19</sup>The full text of “The Oregon Death with Dignity Act” is found in Humphry and Clement, *Freedom to Die: People, Politics, and the Right-To-Die Movement* 349-56.

<sup>20</sup>Demy and Stewart, *Suicide: A Christian Response* 488.

Thus a great change in the attitude of the American public toward the issue of euthanasia has occurred in the past half century. As the twenty-first century begins, limited forms of euthanasia are being practiced throughout the United States.<sup>21</sup> These practices range from voluntary, passive euthanasia which is legally sanctioned throughout most of the country, physician-assisted suicide in the state of Oregon, and voluntary, active euthanasia implicitly accepted through the lack of conviction of those doctors who are willing to be involved in it. This is the social, legal, and moral condition of the society in which the Christian now finds himself living and ministering.

### THE VOCABULARY OF EUTHANASIA

“Discussions of euthanasia are often unproductive because of confusion over definitions.”<sup>22</sup> As one reads the contemporary literature on euthanasia by both advocates and opponents of the practice, he is struck by the fact that the same terms are used with different meanings by differing authors. For instance, the term *euthanasia* has been defined both as “the process by which people’s deaths are intentionally brought about by themselves or others”<sup>23</sup> and as “one person, motivated by compassion, intentionally . . . killing another in order to end that person’s suffering.”<sup>24</sup> Though the first of these definitions includes the act of suicide, the second definition does not. Authors who use the first definition will include physician-assisted suicide as a form of euthanasia, but those who employ the second definition will consistently speak of “physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia.”<sup>25</sup> Consequently, the reader must understand how the different terms relating to euthanasia are defined for the purpose of this article. The following are the adopted definitions in this discussion.

#### Euthanasia

The term *euthanasia* comes from two Greek words, “good” (εὖ, *eu*) and “death” (θάνατος, *thanatos*), and literally means “good death.” In its original context, the term refers to the process by which a person eases into death without unnecessary pain and suffering. The focus is on the manner of dying, and implies that a person meets death with peace of mind and minimal mental and physical

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<sup>21</sup>Dolan (“Homicidal Medicine” 238-44) estimates that between 230,000 and 460,000 deaths by euthanasia in the United States occurred in 1994.

<sup>22</sup>Gary P. Stewart, et al., *Basic Questions on Suicide and Euthanasia: Are They Ever Right?* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998) 23.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 22.

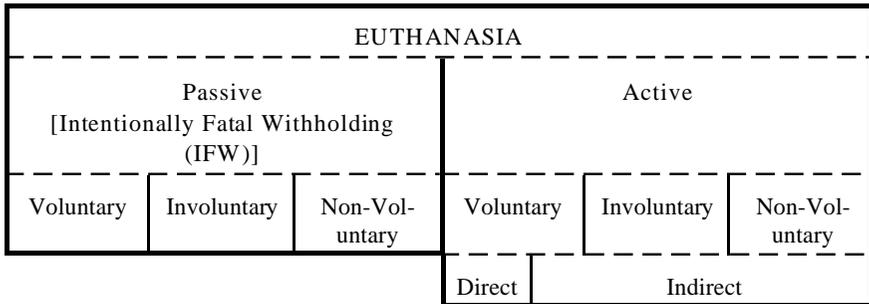
<sup>24</sup>Robert D. Orr, “The Physician-Assisted Suicide: Is It Ever Justified?” in *Suicide: A Christian Response*, ed. by Timothy J. Demy and Gary P. Stewart (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998) 62.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 65.

pain.<sup>26</sup>

However, the term *euthanasia* assumed a different connotation when used by British intellectual historian W. E. H. Lecky in 1869. Lecky used the term “to signify the act or practice of taking the life of a person who is hopelessly ill and doing so for reasons of mercy.”<sup>27</sup> This understanding of the term has continued in contemporary usage. As noted above, some writers continue to use the term exclusively for a killing instigated by a second party. For others, the term has come to stand for a wider variety of practices. This article uses the term *euthanasia* in this latter, broad sense, resulting in the following definition: “Euthanasia is any act or deliberate omission undertaken by oneself and/or others with the specific intention of causing the death of a person and actually causing that death, where the agent(s) acts or deliberately forbears from action on the basis of a conviction that the death being caused will be good for the person who is being killed.” Based on this understanding, there are various types of euthanasia as illustrated in Chart 1.<sup>28</sup>

CHART 1



**Active/Passive Euthanasia.** “These terms focus on the kind of action taken to bring about death.”<sup>29</sup> *Active euthanasia* is “the effort of a person to cause his or her own death or the death of another. . . . The medical cause of death is not disease or injury but the fatal action taken.”<sup>30</sup> By contrast *passive euthanasia* is the withholding, withdrawal, or refusal of treatment to sustain life. More precisely,

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<sup>26</sup>Edwin R. Dubose, “Historical Perspectives: Physician Aid-In-Dying (Active Voluntary Euthanasia ),” in *Doctor-Assisted Suicide and the Euthanasia Movement*, ed. by Gary E. McCuen (Hudson, Wis.: GEM, 1999) 9.

<sup>27</sup>Robert N. Wennberg, *Terminal Choices: Euthanasia, Suicide, and the Right to Die* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989) 3-4.

<sup>28</sup>Chart 1 is adapted from Stewart, et al., *Basic Questions on Suicide and Euthanasia: Are They Ever Right?* 26.

<sup>29</sup>Feinberg, “Euthanasia: An Overview” 152.

<sup>30</sup>Stewart, et al., *Basic Questions on Suicide and Euthanasia: Are They Ever Right?* 23.

Passive euthanasia intends death by withholding (including withdrawing or refusing) available medical treatment or other care that *clearly* could enable a person to live *significantly* longer. Death is intended but not medically caused by the person performing passive euthanasia. Another expression for this practice is “intentionally fatal withholding.” Using this expression can be helpful, since it is more explicit about what is in view than is the term *passive euthanasia*. It is important not to confuse intentionally fatal withholding—which is always morally problematic—with legitimately withholding useless treatment, e.g. when death is imminent even with treatment.<sup>31</sup>

**Voluntary/Involuntary/Non-Voluntary Euthanasia.** This distinction focuses on whether or not the patient requests death. *Voluntary euthanasia* occurs when a patient requests death (actively or passively) or grants permission to be put to death, and his desire is honored. *Involuntary euthanasia* occurs when a patient explicitly refuses death, but his request is not honored. Finally, *nonvoluntary euthanasia* occurs when a patient is put to death when the patient’s wishes are unknown, either because those wishes are unobtainable or no action is taken to obtain them.<sup>32</sup>

**Direct/Indirect Euthanasia.** These terms denote the role played by the person who dies when his life is taken. In *direct euthanasia* the individual himself carries out the decision to die. In *indirect euthanasia* someone else carries out the decision to die.<sup>33</sup> Chart 2 gives illustrations of the different kinds of euthanasia.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 24. There is a great debate among evangelical writers as to whether the term *passive euthanasia* should be employed because the proponents of *active euthanasia* argue that there is no ethical difference between the two. Orr (“The Physician-Assisted Suicide: Is It Ever Right?” 63) defines *passive euthanasia* as “situations where life-sustaining treatments are withheld or withdrawn from a terminally ill patient, with the expectation that this omission will allow the person to die naturally.” On the basis of this definition, Orr concludes, “Thus, *passive* euthanasia is not a necessary or helpful term.” However, Wennberg (*Terminal Choices: Euthanasia, Suicide and the Right to Die* 108-56) has an excellent chapter entitled “Passive Euthanasia and the Refusal of Life-Extending Treatment.” Wennberg argues that withdrawal of treatment from terminal patients is not passive euthanasia because it is not a form of passive suicide. Passive suicide, and thus a form of passive euthanasia, is when a patient (a) intentionally ends his life (b) by a medical omission (c) when death is not imminent and (d) when it is done to relieve himself of suffering. Wennberg’s explanation provides the basis for the definition of *passive euthanasia* given above.

<sup>32</sup>Wennberg, *Terminal Choices* 25.

<sup>33</sup>Feinberg, “Euthanasia: An Overview” 152.

<sup>34</sup>Chart 2 is adapted from Frank Harron, John Burnside, and Tim Beauchamp, *Health and Human Values: A Guide to Making Your Own Decisions* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University, 1983) 45.

Chart 2

	Voluntary	Involuntary	Non-Voluntary
P A S S I V E	Mr. A is unconscious from a medical condition that is treatable, but if untreated, will lead to death. Dr. B recommends treatment for Mr. A.		
	Mr. A refuses treatment (via AMD)	Mr. A requests treatment (via AMD)	Mr. A's desire concerning treatment is unknown
	Dr. B does not treat Mr. A. Mr. A dies from the non-treated medical condition.		
A C T I V E	Mr. A has an incurable medical condition.		
	Mr. A requests a lethal drug.	Mr. A requests non-lethal pain killers.	Mr. A's desires are unknown.
	Mr. A ingests lethal drugs [direct], or Dr. B administers lethal drugs [indirect].	Dr. B administers lethal drugs [indirect].	Dr. B administers lethal drugs [indirect].
	Mr. A dies from the lethal drugs.		

**Related Terminology**<sup>35</sup>

The contemporary debate over euthanasia has produced many technical terms, some of which are described in what follows. In the legal realm, the principle of *patient autonomy* is the viewpoint that declares that since a person is a self-determining agent, he should be able to make his own evaluations and choices based on his own self-interest when it comes to medical decisions. Therefore, in any medical procedure, there must be *informed consent*, the stipulation that a patient understands treatment options and chooses the course of treatment or withholding of treatment in his personal situation. Since the patient is viewed legally as his own medical decision-maker, he is allowed to put in writing *advanced medical directives* (AMD) in which he declares his preference for medical treatment, in the possible case that future ability to communicate will be impaired. Two such legal documents are the *living will*, in which a person indicates his wishes regarding treatment in order to guide medical personnel in a situation where he is unable to choose treatment, and the *durable power of attorney*, by which a patient designates another to make decisions on his behalf should he become physically or mentally unable to

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<sup>35</sup>This section incorporates definitions found in David K. Clark and Robert V. Rakestraw, eds., *Readings in Christian Values*, vol. 2, "Issues and Applications" (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994) 133-34.

do so. If no advanced medical documents exist or are not known, there can be *substituted judgment*, a legal declaration by the courts authorizing a person to make treatment decisions for an incapacitated patient. The courts have also recognized a patient's *right-to-die*, a patient's right to refuse unwanted life-sustaining treatment or forcing doctors to drop such treatment if already administered. Advocates of euthanasia seek to expand this "right" to the point where a patient can determine when, where, and how he will die.

In the medical arena, the principle of *beneficence* asserts that doctors are obligated to do good for their patients, while the principle of *nonmaleficence* obligates doctors to avoid harming their patients.<sup>36</sup> Doing good for the patient means that when medical technologies can no longer prevent death, the doctor withholds or withdraws all life-prolonging and life-sustaining technologies as an intentional act to enhance the well-being of the terminally ill patient by avoiding useless prolonging of the dying process; but unlike passive euthanasia, the act of *letting die* does not intend or choose death. When no medical cures exist, the patient is given *palliative care*, medical treatment which is applied to ease the discomfort and symptoms of a terminal illness. Many terminal patients receive *hospice*, a special kind of care designed to provide treatment and support for terminally ill patients, which includes pain management, social interaction, and spiritual care.

Ultimately, in order to apply biblical principles to the euthanasia issue, it is essential to define precisely the reality of euthanasia. Active or passive, involuntary or nonvoluntary, indirect euthanasia is homicide, the killing of one human being by another. As Mark Blocher has pointedly stated,

To use the word *killing* is technically correct since both action and neglect in particular contexts result in a death that is intended. Euthanasia is allegedly killing for merciful reasons, for reasons of compassion. . . . The absence of malice associated with the acts of euthanasia tends to soften our reaction to it. We are less inclined to label these acts "killing." Yet they are.<sup>37</sup>

Further, active, voluntary, direct euthanasia is a form of *suicide*, the voluntary and intentional killing of oneself. It is vital that "physician-assisted suicide" be clearly recognized for what it is, a form of "suicide." Finally, active, voluntary, indirect euthanasia is a form of both suicide and homicide, suicide on the part of the patient who desires death and homicide on the part of the agent who brings that desire for death to reality through his act of killing.

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<sup>36</sup>The principles of beneficence and nonmaleficence reflect the words of the Hippocratic Oath: "I will use treatment to help the sick according to my ability and judgment, but I will never use it to injure or wrong them." For the words of the Hippocratic Oath, see Cameron, *The New Medicine: Life and Death after Hippocrates* 24-25.

<sup>37</sup>Blocher, *The Right to Die? Caring Alternatives to Euthanasia* 77.

## APPLICABLE BIBLICAL INSTRUCTION

Many fine evangelical works present the arguments for and against euthanasia.<sup>38</sup> The arguments set forth are logical, ethical, historical, social, legal, and medical, in addition to being biblical. However, both the writer and the vast majority of the readers of this present article are committed to the truth that the Bible is the Word of God, and as such, should direct Christian thinking and actions concerning all the questions of life, including euthanasia (2 Tim 3:16-17). Ultimately, the conclusions reached concerning euthanasia must come from and be in accordance with the Scripture. What follows will analyze the biblical passages pertinent to the issue of euthanasia.

### Homicide Is Explicitly Condemned in the Bible

The sixth commandment in the Decalogue is an emphatic negative prohibition, “You shall not kill” (Exod 20:13; Deut 5:17 [personal translation]). The Hebrew root “kill” (רָצַח, *rāṣaḥ*) occurs 38 times in the OT. It is first used in Exod 20:13. Significantly, the root occurs twenty times in Numbers 35 (vv. 6, 11, 12, 16 [2], 17 [2], 18 [2], 19, 21[2], 25, 26, 27 [2], 28, 30 [2], 31). The usage of the term in this chapter gives insight into the meaning of the prohibition in Exod 20:13.

The context of Numbers 35 is the commandment of the Lord through Moses to the sons of Israel that when they came into the land of Canaan, they were to set aside 48 cities for the possession of the Levites (vv. 1-8). From these cities of the Levites, six were to be set aside as “cities of refuge”<sup>39</sup> (v. 6). These cities of refuge were to function as sanctuaries for anyone who killed another person until their crime could be evaluated and their punishment determined. The LORD then gave instruction through Moses to the sons of Israel concerning the basis for their judgment of the killer, the required punishment, and the reason for this ordinance (vv. 9-34). Two observations concerning the use of *rāṣaḥ* are significant. First, 18 times the term occurs in its participial form to refer both to “the manslayer” (vv. 11, 26, 27, 28) and to “the murderer” (vv. 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 30, 31). The distinction between the two types of killers is based upon their motivation; the “manslayer” killed unintentionally (what is referred to in English as “manslaughter”), and the “murderer” killed intentionally (what is referred to in English as “murder”) (v. 11). The criteria by which intentionality could be determined were (1) the weapon used, (2) the enmity of the killer toward his victim, and (3) premeditation (vv. 16-24). The punishment for the killer judged guilty of murder was death by the hand of “the blood avenger,” while the killer guilty of manslaughter was that he remain in his city of refuge until the death of the high priest. Second, *rāṣaḥ* occurs twice in its verbal form (vv. 27,

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<sup>38</sup>For example, see the discussions in Feinberg, “Euthanasia: An Overview” 153-68, and Rae, *Moral Choices: An Introduction to Ethics* 165-80.

<sup>39</sup>All Scripture quotations are taken from the New American Standard Bible unless otherwise indicated.

30). In both cases it refers to acts of killing permitted by the LORD that carry no guilt or punishment. Thus, some acts of killing are outside the boundaries of the prohibition of the sixth commandment. Gordon J. Wenham summarizes the significance of this ordinance:

This law reaffirms in judicial fashion the sanctity of human life (cf. Gen. 9:5-6; Ex. 20:13). The commandment simply says 'Thou shall not kill.' The Hebrew 'kill' is used in this law both of murder and manslaughter (16, 25). Both incur blood guilt and pollute the land, and both require atonement: murder by the execution of the murderer and manslaughter through the natural demise of the high priest.<sup>40</sup>

The implications of the two observations stated above are twofold. First, the Israelite was aware that even accidental death is an affront to God. Even though the penalty for unintentional killing was less severe than for intentional killing, the loss of contact for a period of time from one's land, community, and, possibly, family was a serious loss. Even more devastating to the sincere Israelite worshiper of the LORD would be his inability to accompany his fellow-servants of the LORD as they went to worship Him at the central sanctuary at the three great annual feasts (see Deut 16:1-17). Thus, the Israelite was conscious of the fact that he was to do everything humanly possible not to cause the death of another person. An example of this commitment to avoid even an accidental death is evident in the law recorded in Deuteronomy 22:8: "When you build a new house, you shall make a parapet for your roof, that you may not bring blood-guilt on your house if anyone falls from it." The OT believer knew human life is a gift from God (Gen 2:7), and he was to preserve it to the best of his ability. He certainly sought not to be a participant in the destruction of life.

Second, the Israelite was aware that there were certain killings allowed by God (Num 35:27, 30). The manslayer who did not obey the LORD by staying in the city of refuge and the murderer were under the judicial judgment of God and could be put to death without violating the sixth commandment. By expansion, all the crimes of the OT that the LORD said were punishable by death were allowable killings.<sup>41</sup> Further, the LORD also commanded Israel to kill their enemies in battle when He directed them to go to war (Deut 7:2; 20:17). By implication, when invasions took place, warfare that was defensive in nature, with the resulting killing, was also allowed by God (Gen 14:2; Judg 11:4-6; 1 Sam 17:1; 2 Kgs 6:8).

Therefore, W. R. Domeris well states the conclusion concerning the meaning of the sixth commandment:

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<sup>40</sup>Gordon J. Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, The Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, ed. D. J. Wiseman (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1981) 238.

<sup>41</sup>Sixteen crimes that incurred the death penalty in the OT with supporting Scripture, are listed in John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible* (Nashville: Word, 1997) 270.

In the wider context of the OT, the prohibition may be defined more narrowly as the taking of life outside of the parameters (as in the case of war or capital punishment), laid down by God. Human life, even more than other forms of life, has unique value in the sight of God. . . . To take a life, outside of the parameters set by God, therefore, requires some sort of restitution.<sup>42</sup>

Furthermore, the NT quotes the sixth commandment extensively (Matt 19:18; Mark 10:19; Luke 18:20; Rom 13:9; Jas 2:11). Thus, the NT believer in Christ is under obligation to obey the commandment, “You shall not kill (outside the parameters allowed by God).” Significantly, Paul in Rom 13:8-10 states that obedience to the commandments, including the sixth, is how a Christian shows love to his neighbor. Christian love is not expressed by taking life, but in preserving life.

The question arises concerning the application of this biblical teaching from the sixth commandment to the modern euthanasia debate. In a seminal article wrestling with this question, Millard J. Erickson and Ines E. Bowers state,

We must therefore press further the question of whether euthanasia should be classified as murder. The elements in the Biblical concept of murder seem to be:

1. It is intentional.
2. It is premeditated.
3. It is malicious.
4. It is contrary to the desire or intention of the victim.
5. It is against someone who has done nothing deserving of capital punishment.<sup>43</sup>

However, they reason that euthanasia would not be characterized by maliciousness; the person believes he is doing an act of mercy that will be good for the other person. They conclude, “Hence it appears that the attempt to evaluate euthanasia simply by appealing to the teaching regarding murder fails. Guidance in this matter must be found elsewhere.”<sup>44</sup> However, as was shown above, the prohibition in the sixth commandment encompasses accidental death, a killing that does not have malicious intent. Therefore, euthanasia is prohibited by the sixth commandment. The Christian cannot be the agent in taking another person’s life. The Bible explicitly condemns homicide, malicious or not, except in capital punishment and war.

### **Suicide Is Implicitly Condemned in the Bible**

Suicide, the act of self-killing, is never directly addressed in the Scripture. Though examples of suicide are recorded in the Bible, the OT legal texts neither directly condemn nor condone the act. It is important to note that a single word for

<sup>42</sup>W. R. Dörmers, “רצח,” *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* [NIDOTTE], ed. by Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997) 3:1189.

<sup>43</sup>Millard J. Erickson and Ines E. Bowers, “Euthanasia and Christian Ethics,” *JETS* 19:1 (1976):17.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

suicide does not exist in Hebrew or Greek, making it impossible for the Bible to say directly, “You shall not commit suicide.” The term “suicide” is a creation of the English language. Robert N. Wennberg explains,

Interestingly, however, the term “suicide” was introduced into the English language in 1651 by Walter Charleton in order to make available a more neutral and less judgmental term for acts of self-killing which until then had been described as “destroying oneself,” “murdering oneself,” and “slaughtering oneself”—all phrases that convey firm disapproval. Charleton made his contribution to the English language with this sentence: “To vindicate one’s self from extreme and otherwise inevitable calamity by *sui-cide* is not (certainly) a crime.” This hyphenated word did not exist in the Latin but was an invention achieved by linking two Latin words, “sui” (self) and “cide” (kill).<sup>45</sup>

However, even though the exact term “suicide” does not occur in the Bible, the condemnation of “self-killing” is usually inferred from the sixth commandment. If to shorten the life of another through killing—except in war or for capital crimes—is wrong, to kill oneself is also wrong. Self-killing is a form of killing, and killing is prohibited.<sup>46</sup>

But today, this understanding of suicide as a biblically prohibited killing has come under intense attack. One of the leading spokesmen for this new assessment of suicide is Arthur J. Droge who has summarized his arguments in an article printed in the influential *Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Droge introduces his article with these words:

The idea that suicide is both a sin and a crime is a relatively late Christian invention, taking its impetus from Augustine’s polemics against the “suicidal mania” of the Donatists in the late 4<sup>th</sup> and early 5<sup>th</sup> centuries and acquiring the status of canon law in a series of three church councils of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries. In other words, the act of taking one’s own life, which had been accepted, admired, and even sought after as a means of attaining immediate salvation by Greeks and Romans, Jews and Christians throughout antiquity, now became the focus of intense Christian opposition.<sup>47</sup>

Droge advances three biblical arguments in support of his assertion that Scripture permits some suicides.

<sup>45</sup>Wennberg, *Terminal Choices: Euthanasia, Suicide, and the Right to Die* 17-18.

<sup>46</sup>Eugene H. Merrill (“Suicide and the Concept of Death in the Old Testament,” in *Suicide: A Christian Response*, ed. by Timothy J. Demy and Gary P. Stewart [Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998] 323) states, “Yet suicide is the taking of a human life, and so it clearly falls at least under the rubic of manslaughter.”

<sup>47</sup>Arthur J. Droge, “Suicide,” *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. by David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992) 6:225. Droge’s assertion that the prohibition of suicide is a late Christian invention is refuted by Larson and Amundsen, *A Different Death: Euthanasia & the Christian Tradition* 103-15. They show that “although suicide is a topic that excited little comment in Christian literature before Augustine, twelve church fathers condemned the act at least in passing” (103).

First, five cases of suicide appear in the OT: (1) Abimelech (Judg 9:54); (2) and (3) Saul and Saul's armor bearer (1 Sam 31:4-5; cf. 1 Chron 10:4-5); (4) Ahithophel (2 Sam 17:23); and (5) Zimri (1 Kgs 16:18).<sup>48</sup> The biblical narrator simply reports each of these self-killings with no statement of either commendation or condemnation. Droge concludes, "The important point is that none of these biblical figures receives censure: indeed, their suicides are scarcely commented on, leading one to conclude that in ancient Israel the act of suicide was regarded as something natural and heroic."<sup>49</sup> However, his conclusion does not follow from his own point: if no evaluation of the suicide is given by the biblical author, how can a positive evaluation be the assured conclusion of the biblical commentator. It is true that OT narrative usually records events with no evaluation. The biblical reader must consider the whole presentation made in order to draw proper conclusions. For example, Saul is presented as a king who was disobedient to the LORD (1 Sam 13:13-14; 15:1-31; 28:3-19); Saul's death was a judgment from the LORD for his disobedience (1 Chron 10:13-14). Saul's suicide was the pathetic act of a rebel against God, not the heroic final act of a faithful servant of the LORD.<sup>50</sup>

The NT records one clear case of suicide, the death of Judas (Matt 27:5; Acts 1:18). Droge states, "It too is recorded without comment, although it is implied that Judas's act of self-destruction was a result of his remorse and repentance, and not an additional crime."<sup>51</sup> While it is true that Judas felt remorse (Matt 27:3), the biblical text contains no statement concerning his repentance. Like Saul in the OT, Judas's suicide was the culmination of a spiritual rebellion that led him to betray Jesus into the hands of His enemies (Matt 26:14-16). Judas's self-destruction was a result of his decision to reject Christ's offer of love and spiritual security (John 13:26). The suicide of Judas was not the result of repentance, but happened because of his lack of repentance. Thus, the six biblical reports of suicide do not convey a sense of acceptance and moral approval; rather, the overall context demonstrates an atmosphere of spiritual disobedience.

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<sup>48</sup>Merrill ("Suicide and the Concept of Death in the Old Testament" 323) points out, "The OT is, among other things, a record of war, bloodshed, murder, and mayhem. Yet, and perhaps amazingly, there are only a handful of instances of suicide, all in narrative texts. Undoubtedly a general reverence for life, fear of death and its aftermath, and the self-evident inability to repent of suicide may be contributing factors in the apparently low incidence of suicide."

<sup>49</sup>Droge, "Suicide" 6:228.

<sup>50</sup>Robert D. Bergen (*1, 2 Samuel*, vol. 7 in *The New American Commentary*, ed. E. Ray Clendenen [Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1996] 282) observes, "Though the Bible does not explicitly prohibit such actions, each portrayal of this practice is replete with tragic overtones. The Bible seems to suggest that suicide or assisted-suicide is a desperate act by a deeply troubled individual. None of the individuals who resorted to this action is portrayed as a role model for the pious." For a further treatment of the suicide accounts in biblical narrative, see Dónal P. O'Mathúna, "But the Bible Doesn't Say They Were Wrong to Commit Suicide, Does It?" in *Suicide: A Christian Response*, ed. by Timothy J. Demy and Gary P. Stewart (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998) 349-66.

<sup>51</sup>Droge, "Suicide" 6:228.

Second, Droge raises the possibility that Jesus' own death could be understood as a form of suicide. He asks the question, "How else are we to make sense of the provocative statement of the Johannine Jesus: 'No one takes my life; I lay it down of my own free will' (John 10:18)?"<sup>52</sup> The answer to Droge's question is found in the deity of Jesus. As the one who has life in Himself (John 1:4; 5:26), no man could take life from Jesus unless He voluntarily surrendered it. But the Bible makes clear that Jesus was put to death at the hands of violent men (Acts 2:23; 3:14-15). Jesus was killed by others; He did not kill Himself.

Third, Droge alleges that Paul contemplated suicide according to his words in Phil 1:21-26. He argues,

Furthermore, full weight must be given to Paul's statement about life and death: "which *I shall choose* I cannot tell" (1:22). In other words, the question of life or death is a matter of Paul's *own* volition, not a fate to be imposed on him by others. If it is a matter of Paul's own choosing, then it seems clear that his internal struggle concerns the possibility of suicide. . . . While the option of death was considered and, indeed, personally desirable, it was ultimately rejected because it contravened his understanding of the *present* will of God, namely, that Paul continue his earthly mission. It is not the case, however, that Paul rejected suicide *per se*, only that it was not *yet* the appropriate time for such an act.<sup>53</sup>

However, the choice mentioned in Phil 1:22 is between the "gain" of death (1:21) and the "fruitful labor" of life (1:22), not between death and life *per se*. Between these two beneficial choices, Paul is hard pressed in knowing which to prefer. But the choice in this case is not his to make. The Lord through his execution or release will make known to Paul what His will is.<sup>54</sup> Paul's reflections here show his heart to the Philippian church, a heart that is willing equally to live or to die. What they do not show is a man contemplating suicide.<sup>55</sup>

Therefore, the Bible does not condone suicide. The sixth commandment includes the act of self-killing. Any act of voluntary passive or active euthanasia is an act of disobedience against God because suicide is implicitly condemned in the

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<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., 6:228-29.

<sup>54</sup>Gordon D. Fee (*Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, NICNT, ed. by Gordon D. Fee [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995] 147) answers, "*Contra* A. J. Droge . . . who argues that to take 1:22 seriously must allow that Paul was contemplating suicide. But that seems methodologically in reverse, since the rest of passage, and the letter as a whole, hardly allows such a view. This fails to take seriously Paul's understanding of apostleship—and of discipleship in general—in which one's longing to know Christ includes 'participation in his sufferings' because of one's certainty of the resurrection."

<sup>55</sup>See further, Dónal P. O'Mathúna, "Did Paul Condone Suicide? Implications for Assisted Suicide and Active Euthanasia," in *Suicide: A Christian Response* 387-97.

Bible.<sup>56</sup> Thus, for those who build their ethical standards and behavior on the Scripture, any act of euthanasia is to be rejected as direct disobedience to the Word of God.

## **BIBLICAL GUIDELINES APPLICABLE TO END-OF-LIFE ISSUES**

The Bible clearly asserts that God has sovereign control over life and death (Deut 32:39; 1 Sam 2:6; Pss 31:15; 139:16). As the master over death, the Lord declares, "It is appointed for men to die once . . ." (Heb 9:27). Until the return of the Lord, each person must experience death. Death for the Christian is the gateway into the presence of Christ (2 Cor 5:8; Phil 1:21); but for the non-Christian it is the entrance into Hades and ultimately the second death (Rev 20:13-15). The Bible gives truth about death that provides guidance for end-of-life decisions.

### **Biblical Guidelines for Death**

First, death is inevitable (Eccl 3:2). Therefore, each person should make preparations for death. With the present legal climate, it is imperative that each believer have an advanced medical directive.<sup>57</sup> A durable power of attorney is better than a living will.<sup>58</sup> The surrogate chosen should have the same Christian perspective as the believer.

Second, death is an enemy (1 Cor 15:26). Therefore, when the hope of recovery through medical treatment remains a possibility, the believer should take advantage of every opportunity to forestall death so that he can continue to serve the Lord.

Third, dying is a process (Heb 11:21, 22). Therefore, when it is reasonably certain that a patient's disease is incurable and terminal, measures designed to control physical pain, to provide food and water, to give regular hygienic care, and to ensure personal interaction and mental/spiritual stimulation should be instituted. "Letting die" is not to be equated with "passive euthanasia."<sup>59</sup>

<sup>56</sup>Erickson and Bowers ("Euthanasia and Christian Ethics" 17-24) argue that one cannot prove that voluntary active euthanasia is an instance of suicide (they make a distinction between suicide, euthanasia, and martyrdom), and one cannot demonstrate the wrongness of suicide. Rather, they object to euthanasia on the basis of six broad principles: (1) the sanctity of life, (2) the finality of euthanasia, (3) the spiritual benefit of suffering, (4) the possibility of recovery, (5) the danger of euthanasia being abused as under Hitler, and (6) the alternative of pain management instead of euthanasia.

<sup>57</sup>An excellent explanation of living wills and durable powers of attorney is found in Beth Spring and Ed Larson, *Euthanasia: Spiritual, Medical & Legal Issues in Terminal Health Care* (Portland, Ore.: Multnomah, 1988) 137-71.

<sup>58</sup>John Frame (*Medical Ethics: Principles, Persons, and Problems* [Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1988] 72) declares, "The durable power of attorney also has legal advantages over the living will. A living person is more flexible, more responsive to circumstances, than is a paper document. He can interpret his own words, while a document must be interpreted by others."

<sup>59</sup>See note 31 above.

Fourth, suffering is a part of present earthly life and death (Rom 8:18; 2 Cor 4:17-18; 1 Pet 5:9-10). Therefore, the Christian will patiently endure any pain, especially at the end of life. Pain will not become the reason to commit the unbiblical act of euthanasia.<sup>60</sup>

### **Biblical Guidelines for Dealing with Euthanasia**

The Christian finds himself in a society that is quickly succumbing to the allure of euthanasia. There is a growing demand for the legalization and greater practice of euthanasia. Mark Blocher gives some insightful words concerning the response:

In fact, focusing all our effort on the debate whether or not we should legalize the practice misses the most important issue, how to improve care for dying individuals. . . . My concern is that too much of our effort will be invested in public policy and courtroom litigation, leaving us with little time, energy, and financial resources to improve care for the dying. If we can effectively resist the efforts to plunge society into the darkness of state-sanctioned medical killing, . . . it will be because we have shown that there is no disgrace in human mortality, that human dignity can be cared for and respected in the midst of life's worst experiences.<sup>61</sup>

Therefore, first, it is imperative that we show compassion to the dying. The advocates of euthanasia assert that they wish to show mercy by killing those in pain or by allowing them to kill themselves. But this supposed expression of mercy defies the instruction of the God of all mercies (Ps 119:156)! Instead of mercy killing, Christians need to exhibit mercy living as we pray for, visit, and care for the dying among us. Second, to die well, believers must trust God. It is not euthanasia that is the good death! Rather, it is the Christian who maintains his faith strong in the Lord even unto death and leaves this life with joy who truly dies well.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>An excellent discussion of end-of-life issues is found in Gary P. Stewart, et al., *Basic Questions on End of Life Decisions: How Do We Know What is Right?* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998).

<sup>61</sup>Blocher, *The Right to Die? Caring Alternatives to Euthanasia* 13.

<sup>62</sup>The reader who would like to stay abreast of the latest evangelical information concerning euthanasia should contact: The Center for Bioethics and Human Dignity, 2065 Half Day Road, Bannockburn, IL 60015. Phone (847) 317-8180. Fax (847) 317-8153. Email: <cbhd@banninst.edu>.

## THE CHRISTIAN AND WAR

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*Answering the question, "Should a Christian be a member of the military?" is the best way to elaborate on "The Christian and War." On the positive side, the military emphasizes the importance of moral character for its leaders. On the negative side, the military is a profession in which killing may be a part of one's responsibility. Four possible positions to take regarding this difficult issue are nonresistance, Christian pacificism, just war, and preventive war. Also at stake is the Christian responsibility to submit to governmental authority as indicated in Romans 13:1-7 and 1 Peter 2:13-17. New Testament analogies comparing responsibilities of Christian living with being a good soldier seem to point to the legitimacy of Christians being part of the military endeavor of their country. That plus other factors support a Christian's being involved in military service. Yet the conscience of each Christian must prevail in making this difficult decision about the issue, "Should a Christian be a member of the military?"*

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### Introduction

The issue of war and Christian involvement in military service is so extensive that it is necessary to limit the scope of this study of "The Christian and War." Its literature dates from the earliest years of church history,<sup>1</sup> with a history too vast even to be summarized here. Obviously, biblical exegesis and Scripture rightly interpreted must inform any resolution of the issues. Therefore, at least to look at what the Bible has to say about the topic is imperative. A focus on one basic

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<sup>1</sup>An excellent compendium of key discussions in the past is to be found in Arthur F. Holmes, ed., *War and Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1975). The volume includes declarations of pagan philosophers as well as leaders in Christendom (Plato, Cicero, Athenagoras, Tertullian, Origen, Lactantius, Ambrose, Augustine, Bernard of Clairvaux, Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Erasmus, Menno Simons, Francisco Suarez, Hugo Grotius, John Locke, Immanuel Kant, G. W. F. Hegel, Lyman Abbott, Reinhold Niebuhr, Robert Drinan, and Paul Ramsey). Cf. Roland H. Bainton, *Christian Attitudes Toward War and Peace: A Historical Survey and Critical Re-evaluation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1960). See also Adolf Harnack, *Militia Christi: The Christian Religion and the Military in the First Three Centuries*, trans. by David McInnes Gracie (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), a work first published in German in 1905.

question is the best approach: "Should a Christian be a member of the military?"

Since the question deals with "a Christian," the emphasis should be upon what the NT has to say about the matter. However, the question itself did not originate with the Christian church. Indeed, the issue predates the Christian era. Even in OT times believers faced the problem of involvement in war. Certainly Abraham had given some consideration to the issue prior to commencing armed action against Chedorlaomer's coalition of kings (Genesis 14). He engaged the kings in battle in order to free his nephew Lot and his family.<sup>2</sup> Since both testaments are the inspired Word of God and "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness,"<sup>3</sup> a consideration of the teaching of the whole of Scripture on this issue is in order. "If Christians are to have clear attitudes towards war, they must first come to some understanding of the subject in the Bible, including the Old Testament."<sup>4</sup> However, in order to keep within the length restraints of this article, the study will limit itself to what is revealed in the NT. The OT has much to say about war, but it is not often directly pertinent to the specific question upon which this study will focus.

Military service is a brotherhood of sorts because a fighting unit must be as one if it is to succeed under fire. It is a strange brotherhood since, in the passing of time, even enemies will regard themselves as having a bond forged in the horror of battle. That is why American and Japanese veterans can meet at Corregidor or Iwo Jima and British, American, and German veterans congregate on the beaches of Normandy fifty years after the fact and shed tears together for departed comrades in arms. Such a brotherhood, however, is not the supreme brotherhood that believers enter through the gospel of Christ.

Military service involves keeping faith with a vision for a nation's freedom and greatness. Nothing less than total commitment is required of a soldier. *Semper fi* is more than a motto for the United States Marine Corps, it must be a way of life—and death. Without total commitment, a man or woman cannot serve as a good soldier in any army.

It is the modern military that finds new slogans that emphasize personal development and individual potential. "Be all that you can be" does not focus on

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Robert A. Morey, *When Is It Right to Fight?* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1985) 23-25. In regard to the example of Abraham in Genesis 14, Lot and his family were not descendants of Abraham, therefore the action cannot be legitimized by appealing to the Abrahamic Covenant. Likewise, for those who would point to the uniqueness of Israel's situation in the OT with regard to war, Genesis 14 was prior to Israel's existence.

<sup>3</sup>Second Timothy 3:16—all Scripture quotations are from the NASB unless noted otherwise.

<sup>4</sup>Peter C. Craigie, *The Problem of War in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 16. This volume provides an outstanding study of the issue in the OT in order to encourage a resolution to the problem of Christian involvement in militarism and war.

selfless commitment to one's nation. Such a trend is not unlike the transition experienced in churches that offer a need-based ministry rather than upholding selfless commitment to the Word of God and the cause of Christ.

This push for personal development is associated with a renewed emphasis upon core values and ethics in the military. Every member of the United States Army carries a laminated card entitled "Army Values." On it are the following words:

**Loyalty:** Bear true faith and allegiance to the U.S. Constitution, the Army, your unit, and other soldiers.

**Duty:** Fulfill your obligations.

**Respect:** Treat people as they should be treated.

**Selfless-Service:** Put the welfare of the nation, the Army, and your subordinates before your own.

**Honor:** Live up to all the Army values.

**Integrity:** Do what's right, legally and morally.

**Personal Courage:** Face fear, danger, or adversity (Physical or Moral).<sup>5</sup>

Both of my sons serve in the American military. Nathan is now a major in the Army and Timothy is a captain in the Marine Corps. Both have made it clear that moral character is vital to proper military leadership and that values-training in the current military is something that committed Christian officers are uniquely qualified to teach. General John A. Wickham, a past Army Chief of Staff, wrote about the importance of moral character for military leaders. He noted that "one does not develop character in the heat of battle or a moment of crisis. Character grows out of the steady application of moral values and ethical behavior in one's life."<sup>6</sup> The Christian home and Bible-teaching churches are the best institutions for producing individuals with high moral values and consistent ethical behavior.

If moral character were the only issue, Christians would find military service a simple decision. However, the challenge is far more complicated than that. A number of arguments for a Christian to stay out of the military are as follows:

- The military is a profession in which killing people may be a part of the job description.
- The military can be a very worldly environment in which Christians can face all kinds of temptations. . . .
- Jesus said to love your enemies. . . . In contrast, the military is about hitting the

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<sup>5</sup>Headquarters, Department of the Army, "Army Values," <http://www.hqda.army.mil/ocsa/values.htm> (30 Jan. 2000).

<sup>6</sup>John A. Wickham, Jr., "Leading—A Commentary," *Army Organizational Effectiveness Journal* 1 (1985):6.

enemy before he hits you.<sup>7</sup>

Some of the hard things about being a Christian in the military include:

- Family separation during deployments can make it tough on the family.
- Family separation can be a source of temptation. . . .
- It's hard to be an evangelical witness on the job. . . .
- There is a lot of peer pressure to drink alcohol, curse, and party "on the town" in places of ill repute.
- You have to be politically correct. . . .
- I might have to kill someone someday. . . .<sup>8</sup>

War is violent and terrible. During the American Civil War in 1862, Confederate troops held a low ridge called Marye's Heights near Fredericksburg, Virginia. Union troops sent to assault Marye's Heights had to cross exposed ground. Wave after wave of Union troops charged but were cut down before they could reach the Confederate lines. Over 12,000 were slain. Watching the battle, Gen. Robert E. Lee turned to Gen. James Longstreet, whose men were holding Marye's Heights, "It is well that war is so terrible; else we would grow too fond of it."<sup>9</sup> Any man, woman, or child who has experienced the horrors of war firsthand knows how awful the toll of war can be. That toll is perhaps the strongest argument (outside Scripture itself) for devoting time to an examination of the Christian's involvement in the military.

The violence of military conflict creates a natural tension with the normally peaceful nature of Christian living. One must not forget the significance of non-violence in Christian character and behavior, but must remember the following biblical truths:

1. Non-violence is preferable to violence (cf. Rom 12:17-21).
2. Non-violence is more consistent with Christian morals (cf. Matt 5:9, 38-48; 1 Tim

<sup>7</sup>Nathan Bedford Forrest, a Confederate general, was reminiscing with Gen. John Hunt Morgan about their exploits in Tennessee and Kentucky in the summer of 1862. Morgan wanted to know how Forrest had captured the garrison and stores at Murfreesboro in spite of federal forces filling the surrounding countryside. Forrest replied, "I just took the short cut and got there first with the most men." His answer has been enshrined as "I got there fustest with the mostest." Cf. Clifton Fadiman, ed., *The Little, Brown Book of Anecdotes* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1985) 214. Forrest's statement aptly describes the nature of military engagement and the concept of preemptive strike.

<sup>8</sup>Capt. Timothy Edward Barrick, personal communication, 7 Feb 2000. The downing of Iran Air 655 by the USS Vincennes on July 3, 1988, is an illustration of the final point made by Capt. Barrick. In the midst of a firefight with Iranian gunboats, the Vincennes mistook the civilian airliner for an attacking military aircraft and shot it down with surface-to-air missiles taking the lives of 290 civilians from six nations.

<sup>9</sup>Fadiman, ed., *The Little, Brown Book of Anecdotes* 348.

3:3).

However, the Scriptures themselves do not allow the believer to seek peace at any price (cf. John 2:13-17; Acts 23:1-10; 1 Cor 4:19-21; Gal 2:5-14; Eph 5:11; 2 John 9-11; 3 John 9-10). Granted, the situations to which Scripture passages refer are non-military in nature. However, there is a line to be drawn when standing up to the forces of evil. There are occasions in the course of Christian life when there cannot be peace—when it would be unchristian to compromise or to fail to act unpeaceably toward someone. Sometimes Christians shun confrontation while using Christian love, compassion, and mercy as an excuse. That can result in direct disobedience to Scripture—as in the matter of exercising church discipline against a sinning brother or sister in Christ.

Francis Schaeffer declared that “to refuse to do what I can for those under the power of oppressors is nothing less than a failure of Christian love. It is to refuse to love my neighbor as myself.”<sup>10</sup> He went on to say that was why he was not a pacifist: “Pacifism in this poor world in which we live—this lost world—means that we desert the people who need our greatest help.”<sup>11</sup> Peace at any price is never right, whether it is in the realm of spiritual warfare, church discipline, or government.

Does a posture in defense of truth and morality include military action? Christian apologists have offered four major views in the search of answers to this question.

#### Four Views

**Nonresistance.** The title chosen for this view reflects the words of Matthew 5:39: “Do not resist him who is evil.”<sup>12</sup> However, although physical force may not be employed to resist evil, spiritual means may be enlisted to combat evil (cf. Luke 6:27-36; Rom 12:21; 2 Cor 10:3-4; 2 Tim 2:1-2; Jas 4:7; 1 Pet 5:8-9). In this view the Christian is dedicated to the work of the gospel as his/her highest priority as a citizen of a heavenly kingdom. One may pray for peace and must support the government, but must never be involved in any action that takes the life of another human being. If the unbelieving government needs to fight a war to fulfill its obligations to defend its citizens, let it do so, but no Christian should be an active

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<sup>10</sup>Francis A. Schaeffer, “The Secular Humanist World View Versus the Christian World View and Biblical Perspectives on Military Preparedness,” in Francis Schaeffer, Vladimír Bukovsky, and James Hitchcock, *Who Is for Peace?* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1983) 23.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid. Schaeffer uses the illustration of the obligation of Christian love to stop (by any means necessary) a big man from beating a tiny tot to death, if one were to come upon such atrocious conduct (23-24).

<sup>12</sup>Matt 5:39 is best interpreted as a reference to personal interaction with other individuals in daily conduct, not interaction between armies or governments in a time of war.

member of combat troops.<sup>13</sup> Christians holding this viewpoint ought to request non-combatant status when fulfilling a military obligation.<sup>14</sup>

**Christian pacifism.**<sup>15</sup> The basic philosophy undergirding the nonresistance view is also foundational to the Christian pacifist viewpoint. The key difference is that the Christian pacifist will not serve in the military in any role. Whereas the nonresistance adherent may serve in a non-combatant role, the Christian pacifist must be a conscientious objector.<sup>16</sup> Views that tend to pacifism rest upon texts in the Sermon on the Mount (cf. Matt 5:9, 21-26, 38-48). This viewpoint also relies on the Scriptural background of Matthew 5:21 in Exodus 20:13/Deuteronomy 5:17.<sup>17</sup> The Christian pacifist believes that Christians are called upon to counteract this world's warlike tendencies by promoting the spiritual love and peace which Christ exemplified.

**Just war.** Adherents to the just war viewpoint have sought to establish guidelines to ensure the exercise of the military option in a just fashion. Those

<sup>13</sup>Cf. Keith B. Payne and Karl I. Payne, *A Just Defense: The Use of Force, Nuclear Weapons & Our Conscience* (Portland, Ore.: Multnomah, 1987) 39, 47-49; Herman A. Hoyt, "Nonresistance," in *War: Four Christian Views*, ed. Robert G. Clouse (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1981) 29-57.

<sup>14</sup>Serving in a non-combatant role does not guarantee that an individual will be safe. On March 1, 1967, during the 1st Cavalry Division's Operation Pershing, Specialist 4th Class Jerry Duane Byers was killed by an armor piercing round at Binh Duong, South Vietnam. Jerry was one of my closest friends. He held the nonresistance viewpoint and requested assignment as a medic. War claimed his life at the tender age of 20. This journal article is dedicated to his memory.

<sup>15</sup>Cf. Richard McSorley, *New Testament Basis of Peacemaking*, 3rd rev. ed. (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald, 1985). McSorley discusses five principles demonstrating that war is incompatible with NT teachings. He also offers responses to nine different NT texts employed by advocates of the just war position. In this same volume he also answers sixteen objections to the Christian pacifist position.

<sup>16</sup>Payne and Payne, *A Just Defense* 61-74; Myron S. Augsburger, "Christian Pacifism," in *War: Four Christian Views* 81-97. If the government views refusal to serve in the military as a criminal act (as in a time of war), the consistent Christian pacifist would accept whatever punishment the government should deem appropriate—cf. Everett F. Harrison, "Romans," in vol. 10 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. by Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1976) 137.

<sup>17</sup>The sixth commandment does not refer to either war or capital punishment (cf. Gen 9:5, 6).. Primarily, the command prohibits any member of the covenant community of Israel from committing murder. The same covenant law contained instruction regarding war (Deuteronomy 20). Cf. Craigie, *The Problem of War in the Old Testament* 55-63. Obviously, neither the divine Giver of the revelation nor the Spirit-led recorder of that revelation thought that the two passages were in need of reconciliation. It is equally obvious from Matthew 5:21 that the principle of the sixth commandment has a divine intention beyond just the Israelite community under Mosaic Law. If there were any question about that intent, one merely has to read the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37).

criteria include the following:<sup>18</sup>

1. A just cause is basically defensive in posture, not aggressive.
2. The intent must also be just—the objectives must be peace and the protection of innocent lives.
3. War must be a matter of last resort when all attempts at reconciliation or peaceful resolution are exhausted.
4. A just war must be accompanied by a formal declaration by a properly constituted and authorized body.
5. The objectives must be limited. Unconditional surrender or total destruction are unjust means.<sup>19</sup>
6. Military action must be proportionate both in the weaponry employed and the troops deployed.
7. Non-combatants must be protected and military operations must demonstrate the highest possible degree of discrimination.
8. Without a reasonable hope for success, no military action should be launched.<sup>20</sup>

Although the just war position may seem fairly straightforward, it is, in reality, a very complex matter. Consider the possible combinations and interrelationships of the factors: (1) unjust cause and just means; (2) just cause and unjust means; (3) unjust cause and unjust means; and, (4) just cause and just means. Remember, too, that all of these possible combinations apply to at least two different sides in the

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<sup>18</sup>Payne and Payne, *A Just Defense* 41-43; Arthur F. Holmes, "The Just War," in *War: Four Christian Views* 117-35. Cf. also Holmes, ed., *War and Christian Ethics* 4-5. These criteria are not recognized equally by all just war advocates. Leroy Walters, *Five Classic Just-War Theories* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms, 1971), argues that the position is not monolithic—each theory presents its own list of criteria or conditions. Some people would argue that nations tend to apply these criteria as post facto justification—see Reuven Firestone, review of *War and Its Discontents: Pacifism and Quietism in the Abrahamic Traditions*, ed. by J. Patout Burns, *Journal of Jewish Studies* 50/1 (Spring 1999):178.

<sup>19</sup>This particular point can be debated. If a military power is bent on genocide or characteristically acts with conspicuous and determined inhumanity, unconditional surrender might be the very best way to conclude a war by which that power is to be defeated. The moral problem of *haram* (sometimes having reference to total destruction) in the OT has been discussed in detail by Charles Sherlock in *The God Who Fights: The War Tradition in Holy Scripture*, vol. 6 in *Rutherford Studies in Contemporary Theology* (Edinburgh: Rutherford House/Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen, 1993) 97-104.

<sup>20</sup>Realistically, the utilitarian estimate of the possibility of a successful war is what governs whether or not states engage in warfare. It is not usually a question of should a nation go to war, but a knowledge of the ability to wage war successfully, that is the deciding factor. Rarely do nations inferior in might and power initiate a war with an 'evil' aggressor, simply to prove the justness of their cause" (Capt. Nathan Daniel Barrick, personal communication, Nov 19, 1997). The criterion of success must not carry over into personal conduct. Christians should be willing to lose their lives in an attempt to save someone else's life even if the possibility for success is far less than the potential for failure (cf. John 15:13).

conflict: friend and foe.<sup>21</sup> How should each of the criteria apply to each side in the conflict? “Since human beings of a mind and will are involved on both sides of a conflict, it is often hard to determine what is the just cause in asserting or shunning a ‘just’ hegemony.”<sup>22</sup> War is never simple. It is always complex. It is not a black-and-white matter, nor even gray—if anything, it is blood red.

**Preventive war.** This view is an extension of the just war position. It supports preemptive action or first-strike options (even with nuclear weapons, when necessary) if an enemy’s aggression is thought to be imminent and unavoidable. Preventive war adherents also advocate the use of military force to recover territory unjustly seized by an aggressor.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, such aggressors may be struck without warning while they are residing in their conquered territory in apparent peace.

### **Governmental Authority in the New Testament**

*Just war* advocates normally base their position on passages revealing the divine origin and approval of government and its functions. Romans 13:1-7 is the cornerstone of this viewpoint. Consider a question in regard to this important text: May Christians wield the government’s biblical sword? The apostle Paul represents the government as a divinely constituted authority (vv. 1, 2).

It was to Paul a matter of little importance whether the Roman emperor was appointed by the senate, the army, or the people; whether the assumption of the imperial authority by Caesar was just or unjust, or whether his successors had a legitimate claim to the throne or not. It was his object to lay down the simple principle, that magistrates are to be obeyed.<sup>24</sup>

Even though the civil and military assets of the Roman Empire would be employed to slaughter Christians, the Holy Spirit directed the apostle to instruct believers in Rome to submit to the Roman government. Even though the emperors of Rome lived profligate lives steeped in immorality and debauchery, their authority was legitimate. Every believer was to submit to that authority unless the demands of that govern-

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<sup>21</sup>The writer is indebted to Steve Watkins (a former Navy Seal) for these observations regarding the complexities inherent in the just war position (personal communication, Oct 27, 1999). Watkins also suggested that guerrilla tactics, infiltration by means of special operations, and insurgency compound the difficulties involved in the discussion.

<sup>22</sup>Barrick, personal communication, Nov 19, 1997.

<sup>23</sup>Payne and Payne, *A Just Defense* 57-58; Harold O. J. Brown, “The Crusade or Preventive War,” in *War: Four Christian Views* 153-68.

<sup>24</sup>Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (reprint of 1886 ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972) 407.

ment directly contradicted divine command (cf. Acts 5:29). All other “resistance is a violation of God’s law and meets with judgment.”<sup>25</sup> According to Everett Harrison, the seeming contradiction of Romans 13:1-2 and Acts 5:29 might be handled in two different ways: (1) assume that the apostle merely presents the norm stripped of any possible biblical exception<sup>26</sup> and (2) apply the principle of Romans 8:28, trusting that God eventually will “bring good out of apparent evil.”<sup>27</sup>

The text is also explicit on the role of God-ordained governmental authority: the sword is to be employed in avenging<sup>28</sup> wrong (vv. 3, 4). As John Murray explains,

The sword is so frequently associated with death as the instrument of execution (cf. Matt. 26:52; Luke 21:24; Acts 12:2; 16:27; Heb. 11:34, 37; Rev. 13:10) that to exclude its use for this purpose in this instance would be so arbitrary as to bear upon its face prejudice contrary to the evidence.<sup>29</sup>

Government cannot be passive nor can it avoid actions that might involve the taking of life in order to accomplish its Scriptural mandate. “The Biblical state protects against tyranny from within (crime) and tyranny from without (invasion).”<sup>30</sup> Interestingly, this fact is recognized by all four major views concerning Christian involvement in the military. For some, however, the Christian must not take part in any avenging action, although they would allow non-Christians in the government to do so.

Subjection to governmental authority is not just to avoid punishment for civil disobedience. Subjection is a matter of maintaining a good conscience with

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<sup>25</sup>John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols. in 1, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968) 2:149.

<sup>26</sup>“The way is then open to justify revolution in cases where rights are denied and liberties taken away, making life intolerable for freedom-loving men and women, since the state has ceased to fulfill its God-appointed function. However, Christians will not as a church lead in revolution, but only as citizens of the commonwealth. At the very least, under circumstances involving a collapse of justice, the Christian community is obliged to voice its criticism of the state’s failure, pointing out the deviation from the divinely ordained pattern. Subjection to the state is not to be confused with unthinking, blind, docile conformity” (Harrison, “Romans” 138).

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>*Avenge* is a better translation to employ since it “is generally used in the sense of achieving justice, whereas *revenge* . . . stresses retaliation” (William Morris, ed., *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* [Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979] 91).

<sup>29</sup>Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* 2:152-53.

<sup>30</sup>P. Andrew Sandlin, “War, the Bible, and the State,” *Chalcedon Report* 4/8 (May 2000):3.

regard to one's obligation to God (v. 5).<sup>31</sup> This involves active monetary support for the government by all legitimate forms of taxation (v. 6). Not even the Christian pacifist is given the option of refusing to support the government financially in its military actions.<sup>32</sup> Whether the Christian is on the front lines of battle pulling the trigger or serving as a non-combatant or remaining at home as a conscientious objector, each must pay the taxes for that war. By those taxes, every Christian is a participant in that war and the killing that takes place in its progress. An interesting fact is that the very taxes that Paul exhorted the Roman Christians to pay eventually financed Paul's own execution.

Paul was not the first to experience this irony. Christ Himself ordered the payment of taxes to Caesar and was put to death by Roman soldiers paid by those taxes. Historically, the church has carefully defined a balance of duty for Christians in these matters. Augustine's statement is representative:

So if anyone thinks that because he is a Christian he does not have to pay taxes or tribute nor show the proper respect to the authorities who take care of these things, he is in very great error. Likewise, if anyone thinks that he ought to submit to the point where he accepts that someone who is his superior in temporal affairs should have authority even over his faith, he falls into an even greater error. But the balance which the Lord himself prescribed is to be maintained: Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's but unto God the things which are God's (Mt 22:21).<sup>33</sup>

First Peter 2:13-17 lends support to the submission so carefully delineated in Romans 13:1-7. Peter states quite clearly that such submission is the will of God (1 Pet 2:15). The one who rebels in this area rebels against God. Although this study focuses upon the matter of military service, recognition that the role of the civil police in society is also a function of the avenging arm of government is relevant.

<sup>31</sup>Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* 2:154.

<sup>32</sup>Does the Pauline position contradict the rallying cry of the American Revolution that decried British taxation? Many of the American colonists had fled religious persecution in Europe. They committed themselves to freedom of religion and freedom from tyranny. Taxation without representation was but one aspect of the problem; excessive taxation was also a problem. The British crown's taxes were considered a threat to the welfare of the colonists. The vast distances that separated the colonies from the British government hindered good communication to such an extent that a local, independent government was deemed necessary. Whether or not the American Revolution was contrary to Scripture, modern Christians cannot appeal to its example for avoiding taxation since the two situations are very different. For more detailed attention to the complexities involved in Christian involvement in the Revolutionary War, see Alan Johnson, "The Bible and War in America: An Historical Survey," *JETS* 28/2 (June 1985):172-74.

<sup>33</sup>P. F. Landes, ed., *Augustine on Romans*, SBL Texts and Translations 23, Early Christian Literature Series 6 (Chico, Calif.: Scholars, 1982) 41-43. Cf. also Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* 406.

If a Christian must avoid military service, neither must that Christian be a police officer. Christian pacifists sometimes attempt to distinguish between police action and military action, allowing the former while denying the legitimacy of the latter.<sup>34</sup>

Does the NT give any examples of Christians acting as officers of government who bear the responsibility of wielding the avenging sword of Romans 13:4? Are they approved or disapproved? Were converts required to resign from such positions when they entered the early church? Consider the following:

- Cornelius was a centurion, a military officer of high rank in a battalion of Roman fighting men (Acts 10:1). Although he was a soldier on active duty, he is described as “devout” (εὐσεβής, *eusebēs*, v. 2), a term that, at the least, describes a man of high moral character and piety. He became a convert to Christ and was baptized publicly (v. 48). The Scripture is silent about his status from that point on.
- Sergius Paulus was a proconsul in the Roman government in Cyprus (13:7). A proconsul’s (a Roman provincial governor) authority included ordering the execution of criminals and deploying Roman troops in battle when needed.<sup>35</sup> He became a believer (v. 12). The Bible gives no record of any resignation from his office upon becoming a Christian.
- Erastus (Rom 16:23) was an active city treasurer even after his conversion. As a government officer he managed the funds that would be utilized in the execution of criminals and the payment of police. As an active official, he could be called upon to wield the Roman sword of authority both figuratively and literally.
- Zenas (Titus 3:13) was an active Christian lawyer. In the Roman system of the courts, he played a role in the application of the avenging sword—the application of capital punishment.

Somewhat related to the matter of Christians bearing a sword is the instruction Jesus gave to His disciples for taking prudent measures for self-protection in Luke 22:36. Although it might seem at odds with His teaching in Matthew 26:52, it should be obvious that the two are not mutually exclusive. Luke 22:36 “more likely indicates, not a reversal of normal rules for the church’s mission, but an exception in a time of crisis (cf. ‘but now,’ *alla nyn*). Jesus is not being ironic but

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<sup>34</sup>McSorley, *New Testament Basis of Peacemaking* 22-23. Cf. Loraine Boettner, *The Christian Attitude Toward War*, 3rd ed. (Phillipsburg, N. J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1985) 45-47.

<sup>35</sup>These proconsular powers can be compared to the lesser powers of a procurator like Pontius Pilate who employed Roman troops in the slaughter of Galileans (Luke 13:1) and the crucifixion of Jesus and the two thieves (Matt 27:1-38). Cf. F. F. Bruce, “Palestine, Administration of (Roman),” *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman, (New York: Doubleday, 1992) 5:97-98; John F. Hall, “Procurator,” *ibid.*, 5:473-74.

thoroughly serious.”<sup>36</sup> In regard to this passage, Loraine Boettner declared, “If we lived under such conditions we would have occasion to become much better acquainted with weapons than we now are.”<sup>37</sup>

On the basis of the Gospels and the teachings of Jesus, a number of arguments supporting the believer’s participation in the military are the following:<sup>38</sup>

- Jesus’s approval of a king who waged war against wicked people (Matt 21:33-41).
- After Peter cut off the ear of the servant of the high priest (John 18:11), Jesus did not tell him to rid himself of his sword, merely to resheath it—for future use?
- In John 18:36 Jesus stated that it would have been proper for His disciples to defend His kingdom with swords if it had been an earthly kingdom.

### **New Testament Analogy**

Throughout the Bible the Holy Spirit led the writers in the choice of legitimate metaphors for describing both the character of God and the character of the believer. It is axiomatic that inherently evil vocations or activities are not employed for such descriptions. The simile of the thief (1 Thess 5:4; 2 Pet 3:10; Rev 3:3; 16:15) in eschatological judgment is not an exception to this principle. The text does not say that the Lord *is* a thief, only that He will come *as* a thief comes (viz., unexpectedly). The metaphor of a thief is reserved for one who is anti-Christ (cf. John 10:1, 10).

The metaphor of warfare, armor, and the soldier himself is common throughout the NT. The Christian puts on the armor of God (Eph 6:10-20). Each believer is to be a “good soldier” (2 Tim 2:3-4). Believers are to be active participants in waging spiritual warfare (2 Cor 10:1-6). If being a soldier was as inherently wicked as being a prostitute, a thief, or a murderer, the Holy Spirit would not have permitted the writers of the NT to employ that metaphor.

It is hardly conceivable that the Scriptures should present the Christian life under a symbolism having to do so distinctly with soldiering and warfare and at the same time

<sup>36</sup>Walter L. Liefeld, “Luke,” in vol. 8 of *EBC*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984) 1029. For a contrary view, cf. Norval Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951) 570-71: “They will henceforth, with all their strength and energy, have to find their own way through a hostile world. They must, the Saviour declares in a striking figure, as His followers in the struggle of life, be just as determined and whole-hearted as a fighting man who gives up everything, even his garment, as long as he only possesses a sword to continue the struggle with.” *Ibid.*, 572: “There is no doubt (in the light of Jesus’ whole teaching and life) that the Lord intended them in a figurative sense.” See also F. Godet, *A Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke*, trans. M. D. Cusin, Clark’s Foreign Theological Library, 4th Series, 46 (reprint; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1957) 2:302, and, McSorley, *New Testament Basis of Peacemaking* 39-43.

<sup>37</sup>Boettner, *The Christian Attitude Toward War* 24.

<sup>38</sup>For a fuller listing of such potential arguments, see Morey, *When Is It Right to Fight?* 39-42.

repudiate the reality for which that symbolism stands as always and everywhere wrong.<sup>39</sup>

In addition, that Christ Himself will engage in actual, blood-shedding, life-taking warfare when He returns to set up His kingdom (Rev 19:11-21) is significant. He cannot be the Righteous One, the Holy One, if war is inherently evil and the combatant's role satanic. When He comes, the Lord will instruct His people to engage in that future warfare (cf. Obad 15-21). Would He demand His people to commit sin? Of course not! Therefore, warfare cannot be inherently sinful.

### Christians in Military Service

Why should a Christian serve in the military?<sup>40</sup> Are there any positive points to be advanced for such service? Soldiers at war are serving in a situation that can only be described spiritually as desperate. Men occupy a position where death is a real possibility for them to experience—a horrible and agonizing death by violent means. Such men are in desperate need of the gospel and the ministry of Christians. War itself creates an atmosphere of destruction and inhumanity. Violent deeds may bring out the very worst of the sinful nature's traits. Christians may need to stand in the gap in order to maintain decency, order, and just action.

Such a thing as a just war may also occur. World War II could very well make the claim of being a just war.<sup>41</sup> Doubtless, there are others and will be others. War is the result of sin (cf. Jas 4:1-2), but war itself is not necessarily sin. "The one who takes original sin seriously knows that life is lived on a descending escalator and that it is a tough job even to stand still."<sup>42</sup> It becomes all too clear to any sound theological thinking that the rejection of the employment of force might be a recipe for anarchy or tyranny attended by multiplied suffering and death for many innocent people. That is why all four major views of Christian involvement in war uphold the right of a state to maintain a standing army and to order it onto the field of battle. The issue is the degree of individual Christian involvement. "All violence is caused by sin, but not all violence is necessarily sinful—it may even be the occasion of virtue when it calls for courage and self-sacrifice."<sup>43</sup> In short, the need is for men

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<sup>39</sup>Boettner, *The Christian Attitude Toward War* 33.

<sup>40</sup>Origen (ca. A.D. 185-254) offered this question rhetorically from a slightly different perspective: "Do not those who are priests at certain shrines, and those who attend on certain gods, as you account them, keep their hands free from blood, that they may with hands unstained and free from human blood offer the appointed sacrifices to your gods; and even when war is upon you, you never enlist the priests in the army" ("The Soldier's Chaplet," in *War and the Christian Conscience: From Augustine to Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. by Albert Marrin [Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1971] 33-34).

<sup>41</sup>T. E. Wilder, "American Empire and Christian Silence," *Chalcedon Report* 4/8 (May 2000):10.

<sup>42</sup>John W. Wenham, *The Goodness of God* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1974) 98.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, 99.

who will stand for God and for His Word in the world—including in the military among soldiers who need the gospel.

### **The Christian's Conscience**

Certain principles of Christian action apply even to considering participation in the military. Each believer is accountable to God (cf. Acts 5:29). No believer can leave this decision to someone else. Each Christian has liberty to determine the will of God for his or her life (cf. Romans 14). Part of that determination must take into account the dual citizenship of the Christian as being *in the world* while not being *of the world* (cf. John 15:19; 17:11).<sup>44</sup>

Consider the matter of prayer. Do Christians pray that the Lord Jesus will return soon? In point of fact, we are praying that

the whole pitiless machinery of war may go forward to bring, if possible, a speedy conclusion. It is mangled bodies, tortured minds, orphaned children that we are concerned with. There will be unstable children growing up to be parents of unstable homes, till the third and fourth generation, as a result of our war.<sup>45</sup>

Do Christians pray for the deliverance of Christians from persecution in places like China, the Sudan, and Pakistan? Do Christians pray for the release of the missionaries held hostage in Colombia? What will be the outcome if those prayers are answered by God? Christ eventually will come to judge those who have rejected Him and the gospel concerning Him. God may choose, in the meantime, to utilize war in China, the Sudan, or Pakistan to accomplish the deliverance of His people from persecution. The answer to these prayers may be war. Do believers know what they are praying? Any who have prayed these prayers cannot claim to have hands free of blood just because they have refused to be a soldier in their nation's military.

Christians should not too hastily claim the role of "peacemaker" (Matt 5:9). Such a role is not necessarily antagonistic to the role of a warrior. Christ's employment of the Greek term (εἰρηνοποιός, *eirēnopoios*) is the only Scriptural occurrence. Outside Scripture it is found only as a description of Caesar who

<sup>44</sup>The example of William Penn illustrates one direction in which a believer might be led: "Among the people influenced by [George] Fox's teachings was William Penn. The son of a distinguished admiral, Penn used to wear a sword as a reminder of his own and his family's martial tradition. As he came further under the spell of the Quaker doctrine of nonviolence, he began to doubt whether it was appropriate for him to wear such an ornament. He sought Fox's counsel. 'Wear thy sword as long as thou canst,' was the Quaker leader's advice. A few weeks later when Fox met Penn, he asked him with a smile, 'Where is thy sword?' Replied Penn, 'I wore it as long as I could'" (Fadiman, ed., *The Little, Brown Book of Anecdotes* 217). Penn's decision regarding participation in the military did not remove him from government service or from the payment of taxes in support of the military.

<sup>45</sup>Wenham, *The Goodness of God* 166.

wielded the sword of military might to produce the *pax Romana*.<sup>46</sup> A true peacemaker will not make peace at any price nor will he or she shun the employment of legitimate force to produce that peace.

### Conclusion

The issue is not one that can be decided quickly nor easily. No believer dare take the matter lightly. It is a difficult matter that involves the conscience of believers and perhaps even their Christian liberty. Note John the Baptist's response to the soldiers who inquired what they should do as works that would appropriately result from repentance:

And some soldiers were questioning him, saying, "And *what about us*, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "*Do not take money from anyone by force, or accuse anyone falsely, and be content with your wages.*"<sup>47</sup>

They were not told to resign from their vocation as soldiers, but to be content in that position with the wages it paid. Their behavior was to be just and honest—even while remaining soldiers. They were not instructed to resign, the life of a soldier not being viewed as inimical to true repentance. Ultimately, however, John's instruction must be recognized as a pre-Christian declaration. Also, it was directed at those already in the military, not to those who might consider joining. These tensions have been recognized since the earliest centuries of the Christian church.<sup>48</sup> The passage is offered here as a catalyst for further study. Has its teaching been revoked or revised by Christ or the apostles? What are its logical and theological implications in the context of all the rest of Scripture's teachings on this subject?

The issue of war might be ignored for a time, but every individual must, at some time, come to grips with it personally. Peter Craigie described his encounter with the issue in the following way:

When I was a theological student, I worried about the "holy war" problem in the OT and sought the advice of a professor for further reading. He recommended one or two commentaries and von Rad's *Der heilige Krieg im alten Israel* ("The Holy War in Ancient Israel"). I went off to study and found a mass of material of linguistic, historical, and cultural interest. But I found nothing which spoke to my problem, the theological anxiety I had about the identification of God with war. One cannot generalize from a single experience, yet I have met a large number of clergy since that time who

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<sup>46</sup>Cf. H. Beck and C. Brown, "Peace," *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. by Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976) 2:776-77.

<sup>47</sup>Luke 3:14 [emphasis added].

<sup>48</sup>Cf. Harnack, *Militia Christi* 70-71.

experienced the same problem in their theological training.<sup>49</sup>

It is up to each believer to go to the Word of God in order to study this issue for himself/herself. Each believer's good conscience is at stake in the decision. It is the opinion of this writer that the just war viewpoint offers the greatest consistency with the overall view of both the OT and the NT. Such a viewpoint ought not to be imposed on any individual believer, however. Perhaps the Scripture's silence about any resignation from military service by converted soldiers on active duty is but an indication that the matter falls in the realm of freedom of conscience rather than the realm of absolute morality. That is the best answer to the question, "Should a Christian be a member of the military?"

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<sup>49</sup>Craigie, *The Problem of War in the Old Testament* 106.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WORKS ON CHRISTIAN ETHICS

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Earlier pages of this issue of *The Master's Seminary Journal* contain articles on Christian ethics. The following bibliography represents the collected research of the authors and some additional sources that were consulted, but not cited in the articles. Its four sections are (1) General, Reference Works and Biblical Commentaries, (2) Monographs and Multi-Author Works, (3) Journal and Periodical Articles, and (4) Unpublished Materials. This listing is not exhaustive, but will serve as a foundation for readers desiring to pursue the study further.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

David W. Baker and Bill T. Arnold, eds. *The Face of Old Testament Studies: A Survey of Contemporary Approaches*. Grand Rapids: Apollos/Baker, 1999. 512 pp. \$34.99 (cloth). Reviewed by William D. Barrick, Professor of Old Testament.

General introduction to the OT needs constant updating to stay abreast of current trends and issues regarding text, canon, criticism, historiography, and archaeology. Most available general introductions are outdated in their discussions of current issues. In 1985 *The Hebrew Bible and Its Modern Interpreters* edited by Douglas A. Knight and Gene M. Tucker (Minneapolis: Fortress) was published in order to call attention to current (at that time) and potential issues. Although the volume is admirable, it possesses three weaknesses: (1) It does not take an evangelical stance; (2) it is at least fifteen years outdated; and, (3) it is more fitting as a text for students in a Master of Theology or a doctoral program than for a student pursuing a Master of Divinity degree or an informed lay person. *The Face of Old Testament Studies*, on the other hand, is evangelical in stance, up-to-date, and makes a practical text for M.Div. students or informed lay persons. This volume is a welcome survey of developments in the field of OT studies from 1970 to 1997 (with some minor updates as late as April 1999).

The volume consists of the following sixteen essays: "The Text of the Old Testament" by Al Wolters (19-37), "Epigraphic Light on the Old Testament" by Mark W. Chavalas and Edwin C. Hostetter (38-58), "Archaeological Light on the Old Testament" by Mark W. Chavalas and Murray R. Adamthwaite (59-96), "Literary Approaches to Old Testament Study" by Tremper Longman III (97-115), "Pondering the Pentateuch: The Search for a New Paradigm" by Gordon J. Wenham (116-44), "Historiography of the Old Testament" by V. Philips Long (145-75), "Early Israel in Recent Biblical Scholarship" by K. Lawson Younger, Jr. (176-206), "The Historical Study of the Monarchy: Developments and Detours" by Gary N. Knoppers (207-35), "Exile and After: Historical Study" by H. G. M. Williamson (236-65), "Israelite Prophets and Prophecy" by David W. Baker (266-94), "Wisdom Literature" by Bruce K. Waltke and David Diewert (295-328), "Recent Trends in Psalms Study" by David M. Howard, Jr. (329-68), "Recent Studies in Old Testament Apocalyptic" by John N. Oswalt (369-90), "Religion in Ancient Israel" by Bill T. Arnold (391-420), "Opening Windows onto Biblical Worlds: Applying the Social Sciences to Hebrew Scripture" by Charles E. Carter (421-51), and "Theology of the Old Testament" by R. W. L. Moberly (452-78). Indexes include a limited Subject

Index (479-89), an apparently complete Author Index (490-506), and Scripture Index (507-12).

In a survey of significant archaeological finds relating to the OT, Chavalas and Hostetter provide brief descriptions of epigraphic material from Palestinian sites such as Arad, Beth-shan, Daliyeh, Deir 'Alla (cf. fuller discussion, 92-94), Horvat Uza, Ketef Hinnom, Khirbet el-Qôm (cf. fuller discussion, 411-14), Kuntillet 'Ajrud (cf. fuller discussion, 411-14), Lachish, Eliachin, Samaria, Tel Dan, Tell Siran, and Yavneh-Yam (45-53). Examples from Egyptian epigraphy are also included (53-58). Chavalas and Adamthwaite expand this archaeological survey to Syro-Mesopotamia (59-69), then return to Egypt and Palestine in order to illuminate the biblical story of Joseph (71-78) and the account of the exodus from Egypt and the conquest of Canaan (78-96). Giving proper attention to the continued Egyptian influence in Palestine after the exodus and conquest, they arrive at a modified form of the early date for the exodus.

Several essayists discuss archaeological data as it relates to "the existence of a distinctive Israelite ethnicity" (195). None refer to either Deuteronomy 6:10-11 or Joshua 24:13 regarding Israelite use of Canaanite structures. Evangelicals should not expect distinct cultural discontinuity in cultural debris. The Israelites spent centuries in Egypt and acquired a large amount of Egyptian items at the time of their departure (cf. Exod 12:34-36). Distinctly Israelite cultural debris should not be expected until late in the period of the Israelite judges. Pig husbandry is closely related to the ethnicity question (195-96). Could NT references to Jewish involvement in pig husbandry (Matt 8:30-33; Luke 15:15-16) indicate a cultural trait from earlier times? Since social science critics compare biblical tradition with modern sociological data, why not compare ancient Israelite pig husbandry with Muslim pig husbandry in modern Bangladesh (something this reviewer personally observed during fifteen years in that country)? Either way, pig husbandry may not prove to be a dependable indicator of cultural discontinuity in ancient Palestine.

The Babylonian exile and the postexilic period have been objects of increased discussion in the last three decades (236). However, as Williamson points out, the attention has been focused more on new archaeological data rather than upon the biblical texts themselves (264). Evangelicals need to take up the challenge to provide biblical studies matching Edwin Yamauchi's excellent historical study entitled *Persia and the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990).

*The Face of Old Testament Studies* reveals a healthy skepticism regarding the various theories of biblical criticism. Longman accurately identifies some of the more extreme views of literary criticism as "the logical route to go once one loses faith in any kind of authority of the text" (113). Essayists consistently call for evangelicals to stand firm on the authority of the biblical text. Wenham warns against too quickly throwing aside the views of the so-called "biblical archaeology" movement initiated by Albright and Speiser (123) to run after the extreme views of Van Seters and Thompson. Arnold remarks that OT studies "have been dominated by evolutionary explanations for Israelite monotheism" (409) over the past three decades. Liberal biblical criticism is a living virus still infecting biblical studies with

radical humanism and anti-supernaturalism.

Observing the ongoing skirmishes between liberal critics and evangelicals, Carter identifies three areas of tension between evangelicals and social science critics: (1) the uniqueness of Israel, (2) imposing modern worldviews on ancient Israel, and (3) the diminution of biblical exegesis (442-48). Long's essay on historiography also deals with these tensions. He declares that "social science approaches often have little room for the Old Testament texts themselves" (165). For those who ignore the truth claims of the OT because of rebellion against God, Long suggests that the proper corrective is biblical repentance (173).

At the same time, however, the essayists recognize the contributions that have been made to OT studies by proponents of those theories. As Williamson puts it, "What is needed is a sober eclecticism, which necessarily involves the historian in a measure of reliance on the work of specialists in related disciplines" (241). With regard to the potential disregard of social science criticism by evangelicals, Carter warns against either "scholarly hubris or siege mentality" (448) and Long concludes that so "long as practitioners recognize the proper role of the social sciences in addressing background concerns, their studies provide a valuable service" (171). Knoppers calls for both factions to integrate the different kinds of evidence rather than to operate on a principle of compartmentalization and exclusion (235).

Several excellent essays omit significant evangelical contributions to the subjects being discussed. Long's essay on historiography failed to mention John Warwick Montgomery's *The Shape of the Past: A Christian Response to Secular Philosophies of History* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1975). Waltke's superb survey of developments in the study of the Book of Proverbs ignored the significant contributions of Ted A. Hildebrandt (e.g., "Proverbial Strings: Cohesion in Proverbs 10," *Grace Theological Journal* 11/2 [Fall 1990]:171-85; "Proverb," in *Cracking Old Testament Codes*, ed. by D. Brent Sandy and Ronald L. Giese, Jr. [Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1995] 233-54).

Unfortunately, prophetic literature is the subject of the weakest essays in the volume. Oswalt is disappointingly negative in his discussion of OT apocalyptic and provides only a minimal definition (cf. 372). The reader is left to glean what he can from references in the footnotes. Baker's essay on Israelite prophecy also lacks vitality. It is but a simple survey of literature and current discussions with virtually nothing in the way of either solutions or personal opinion. By comparison, Waltke's lucid description of developments in the study of wisdom literature exposes the reader to potential solutions and Waltke's own preferences.

In at least three footnotes, references are given to online sources (342 n. 42, 430 n. 28, 436 n. 45). Such references, in and of themselves, are an indication of developments in OT research in the past few decades. The problem, however, is that they tend to be ephemeral. One day they are available online and the next they have disappeared in cyberspace where they can no longer be checked, cross-referenced, or cited. After much searching, this reviewer was able to locate the first reference at a new address: <<http://www.bookreviews.org/Reviews/1850757976.html>>. The other two references, however, are no longer available on the internet. That makes

them the only two references in the volume that cannot be traced as cited. Unlike printed sources, they cannot be requested on inter-library loan when they have gone out of print. Biblical scholars would benefit immensely if some organization would provide a permanent archive of quality online materials so that interaction might continue even after an individual website closes.

This reviewer is employing Baker and Arnold's volume as a required textbook in OT Introduction on the M.Div. level. It is a valuable resource for professor and student alike.

David L. Balch. *Homosexuality, Science, and the "Plain Sense" of Scripture*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000. 318 pp. \$16.00 (paper). Reviewed by Alex D. Montoya, Associate Professor of Pastoral Ministry.

David L. Balch, professor of New Testament at Brite Divinity School of Texas Christian University, edited *Homosexuality, Science, and the "Plain Sense" of Scripture*, which contains 10 distinct articles on the topic of homosexuality and the Christian faith. The majority of the contributors adhere to the revisionist view, including Balch. The volume is helpful in understanding both the position of the revisionists as well as the basic reasonings for their position. The articles are well written, showing scholarship in the field, and an obvious transparency of their hermeneutical presuppositions.

Chapter 1 is "Meddling Through: the Church and Sexuality/homosexuality" by Mark G. Toulouse of Brite Divinity School. He traces the development of the homosexual debate with the rise of the sexual revolution in the 1960s, and how homosexuality moved from being a disease to a sexual orientation. He advocates further dialogue, or the church will continue to muddle through, he says.

Chapter 2 is "Same-sex Eros: Paul and the Greco-Roman Tradition" by William R. Schoedel of the University of Illinois, in which he argues that Paul's attack on same sex *eros* in Romans was but a reflection of the attitudes held by the Greco-Roman world of his day. The outcome is that we cannot read our views of sexuality into Paul. In addition there seems to be a development of the nature of family which goes beyond sexuality: "Ironically, many defenders of what has now become the traditional family do not see that the call of gay couples for status as families is in fact a recognition of the basic strength of the traditional model" (72).

Chapters 3 and 4 deal with the issues of science and the Bible. Stanton L. Jones and Mark A. Yarhouse co-author "The Use, Misuse, and Abuse of Science in the Ecclesiastical Debates," where they conclude that science "will not solve the ethical debate about homosexual behavior for the church" (119). Christine E. Gudorf in "The Bible and Science as Interpreted Sources" adopts a revisionist view of the texts and states that "the traditional biblical texts quoted against homosexuality are not sufficiently persuasive to justify excluding all homosexual persons from

either church membership or clerical roles” (139).

“The Bible in Christian Ethical Deliberation concerning Homosexuality: Old Testament Contributions” by Phyllis A. Bird is chapter 5. It looks at the traditional OT texts against homosexuality. Her conclusion is that “sexuality as we understand it today is not addressed in the Bible. . . . The terms of Israel’s culturally shaped understanding will not satisfy our present need” (168).

Chapters 6 and 9 are the only chapters which clearly stand against the revisionist position. Christopher Seitz of the University of St. Andrews, Scotland, argues convincingly for the traditional view in chapter 6, “Sexuality and Scripture’s Plain Sense: The Christian Community and the Law of God,” where he states that “the church is constrained on the basis of Scripture’s plain sense to proscribe homosexual behavior among its members” (p. 191). Kathryn Greene-McCreight of Smith College in chapter 9, “The Logic of the Interpretation of Scripture and the Church’s Debate,” rightly surmises that the argument in the church today “is really about hermeneutics, about the interpretation and use of Scripture” (245). She concludes that “the Bible rejects homoerotic activity whenever the topic is dealt with” (245).

Paul’s discussion in Romans is given a revisionist view by David E. Frederickson in chapter 7, “Natural and Unnatural Use in Romans 1:24-27: Paul and the Philosophic Critique of Eros,” and by Robert Jewett in chapter 8, “The Social Context and Implications of Homoerotic References in Romans 1:24-27,” where “natural” does not mean natural, and where a cultural distinction needs to be made.

Chapter 10 is “Christian Vocation, Freedom of God, and Homosexuality” by Nancy J. Duff of Princeton Theological Seminary, where the thesis, based on the doctrine of vocation and the freedom of God, is that some people are called into homosexual relationships (261). She obviously rejects the plain sense of Scripture.

Balch’s conclusions follow the revisionist reasoning, and his appeal to Jewish readings seem only to cloud the issue.

Overall, the book is a source for understanding the position of those who advocate the homosexual lifestyle and its acceptance and inclusion in the church. With only 2 of 10 articles presenting the traditional position, it is clearly biased, and thus not profitable for those who seek rebuttals to the revisionist arguments.

Dennis W. Bickers. *The Tentmaking Pastor*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000. 136 pp. \$13.99 (paper). Reviewed by Alex D. Montoya, Associate Professor of Pastoral Ministries, The Master’s Seminary.

*The Tentmaking Pastor* is written by an actual tentmaking pastor, Dennis W. Bickers, pastor of Hebron Baptist Church in Madison, Indiana. Since taking the church, he has worked full time in secular employment, first at Cummings Engine Company and now as owner of Madison Heating and Air Condition. Undoubtedly,

he is qualified to pen such a book.

The book covers the topic of tentmaking from a practical perspective. The author attempts to make a case for bivocational ministry in chapters 1 and 2, stating that many churches are too small to compensate a full-time pastor adequately, and such churches are better served by a bivocational pastor in a long pastorate than by a revolving door of short pastorates. Furthermore, he states that there is and will continue to be a shortage of pastors due to church planting, an aging ministry, an aging church and ministry drop-outs (26-32).

Pastor Bickers then addresses the tentmaker himself with chapters on "Preparation for Bivocational ministry," "A Rewarding Ministry," "The Need for Balance," and "The Importance of Preaching." These are valuable for those called to a tentmaking ministry. Here the author shares his personal struggles as a tentmaker and the lessons learned.

The last section of the book is an appeal for men and churches to consider the viability of a tentmaking ministry. He lists a number of practical suggestions to make this happen.

The book is an excellent source for those contemplating a tentmaking ministry, and churches which may be in a situation where a full-time pastor may not ever be a reality. It does not establish a clear biblical rationale for the tentmaking call. The danger also exists that some will see the church as their second job, when in actuality the "tentmaking" is the second job. There was not real emphasis on "tentmaking" as a temporary step in forming the church (as was Paul's case). This lack is seen from the author's move from one job to another. This is a caution to consider. Overall, this reviewer found the book refreshing and enlightening.

Robert L. Brandt and Zenas J. Bicket. *The Spirit Helps Us Pray: A Biblical Theology of Prayer*. Springfield, Mo.: Logion, 1997. 469 pp. \$26.99 (cloth).  
Reviewed by James Rosscup, Professor of Bible Exposition.

Here is a survey on many points from prayers in each stage of Bible history. The authors are Pentecostal. Brandt is a former president of Central Indian Bible College and an executive presbyter for the Assemblies of God. Bicket was president of Berean College for ten years.

First, strengths are of note. The writers define confession as acknowledging sin, or affirming God's greatness and goodness (23). They see intercession as one or more persons, human or divine (cf. Rom 8:26-27) asking God on behalf of another person or persons (26). The book points to obeying and building altars as reasons Abraham rose to a great role before God. It fails to show God's sovereign grace initiating and maintaining Abraham's relationship to Himself as making him great.

Other surveys discuss such characters as Job, Moses, Hannah, Samuel, David, Jeremiah, Daniel, Jesus, and Paul. On Daniel 9 one reads, "Knowing God's

will does not render prayer unnecessary; it makes it all the more important and effective since praying in faith always brings a response" (172). Chapter 8 on Jesus' prayer teaching has effective points, and Chapter 14 offers help in understanding the relation of angels to prayer in aiding saints and fulfilling God's will.

Weaknesses also appear. The first chapter rates "communion" as a deeper level of fellowship (intimacy) than some other prayer. Is not all true prayer, in any aspect (e.g., petition, intercession, praise) communion with God? And cannot the godly commune with God in all life's issues? Why *rate* at levels what the Bible does not give us authority to rank?

One can ask why in the introduction's key words/phrases on prayer, a frequent NT word, *proseuchomai*, does not appear. Far later, on p. 283, it does. Confusion arises in calling petition, intercession, and confession "means" of prayer (28), and seeing as "aspects" all 15 concepts listed (31). Some are attitudes, distinct from aspects. Prayer's "aspects," "parts," or "segments" can aptly refer to parts such as petition or intercession, but an "attitude" is a spiritual characteristic that should permeate any aspect of prayer, even all parts of life. It would be effective for the book to define "worship" more carefully. The writers list it as reverence/devotion and as one word in a list of 15 on prayer (30-31), leaving the impression that the others are not worship. Any attitude, word, or act of life or in prayer can be "worship." The book is also misleading in giving the impression that worship is *praise* only. All parts of prayer, or of life, are true worship if genuine devotion to God is in them.

Other attitudes that the list omits are strategic in filling all of life and all parts of prayer. Listening (hearing) and watching are examples. The book tabs submission as a "condition" for praying effectively (28). Yes, it is a condition that is an attitude, and to this Scripture adds other attitudes, e.g., faith, love, humility, unity. Later, the authors see waiting as highly crucial. Apart from their remarks, to "wait" in biblical usage as in the Psalms and Isa 40:29-31 means to trust/hope confidently and patiently expect. The writers do not explain how the various terms (aspects or attitudes) blend harmoniously in a unified life of prayer.

It is frustrating to read that the Greek word *deesis* in some texts means "a more importunate, passionate pleading with God" (29), and find no examples.

The book's many good things are, for readers of non-Pentecostal orientation, also clouded by defining "praying in the Spirit" (cf. Eph 6:18; Jude 20) as praying in an unknown tongue (28). Neither text that expressly uses the phrase links prayer with "an unknown tongue" or hints at this identification. The writers read the idea into the verses from their belief system, but Ephesians and Jude in their own overall and near contexts deal with issues such as prayer in the whole of life in harmony with the Spirit's will and power.

To read that "of all God's creatures only people pray" (35) is disturbing. Do angels not pray, as in praise, when they speak to exalt God, as in the Revelation or in lauding God before shepherds in Luke 2?

The book's summaries through the Bible give impetus to increase and sharpen prayer. Still, its ideas often lack quality or fail to relate things properly to

build confidence about its guidance. The use of the work may be confined more to schools where praying in the Spirit is seen as prayer speaking in tongues.

John D. Currid. *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997. 269 pp. \$21.99 (paper). Reviewed by Michael A. Grisanti, Associate Professor of Old Testament.

John Currid, who received his doctoral degree from the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago and is presently an Associate Professor of Old Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi, has provided a very readable and profitable overview of the many and varied interrelationships between ancient Egypt and the OT.

Currid writes his book in a time when many biblical scholars contend that there was little actual connection between Egypt and the Bible. For some, the Bible's references are mostly anachronisms, i.e., references to an Egyptian element long after the fact (and therefore these elements provide nothing helpful for understanding the Ancient Near Eastern [ANE] background of a given section of Scripture). Some regard the Egyptian "connections" as a figment of the biblical writer's imagination. In contemporary nomenclature, scholars who view the historicity of the Bible with great suspicion and skepticism are labeled as "minimalists." At the outset, Currid lays before his readers his intention to "argue vigorously against the prevailing minimalistic approach. . . . A primary aim of this book is to show many firm points of contact between Egypt and the Bible on a variety of levels" (13).

Currid divides his volume into five major sections (thirteen chapters). The first section introduces the larger issue of the significance of ANE background and historical data. After delineating reasons why certain scholars downplay the significance of an Egyptian background for the OT, Currid examines some of the cosmologies of the ANE world, comparing them to a Hebrew cosmology. He contends that the biblical pattern came first and the other ANE concepts derive from that original pattern.

The second section (and the largest section, 42 % of the book) considers Egyptian elements found in the Pentateuch. After comparing the cosmogonies of Egypt and Genesis 1–2, Currid examines the Egyptian background of Potiphar, the confrontation of Moses' rod/serpent with the rods/serpents of the Egyptian magicians, the Ten Plagues, and the bronze serpent erected during the wilderness wanderings. He also gives attention to Israel's itinerary as they traveled from Egypt to the land of promise.

In the third section Currid examines the connections that existed between Egypt and Israel that appear in the historical books of the OT, giving special attention to Shishak's invasion of the southern kingdom during the reign of

Rehoboam. The final two sections compare Egyptian and biblical wisdom literature and prophetic material.

In addition to a handful of illustrations (figures, photographs, and maps, 11 total), Currid provides a select bibliography of relevant works dating from 1973-1995. The book concludes with a helpful Scripture and subject index. The most helpful figure (#1, pp. 17-19) involves a chronology of Egypt and Palestine and includes a select list of kings. Although he does not address the issue directly in the body of the book, this chronology shows that Currid favors a late date for the exodus. At the end of chapter ten, in the form of an appendix, Currid provides a running commentary of the Bubastite Portal (189-202), which has special significance for the reign of Shishak. Toward the beginning of Chapter 11, Currid includes a helpful starter bibliography of works that deal with the relationship of the “Wisdom of Amenemope” and the Book of Proverbs.

A few scattered conclusions made by Currid deserve mention. Although he says that the precise location of Sinai is unknown (137), his map suggests that he accepts the traditional location for Sinai (Jebel Musa) rather than the Arabian location suggested in recent scholarship (124). Currid suggests that the crossing of the “Red Sea” took place at the northern end of the Gulf of Suez (135-36).

Currid could significantly improve this volume by including more maps and illustrations. At several points where Currid delineates various place names (especially those in Egypt), a detailed map for the reader to consult at that point would have proved helpful (e.g., Chap. 7).

This reviewer found the volume interesting and helpful throughout. Currid is willing to offer a unique interpretation in places, firmly interacts with and critiques minimalists, and admits when he feels that existing evidence does not allow for a concrete conclusion. Kenneth Kitchen, an Egyptologist of note, writes that “Currid’s well-documented book is a breath of fresh air and represents a valuable contribution” (11).

James F. Engel and William A. Dyrness. *Changing the Mind of Missions: Where Have We Gone Wrong?* Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2000. 192 pages. \$10.99 (paper). Reviewed by Cecil Stalnaker, Ph.D., Grace Community Church Missionary and Associate Professor of World Evangelization, Tyndale Theological Seminary, The Netherlands.

*Changing the Mind of Missions* will disturb the comfortable (Western mission workers), but comfort the disturbed (probably non-Westerners). The intended audience of this work is Westerners who are highly committed to missions—missionaries, future missionaries, mission executives, pastors, and mission committees—but it is specifically aimed at leaders who are determining the future direction of their particular mission.

The writers feel that North American commitment to the evangelization of the world is in retrenchment and that North American missions are not functioning as they should—contrary to what God intended. Therefore, they attempt to diagnose what has gone wrong with the harvest, calling God's servants to biblical fidelity. For them, missions has become entrapped in modernity, resulting in many negative consequences. Thus, in an exhortative, sometimes pleading challenge, they maintain that missions must be carried out differently.

The book starts by stating three trends in missions: (1) missions being caught in American culture with its economic and pragmatic emphasis; (2) a shifting away of the initiative in missions from the Western world to the younger churches of the two-third's world; and (3) the loss of theological roots in missions in making the gospel merely proclamation. The most provocative section is Chapter 3, where the writers maintain that meager harvest results are due to a Westernized approach to missions and its deviation from biblical roots. The writers enumerate several problems in Western missions—influence of modernity, evangelism void of discipleship, pragmatic evangelistic strategies, and the church's having been replaced as the primary sending agency. In chapters four to six, suggestions are presented to counter the above trends. Engel and Dyrness advocate a break from modernistic mission assumptions, a desire to discern where God is at work and an effort to join Him, a need for the local church to recapture its organic, that is, missional nature, and that mission agencies make the necessary paradigmatic changes, even to the extent of eliminating their programs entirely if necessary. The book terminates with seven statements that clearly indicate the route that missions should take if they are to guarantee their future.

Needless to say, *Changing the Mind of Missions* is challenging, having many significant ideas that need to be considered. It is a relevant book in light of today's changing mission context. Its critique of rationalism and pragmatism in missions is justified.

Negatively, the writers' desire to eliminate any distinction between evangelism and social transformation. But does this accord with the Scriptures? After all, Jesus did appear to place a priority on evangelism when he said: "For what will a man be profited, if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul?" The writers' disdain for denominationalism in reference to church planting is clear; yet, has not God blessed and used denominational efforts in advancing His kingdom? To disregard denominational distinctives may sometimes do more harm than good.

Structurally, the book is clearly laid out, with section and sub-section titles and the major points clearly emphasized. However, unfortunately it has no subject index.

Indeed, these capable writers will accomplish their purpose—to disturb the comfortable Western mission worker. Whether one agrees with them or not, minds will be challenged, especially those of mission executives and of missionaries responsible for field operations. This is a book that mission decision-makers should study and discuss chapter by chapter.

Joseph A. Fitzmyer. *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Christian Origins*. Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature. Ed. by Peter W. Flint and Martin G. Abegg, Jr. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000. xvii + 290 pp. \$34.99 (paper). Reviewed by William D. Barrick, Professor of Old Testament.

Joseph A. Fitzmyer is professor emeritus of biblical studies at the Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C. He has been directly involved in the research and publishing of the Dead Sea Scrolls since 1955. He has authored a number of significant works including *The Semitic Background of the New Testament* (The Biblical Resource Series; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans/Livonia, Mich.: Dove, 1997) and *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Major Publications and Tools for Study* (SBLRS 20, rev. ed.; Atlanta: Scholars, 1990). *Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature* is a series focusing on the interdisciplinary task of analyzing and interpreting the published Scrolls. All but one of this volume's chapters (Chapter 5, "Qumran Messianism," 73-110) had been published elsewhere between 1987 and 2000. Each chapter has been revised and updated for the current publication. A helpful set of indexes concludes the volume (267-90).

The volume opens with general methodological considerations (1-16), concentrating on the contribution of the Scrolls to an understanding of "the Palestinian Jewish matrix from which early Christianity emerged" (1). After demonstrating that "Dead Sea Scrolls" might refer, in its broadest sense, to the materials from nine different sources (2), Fitzmyer restricts the corpus for these studies to "the Qumran Scrolls and . . . those texts from Masada and the Cairo Genizah that are related to them" (4).

Direct ties with the Essene community of Qumran and John the Baptist, Fitzmyer concludes, cannot be proved or disproved even though there are seven reasons to take the potentiality seriously (19-21). Neither is there any basis for hypothesizing a relationship between Jesus and the Qumran community (21-23). Two issues have focused attention on the Scrolls' contributions to NT studies: nineteen Greek fragments in Cave 7 and the view of some scholars that the Scrolls are Jewish Christian in nature. As to the former, the fragments are too tiny for their contents to be identified with certainty (23-26). As for the latter, Fitzmyer declares that the claims of Robert H. Eisenman and Michael O. Wise in their book entitled, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Uncovered: The First Complete Translation and Interpretation of 50 Key Documents Withheld for Over 35 Years* (Rockport, Mass.: Element Books, 1992), are "exaggerated and simply wrong" (27).

The Scrolls shed light on the Palestinian Jewish background of some key Pauline teachings, christological titles, Gospel passages, and Melchizedek's role in the Epistle to the Hebrews (28-40). The matter of christological titles is especially pertinent to the use of "Son of God" and "Son of the Most High" in the Aramaic text of 4Q246, the focus of Chapters 3-5 (41-110). Chapter 3 is an outstanding

description, transcription, translation, and commentary on 4Q246. It alone makes the book worth its price. Six different interpretations of this “Son of God” reference are cited: (1) J. T. Milik’s blasphemous Syrian king, (2) David Flusser’s apocalyptic Antichrist, (3) Florentino García Martínez’s apocalyptic and eschatological angelic savior, (4) Martin Hengel’s Jewish people collectively, (5) Emile Puech’s apocalyptic messiah, and (6) Fitzmyer’s apocalyptic future Jewish ruler “who may be a successor to the Davidic throne, but who is not envisaged as a Messiah” (60).

Chapter 4 is entitled “The Background of ‘Son of God’ as a Title for Jesus” (63-72). Fitzmyer denies any messianic intent in Psalm 2—a direct contradiction to the NT writers’ claims in Hebrews 5:5-11 and Acts 13:16-41. Chapter 5 (“Qumran Messianism,” 73-110) continues the discussion of 4Q246. The author indicates that confusion has arisen due to failure to preserve the distinctions between *messianism*, *eschatological*, and *apocalyptic* (74). However, he does not offer any distinctive definitions that might clarify the matter.

Two brief studies (Chapters 6 and 7) relate to topics significant to the NT Gospels. The first describes the discovery of a collection of sapiential beatitudes in a Cave 4 text (4Q525) that finally has been published forty-two years after its existence was first revealed (111-18). The second discusses the Aramaic evidence affecting the interpretation of the NT’s use of *Hosanna* (119-29). Fitzmyer traces the term’s semantic shift from its inception in Psalm 118:25 to its use in the Gospels.

Chapters 8 and 9 comprise a fairly extensive discussion of the Qumran texts of the apocryphal book Tobit (131-235). Chapter 10 is a brief survey of the progress of study regarding the Qumran Aramaic Levi Document and a comment on the language of composition (237-48). In Chapter 11 Fitzmyer tackles the recent identification of the Qumran community with the Sadducees (249-60). He concludes that such an identification is unsupported on the basis of current evidence: “It is one thing to say that the Qumran community and the Sadducees held certain views or interpretations of Scripture in common, but quite another to say that the Jews of Qumran were Sadducees” (259). The final chapter is dedicated to a brief treatment of two Damascus Document passages that have been taken as references to the death (the “gathering in”) of the Teacher of the Qumran community (261-65). Fitzmyer supports that meaning contrary to Ben Zion Wacholder’s recent contention that the passages should be taken as references to the gathering of the community by the Teacher at the founding of the sect in Damascus.

Fitzmyer’s work should be consulted by everyone studying the Dead Sea Scrolls’ relationship to the NT as well as by those involved in Aramaic studies. It is an island of sanity in the midst of recent publications presenting an overly skewed view of the Scrolls and their relationship to Christian origins, Christian theology, and Christian Scripture.

*Theological Dialogue*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2000. 228 pp. \$10.39 (paper). Reviewed by Richard L. Mayhue, Professor of Theology and Pastoral Ministries.

Two leading voices in the expanding discussion of whether hell is a place of eternal conscious torment for unbelievers or whether, after the final judgement, all unbelievers are totally put out of existence. Fudge champions the latter view in his book *The Fire that Consumes: The Biblical Case for Conditional Immortality* (Paternoster). Peterson strongly supports the former in his volume *Hell On Trial: The Case for Eternal Punishment* (Presbyterian and Reformed). In this helpful little volume, Fudge first makes the case for conditionalism to which Peterson writes a response (19-113). Peterson then does the same in support of the traditional view of hell which is followed by Fudge's interaction (117-181). The great value of this book is that it makes available a very complex subject in scope of terms that Christian laymen can grasp.

The volume is well-documented by both sides. Also, it has very helpful indexes, e.g., names, subject, and Scripture. For those who have been confused as to what each side teaches or those who have been intimidated by the vast amount of complex material which needs to be digested to understand the subject, this little volume will bring helpful relief.

If your appetite is whetted by this subject/volume, you could expand on it by consulting *The Master's Seminary Journal*, Fall 1998, which is exclusively devoted to the subject "Hell: Never, Forever, or Just for Awhile?"

Michael W. Holmes (ed.). *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999. xv + 613 pp. \$24.99 (paper). Reviewed by William C. Varner, Professor of Bible, Director of IBEX, The Master's College.

Michael Holmes, Professor of Biblical Studies and Early Christianity at Bethel College, has provided scholars and students with the most accessible and up to date resource available for study of the Apostolic Fathers. Since this book is actually an "update" of a "revision" of a "second edition" of an "original," it is helpful to review briefly the pre-history of this great work.

J. B. Lightfoot, Cambridge Professor and later Bishop of Durham, provided the English-speaking world a great service with his invaluable edition of the *Apostolic Fathers* (Macmillan, 1890). The first edition included the Epistles of Clement, Ignatius, and Polycarp plus the Martyrdom of Polycarp. In 1891 he completed his work with his own addition of the Didache plus the texts of the Epistle of Barnabas, Shepherd of Hermas, the Epistle to Diognetus, as well as the Fragment of Papias, contributed by J. R. Harmer (Macmillan, 1891).

This last one-volume edition served the church well for a century. Users of the Lightfoot-Harmer text, however, had to contend with a rather antiquated English translation of these ancient books that often obfuscated rather than enlightened readers. In the current edition under review, editor Holmes expresses this concern tastefully:

Of all Lightfoot's work it was the translation which had borne most heavily the passage of time, not the least reason being changes in English style and usage, particularly during the last half-century. As a consequence, while the underlying basis of the translation remained sound, not a few readers found the translation itself more difficult and off-putting than helpful (x).

Therefore, in 1989 a revised English translation of the Lightfoot-Harmer volume appeared (*The Apostolic Fathers*. 2nd ed. Edited and reviewed by Michael W. Holmes. Grand Rapids: Baker 1989). In 1992 Professor Holmes contributed a Greek and English edition, incorporating the new translation—*The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations of Their Writings*, 2nd ed., edited and translated by Lightfoot and Harmer, edited and reviewed by Michael W. Holmes (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992). Finally the present “updated edition” under review was published in 1999.

In spite of his gracious acknowledgement of Lightfoot's and Harmer's labors, Holmes really has contributed an entirely new edition of the Apostolic Fathers with their Greek and English texts on facing pages. This edition provides an update to the biographies and introduction in the 1992 work, as well as the evidence of an additional witness to Hermas (Bodmer Papyrus XXXVIII).

This reviewer cannot express adequately his appreciation for this edition of the earliest extant Christian writings outside the NT. It is clear, up-to-date, and affordable, especially when compared to the two volume Loeb Classical Library edition, translated by Kirsopp Lake (*Apostolic Fathers*. Loeb Classical Library. 2 vols. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1976-77).

Evangelicals have often ignored the writings of the Church Fathers, probably due to a distrust of “tradition” that has prevailed in the Protestant heritage. However, most evangelicals still utilize without much qualm biblical commentaries extensively in their studies. Should they not at least be aware of what these second-century authors wrote, some of whom were in direct contact with the apostles during their youth?

This book should be purchased and studied, no matter what level of Greek proficiency characterizes the pastor, student, or professor who uses it. Even if one already possesses the old Lightfoot edition, this new work by Holmes is well worth its cost.

William Horbury, ed. *Hebrew Study from Ezra to Ben-Yehuda*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1999. xiv + 337 pp. \$69.95 (cloth). Reviewed by William D. Barrick, Professor of Old Testament.

*Hebrew Study from Ezra to Ben-Yehuda* is a collection of papers which were read at the 1996 meeting of the British Association for Jewish Studies. Horbury himself is Professor of Jewish and Early Christian Studies in the University of Cambridge. Of the 22 contributors to the volume, only two are from outside the U. K. (Jan Willem van Henten and Peter van Rooden, both of the University of Amsterdam). Nine of the 22 are from the University of Cambridge.

Front material includes a helpful section entitled "Notes on Contributors" (ix-xi) and an "Introduction" by the editor involving a detailed survey of the contents and contributions of the various essays (1-12). The body of the volume is divided into six parts arranged chronologically: Part I, "The Second Temple Period" (13-68, four essays); Part II, "Rabbinic and Early Christian Hebraists" (69-131, four essays); Part III, "Rome and Byzantium" (133-61, two essays); Part IV, "The Karaites" (163-203, two essays); Part V, "Christian Hebraists in Mediaeval and Early Modern Europe" (205-67, five essays); and, Part VI, "The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries" (269-317, five essays). Back material includes a "Select Bibliography" (319-20) and a full set of valuable indexes for authors, proper names, places, and subjects (321-37).

Three themes run through a majority of the essays: (1) Many Jews studied Hebrew as an acquired second or even third language, accessing it through either their mother tongue or yet another language. (2) The primary focus of Hebrew studies has been the biblical texts. (3) The acquisition of Hebrew has been dependent upon what aids and tools were available (viz., translations, transliterations, grammars, and lexicons). Essays representative of these three foci are, respectively: (1) Judith Olszowy-Schlanger's "The Knowledge of Hebrew Among Early Karaites, and Its Use in Karaite Legal Contracts" (165-85), (2) Geoffrey Khan's "The Karaite Tradition of Hebrew Grammatical Thought" (186-203), and (3) Philip S. Alexander's "How Did the Rabbis Learn Hebrew?" (71-89).

Joachim Schaper's "Hebrew and Its Study in the Persian Period" (15-26) will be of interest to students of the post-exilic period. In "Hebrew and Its Study at Qumran" (38-52), Jonathan Campbell agrees with Schaper that the language situation among Palestinian Jews in the Second Temple period was complex. Hebrew definitely had a leading role at Qumran among the religious (48). Schaper believes that "the use of Aramaic was probably restricted to the upper classes" (16) while the common people spoke Hebrew (17). At the conclusion of Campbell's essay, he provides a categorized listing of 130 scrolls from Qumran (49-52). Alexander concludes that Hebrew had "effectively disappeared as a vernacular" by A.D. 200 (73), but agrees with Schaper and Campbell concerning the complexities of language usage from the Babylonian exile to the NT period (74). In "The Hebrew Matthew and Hebrew Study" (122-31), William Horbury takes a slightly different view: "Despite the discovery of Hebrew texts at Qumran and among the Bar Kokhba

letters, and of some Hebrew inscriptions, Aramaic was probably the principal language even of Jewish biblical study" (129-30).

Hebrew teachers and students will be intrigued by Alexander's description of the rabbinic employment of literal translations as a crib or crutch in learning classical Hebrew (80-82). The technique may even account for the dual nature (i.e., awkward but learned) of Aquila's Greek translation of the Hebrew OT (82-84). Horbury's essay on the Hebrew version of the Gospel of Matthew (122-31) describes the part that this translation played in reviving the study of biblical Hebrew.

Anyone studying the priestly garments in the OT will find Robert Hayward's essay ("St Jerome and the Meaning of the High-Priestly Vestments," 90-105) very informative. Jerome's use of Hebrew "to display his knowledge of the Hebrew language" (91) bears an uncomfortable similarity to some modern preachers' display of biblical language knowledge in the pulpit. Jerome's study of biblical Hebrew in the 5th century A.D. was followed by a dearth of Christian Hebraists throughout the Byzantine Empire (discussed in Nicholas de Lange's essay, "A Thousand Years of Hebrew in Byzantium," 147-61). The end of that era of darkness corresponded with the reappearance of Christian Hebraists (the topic of the five essays in Part V).

"Some Points of Interest in Sixteenth-Century Translations of Exodus 15" by Graham Davies (249-56) aims at identifying issues that 16th-century translators were facing in the study of Hebrew, links between the various English versions of that time, and sources for the renderings those translators introduced (250). Gareth Lloyd Jones's essay, "Robert Wakefield (d. 1537): The Father of English Hebraists?" (234-48), opens with a thank-you letter to Henry VIII from students at Cambridge. King Henry had fulfilled their greatest desire—to "have a most learned and industrious person to teach" Hebrew. They explained that without Hebrew "divinely inspired literature cannot be thoroughly investigated or correctly interpreted" (234). May their tribe increase!

This volume of essays will prove to be a valuable library resource in any educational institution offering course work in Hebrew. Hebrew professors should read it and inform colleagues and students about essays pertinent to a variety of disciplines represented in their school's curriculum.

Thomas Ice and Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr. *The Great Tribulation: Past or Future?*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999. 224 pp. \$13.99 (paper). Reviewed by Donald E. Green, Faculty Associate of New Testament.

Until recently, the eschatological position of preterism—the view that the Great Tribulation is a past event fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70—had largely been off the theological radar screen. R. C. Sproul, Kenneth Gentry, and others have revived the doctrine, even though it still remains a minority

view. *The Great Tribulation* seeks to contrast preterism and futurism to help Christians understand prophetic fulfillment issues (7).

Gentry, a professor at Bahnsen Seminary in California, presents the preterist position. Thomas Ice, familiar to many readers of this journal, defends the futurist position. Each author devotes two chapters to presenting his view, and has a separate chapter rebutting the other's position. Their arguments are supported by extensive footnotes that are a welcome source for further research.

Gentry asserts that the Tribulation prophecies in Matthew 24–25 were fulfilled in A.D. 70 based on his interpretation of certain “time reference” verses like Matthew 24:34 (“Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place”). That verse is “the key to locating the Great Tribulation in history” (26). Gentry ably defends his view in the first two chapters, restricting his main comments to Matthew 24:1-34 (14).

The next two chapters are Ice's presentation of the pretribulational view. He capably takes the reader through the flow of the OT (Chapter 3) and the NT (Chapter 4) to establish his position. He focuses on Luke 21:20-28 to show how the destruction of Jerusalem and a future coming of Christ fit together in biblical revelation.

The space constraints of the book make it unreasonable to think that either side could deliver a knockout blow. However, broader research will convince the unbiased reader to reject preterism. The following points are noteworthy:

(1) Preterists employ faulty hermeneutics. They insist on a literal interpretation of the time references (26-34), but freely resort to symbolism when necessary to support their system (e.g., 55-65). Such inconsistency should be rejected as theologically self-serving. Further, their loose juxtaposition of unrelated texts should not be confused with actual exegesis.

Preterists also pit Scripture against itself. Gentry uses Matthew 24:34 to override the plain sense of verses that would otherwise contradict his system (e.g., 51, 54, 55, 195). It is better to recognize that all Scripture is equally inspired by God, and consequently each verse should be allowed the same weight in the interpretive process.

(2) Preterists selectively quote Scripture. Gentry repeatedly jumps over Matthew 23:39 (“You shall not see Me *until* you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’”) in his discussion of Matthew 23:37-38 and Matthew 24:1 (23-24, 172, 182). He relegates it to a footnote even though it obviously undermines his argument (208 n. 46). He also deals inadequately with Matthew 24:36 (“Of that day and hour no one knows”) and similar verses that indicate that Jesus did not intend to set time frames for His disciples as they looked for His return.

(3) Preterists are not credible when they dogmatically assert that the time reference in Matthew 24:34 is “indisputably clear” (26-27). If that were so, one would expect Gentry to name more than two theologians born in the last century who held his view (13). Further, this “clear” verse has been the subject of at least eight interpretations throughout church history, with most views having several adherents. Not only does that undermine preterist credibility in presenting the facts,

it also shows that they have built their system around a debatable text—clearly a shaky proposition.

(4) Finally, the testimony of the early church contradicts preterism. Gentry argues that contemporary onlookers would interpret the destruction of Jerusalem as God's judgment on Israel (60-61). However, early church writers, including the first-century *Didache* and Justin Martyr (c. 140-150), took a futuristic view of the Olivet Discourse. That is inconceivable if the destruction of Jerusalem was "obviously" God's judgment to its witnesses.

The present reviewer recommends *The Great Tribulation* as a suitable introduction to the preterist position and some of the arguments that futurists employ against it. The careful interpreter will use it in conjunction with other eschatological resources for the most effective study.

George A. F. Knight. *The Song of Moses: A Theological Quarry*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995. viii + 156 pp. \$12.99 (paper). Reviewed by William D. Barrick, Professor of Old Testament.

This little volume is aptly titled *A Theological Quarry*. It is a play on "the Rock" as a divine title in Deuteronomy 32. Pastors and students will discover some delightful lessons that Knight draws from the text of this significant OT chapter. The OT prophets and the NT writers dug in this quarry with profit, so it is fitting that we should continue to mine its wealth. Knight's book invites the reader into a deeper contemplation of the devotional and expository richness of the Song of Moses.

George Angus Fulton Knight is a retired professor and pastor living in Dunedin, New Zealand. He has ministerial experience in Hungary, Scotland, the United States, the Pacific islands, and New Zealand. He is one of the editors for the International Theological Commentary series and has authored three of its volumes (*Isaiah 40-55*, *Isaiah 56-66*, and *The Song of Songs and Jonah*). He has also produced commentaries on Leviticus and Psalms in the *Daily Study Bible*.

In the "Introduction," Knight discusses the higher critical view ascribing Deuteronomy 32 to the work of a hypothetical Deuteronomist who was updating the work of Moses (1-8). He concludes that such a viewpoint is erroneous and that the Song is truly the work of Moses (6). He also rejoices that, after a period of neglect, "the study of Hebrew is being made mandatory in some of the best theological schools" (8).

The "Commentary" section of the volume (9-138) examines the text verse by verse. Then a "Postscript" (139-46) summarizes the continuity of the teachings of the Song of Moses and the teachings of the NT. Knight issues two challenges in these pages. The first is for readers to immerse themselves in the study of the continuity of OT and NT with regard to the person of God and the salvation He offers (141-42). The second is an invitation to Christians, Jews, and Muslims to

engage in a joint reexamination of their common roots in the faith of Moses and Abraham (143, 145). A “Selected Bibliography” closes the book (147-56). Although it is a small tome, a set of indexes would greatly increase its usefulness.

Throughout the “Commentary” Knight hammers away at various theological and interpretive concepts that are characteristic of the present. He reminds the reader that the theme of Deuteronomy 32 “is the character of God, not—as many Westerners would wish it—’My experience of God’” (14). The Septuagint’s Greek text differs from the Masoretic Hebrew text in a number of places in the Song of Moses, so the author seizes the opportunity to warn about putting too much trust in the Septuagint. The student of Scripture must “remember that the LXX was penned by scholars who as fallible human beings were blissfully unaware that they were but children of their day and age” (23; also cf. 39, 67, 72, 115, 128, 133-34). Likewise, the author warns of overstating the contribution of the Dead Sea Scrolls: “At certain points the Scrolls demonstrate more *eisegesis* than *exegesis* of Moses, more interpretation of what the community wanted to find in the biblical text than what was actually there” (40). Modern literary criticism’s overstatements also draw Knight’s fire: “It is presumptuous on our part to straightjacket such an ancient poem as this within the bonds of the various classifications of Hebrew literature that moderns have thought up in the light of the literature of later centuries” (44).

Syntactical analysis, word studies, NT use of the OT, and theological application are all represented in Knight’s volume. The author’s approach is more theological than exegetical, although he is careful to establish his theological comments upon his exegetical results. This reviewer’s glowing comments should not be taken as stating that the volume is an example of errorless exposition or of theological perfection. Knight’s acceptance of Mosaic authorship for Deuteronomy 32 does not prevent him from allowing for multiple authors of the Pentateuch (55) and for later additions of Deuteronomy 30 (81) and the Law of Holiness (83). He also denies any Mosaic awareness of life beyond death (34, 43). In addition, he attributes the Israelite concept of Sheol to an erroneous Egyptian and Canaanite concept (78).

*The Song of Moses* is itself a “theological quarry.” As in any mining operation, however, the reader must sort the mined material by means of careful sifting and examination. Having done so, this reviewer found much gold and not a few gems of high value.

John MacArthur. *The Gospel According to the Apostles*. Nashville: Word, 2000. 272 pp. \$10.39 (paper). Reviewed by Richard L. Mayhue, Professor of Theology and Pastoral Ministries.

*The Gospel According to the Apostles* is a reprint of John MacArthur’s

previous volume *Faith Works*. It is the companion volume to an earlier work, *The Gospel According to Jesus* (Zondervan). The set of two volumes is a complete treatment of what the entire NT says with regard to salvation. Dr. MacArthur rightly concludes that there is only one gospel, the one preached by Christ and by all of the apostles without deviation.

This volume is especially helpful in that it provides a very readable treatment of the subject which interacts with the contemporary discussion on "Lordship salvation" as it relates to the writings of the Fathers and a careful exposition of the entire NT. This book is must reading for anyone who takes the gospel seriously.

Douglas J. Moo. *The Letter of James*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000. xvi + 271 pp. \$28.00 (cloth). Reviewed by Paul W. Felix, Assistant Professor of New Testament.

Professor Moo is no stranger to commentary writing on the Book of James. As many students of James know, he contributed an earlier and briefer work on this letter as part of the Tyndale series (*The Letter of James* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985]). The Pillar series allowed the author to double the space he could devote to commentary on the letter. The primary benefit of this is more attention given to pursuing issues of background and theology.

Moo lays the foundation for the commentary by discussing the following introductory topics: (1) The Letter in the Church, (2) Nature and Genre, (3) Author, (4) Occasion and Date, (5) Theology, and (6) Structure and Theme. This is not a hastily built foundation as Moo devotes 46 pages to these matters. A cursory survey of James in the life of the Christian church reveals that this canonical book is an important NT letter. It is a literary letter rather than a personal one that contains general admonitions concerning the condition of the readers. An obvious feature of James' letter is his use of the teachings of Jesus as a source and its striking similarities to the words and emphases of a certain segment of Hellenistic Judaism. That the letter lacks clear organization has often been noted, and Moo agrees with this assessment. With regards to the genre of James, the author rejects the identification as paraenesis or the popular selection of wisdom, and favors a sermon or homily.

The author builds a strong case for James, the brother of the Lord, being the author of this letter. Awareness that a growing number of scholars in the last two centuries have rejected this universally held viewpoint prompts Moo to consider some of their objections. He quickly dismisses the objections that James is not a Christian book at all and that the book was written by someone other than the Lord's brother. He devotes attention to James being a pseudepigraphical letter, giving a fair representation of this view. Yet, he does not deny that the letter was written by

James of Jerusalem. James writes to believing Jews, who are experiencing poverty and oppression, and are compromising spiritually so that they can rightfully be labeled as worldly. This profound letter was written during the middle 40s and certainly before the Jerusalem Council.

It is rare that James is mentioned as a theological letter. Moo reacts against this rarity by showing the contributions that James makes to the following theological topics: God, Eschatology, The Law, Wisdom, Poverty and Wealth, The Christian Life, Faith, Works, and Justification. Readers will appreciate the introductory discussion of the alleged conflict between James and Paul with regards to the critical doctrine of “justification by faith alone.”

The theme of James as advocated by the author is spiritual wholeness. “Basic to all that James says in his letter is his concern that his readers stop compromising with worldly values and behavior and give themselves wholly to the Lord” (46). The author develops this theme under the topics of the pursuit of spiritual wholeness (1:2-18), the evidence of spiritual wholeness (1:19-2:26), the community dimension of spiritual wholeness (3:1-4:12), and the worldview of spiritual wholeness (4:13-5:11).

The commentary proper consists of 205 pages devoted to a careful analysis of James’ message to his readers. It has five major sections that are dictated by the chapter divisions in James. These arbitrary divisions resulted in an unnatural break in the discussion of 3:13-4:3 (179). Within these chapter divisions, Moo faithfully follows the outline laid out in the Table of Contents. Each logical section is introduced by showing how the passage fits into the overall scheme of the structure of James, a fitting which due to the nature of this epistle can be a challenge for the interpreter. The author works hard to show that this practical letter has an overall structure.

A verse-by-verse interpretation of the text characterizes each section. Although the discussions are based upon the NIV, Moo frequently refers to the Greek text by means of transliteration. He gives primary attention to lexical details, but also a fair amount to syntactical discussions. Interpretive issues are handled fairly and evenly. The writer often gives “pros” and “cons” for various views, before taking a position. Textual problems are not ignored. Moo provides his readers with the preferred reading based on textual evidence (e.g., 78, 107, 103, 152, 166, 203). Numerous times he peppers his comments with good devotional insights (71, 76, 86, 87, 90, 93, etc.). He challenges the reader to consider how offensive and detestable sin really is (1:21) and how it is possible for seminary students, and even seminary professors, to deceive themselves regarding their true spiritual state by only hearing the word (1:22).

The author correlates the message of James to the teachings of Jesus as well as to extrabiblical material. The Index of Scripture References and the Index of Early Extrabiblical Literature reveal how often these parallels are brought out. Moo utilizes a number of significant resources that are available to the student of James. His Select Bibliography is good, up-to-date, and scholarly. The bibliography is strengthened by the various works that are identified in footnotes throughout the

book. The Index of Authors shows that he most often refers to the works of Davids, Dibelius, Frankemölle, Johnson, Laws, Martin, Mayor, and Mussner. He does not ignore important issues such as James and Paul on justification and the meaning of "law." One is able to get his perspective on these topics by utilizing the helpful Index of Subjects.

One shortcoming of this commentary is the use of the NIV as the preferred translation. On more than one occasion, Moo must take space to correct its translation (e.g., 185, 206). A small number of errors were also detected by this writer. The most noticeable was a reference to Tit 3:20 (245, 265), which should be 2 Tim 4:20. The reader of this commentary is also cautioned to be aware of the eschatology of Moo (posttribulational rapture). This becomes an issue in his interpretation of 5:8-9.

*The Letter of James* is designed for serious pastors and teachers of the Bible to make clear the text of Scripture as we have it (viii). Moo has done a commendable job in accomplishing this goal. Pastors and teachers will profit greatly from this important work on the Epistle of James.

Mark A. Noll and David N. Livingstone. *Evolution, Science, and Scripture: Selected Writings*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000. 347 pp. \$23.99 (paper).  
Reviewed by Trevor Craigen, Associate Professor of Theology.

Plaudits and accolades have consistently accompanied the writings of B. B. Warfield. He was an erudite scholar, a prolific writer, and a voracious reader. This selection, in chronological order, of eight articles, one lecture, and thirty-one book reviews, substantiates that evaluation. Preamble abstracts well summarize the content of the article or review. They attest the hard work of the editors and alert the reader on what to be aware of as he reads. A bibliography of two further articles and another twenty-five reviews, which were excluded from the selection, is also provided. In one book, then, is a handsome collection of resources for further discussion on science, the Bible, and evolution.

The introduction, concisely packed with information on the life and thoughts of this man, describes him as a conservative evolutionist (13). This immediately triggers questions on how he would harmonize science and Scripture, how he would treat the historical narrative of Genesis 1-2, and how he would relate general revelation to special revelation.

In fact, the introduction points out that Warfield, "the ablest modern defender of the theologically conservative doctrine of the inerrancy of the Bible, was also an evolutionist" (14). This was called the best-kept secret in American intellectual history and was intended, evidently, to prick the conscience of those who have treated theology and science in unsophisticated intellectual barrenness. Between the lines of the polemical vocabulary and turn of phrase one is supposed

to hear, apparently, “If only they would be like B. B., intellectually robust and sophisticated, able to provide such a fruitful working relationship between theology and science!” Was it just imagination that heard the frustrated sigh of the editors in closing off these comments?

What does come out repeatedly, however, is Warfield’s equivocating approach: maybe evolution is the process but then maybe it is not. Creation there must be, and mediate creation too, but then evolution, even if it needs to be more narrowly defined, should not be rejected out of hand nor fiercely held to as *The Answer!* Or to put it another way: “There may be such a thing as descent with variations forming new species, and yet *not* such a thing. . . . We may welcome evolution as accounting for much while yet seeing that it is not proven to account for all . . .” (121). Evolution was to him both potentially probable and improbable, neither proved nor disproved (169). Such equivocation—however a mark of honest candor on his part it might be—does show the danger of how a prevailing theory on origins may dominate the theologian’s thoughts to one degree or another and may finally impact his exegesis.

Warfield, the editors remind the readers, was committed to his “goal of harmonizing a sophisticated conservative theology and the most securely verified conclusions of modern science” (42). Why, then, did Warfield accord evolutionary concepts any value in his deliberations? He also affirmed that the Christian should strongly deny evolution’s offering any solution to the question of origins nor should evolution replace mediate creation because not all came from the “primal world-stuff” (209). Further no theological value was to be had from debate on the age of the earth (211, 222 f.). But what of a comment made a page earlier that the Christian has no quarrel with evolution when it is a suggested account of the method of divine providence? (210). What of his observations that evolution and creation are mutually exclusive? (200). One cannot help but muse on how dialectical this all sounds.

After perusing the articles and book reviews—and this was not an unpleasant task at all—the troubling question still looms large in the foreground: How could one who so staunchly proposed, defended, asserted, and taught that “the Bible communicates revelation from God *entirely without error*” [emphasis added], then turn around and entertain the notion that “evolution might offer the best way to understand the natural history of the earth and of humankind” (15)? Or how did he teach that man’s body could come via evolutionary process whereas his soul must come directly from God Himself (37). Actually, creationism (i.e., God directly creates each soul) operates as an escape clause to protect the distinctiveness of man’s *imago dei* when evolutionary development of man is proposed (cf. 215). Apparently, nothing in the Genesis accounts, or elsewhere in Scripture for that matter, needs be antagonistic toward evolution! “Needs be” sounds an alert: Is the text being flexed to accommodate a non-literal interpretation? Yes, it is! (39). And that is disconcerting enough to spotlight Warfield’s clay feet! Praised for his labors he might have been, but up on the pedestal as *the* discerning writer on evolution and science, as *the* model of how theologian and exegete must relate to science, he

cannot be, and should no longer be treated as such. When he was right, he was right, when he was wrong, he was just plain wrong, and disservice is done if he is then draped in the emperor's clothes!

He accepted the conclusions of a Princeton colleague, William Henry Green, that the genealogies of Scripture were not reliable for chronological calculations (39-40, 217-22). "Nothing can be clearer," he wrote, "than that it is precarious in the highest degree to draw chronological inferences from genealogical tables" (272). Genealogies do provide, however, a time-span from a beginning point to an endpoint, from one selected ancestor to another. When this is linked with years of life, and with age at point of another's birth, then the temporal nature of the genealogies could not be clearer. These genealogies are not historically and chronologically inaccurate and totally irrelevant on when the Flood and the Beginning occurred. To exclude genealogies from calculating the age of the earth, notwithstanding the fluid ancestral use of 'begat,' constitutes nothing less than a critical exclusion. Enough said!

The articles on Darwin's religious life, on the antiquity and unity of humankind, and on Calvin's doctrine of creation were most instructive, as were the footnotes in all chapters. Undoubtedly this selection from the pen of Warfield will stimulate more thought and study on evolution, science, and the Scripture, and for that the editors are to be commended. The reactions may not be always partial to Warfield, but then one could wonder, in response, whether or not this man's equivocation and conclusions would have remained the same had he access to the wealth of information available now, but not available in his day. Would he, or would he not, have graced the halls of recent creationism?

Richard V. Peace. *Conversion in the New Testament: Paul and the Twelve*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999. xv + 397 pages. \$25.00 (paper). Reviewed by Cecil Stalnaker, Ph.D., Grace Community Church missionary and Associate Professor of World Evangelization, Tyndale Theological Seminary, The Netherlands.

The author is the Robert Boyd Munger Professor of Evangelism and Spiritual Formation at Fuller Theological Seminary. Building on his doctoral dissertation, he has made a significant contribution to the discussion on conversion by attempting to weave NT studies with practical theology, namely that of evangelism. His purpose was to investigate the nature of conversion in light of the Apostle Paul's and that of Christ's disciples with respect to current evangelistic methodologies. He maintains that people convert under the same theological understanding, but each person may differ in his conversion experience.

The book appears in three sections. Section I is an integrative study of Paul's Damascus road conversion experience, which is based on a study of the book of Acts and Paul's epistles. From Paul's turning to Christ, Peace views conversion

to consist of three elements: (1) Insight, that is, gaining truth and understanding; (2) Turning to God or repentance; and (3) Transformation, which results in a new way of living. According to the author, the apostle's conversion was a point-in-time event. Section II argues that the conversion of the twelve disciples is the "organizing principle" of the Gospel of Mark, maintaining that there are six units to the Gospel, structured around six main titles for Jesus—a Great Teacher, Powerful Prophet, Messiah, Son of Man, Son of David, and Son of God. Although he believes that Mark had several purposes, he feels that conversion is a major theme. Even though the disciples' conversion is examined in light of Paul's, he describes their conversion as gradual by nature, rather than immediate. He attempts to trace this gradual understanding of Jesus through the above six titles, whereby they come to know Jesus step-by-step in their spiritual journey.

The strengths of this work are many, especially Peace's attempt to create a practical theology which arises out of biblical and theological foundations. An added benefit is that Peace attempts to handle a number of insights on conversion from psychology, but concludes that they have little to offer other than describing what happens during the so-called conversion experience. His critiques of encounter evangelism, principally that of mass or crusade, of personal confrontation, and of media evangelism, are helpful. He finds these approaches lacking in many ways; yet he is not ready to eliminate them from today's evangelistic scene. He is an advocate of "process" evangelism, which makes understanding of the gospel and Christ essential prior to commitment in salvation to God. He briefly examines the approaches used, whereby evangelism takes place in small, growth, and worship-oriented groups. However, he believes that both approaches—process and encounter—are necessary to reach mankind for Christ. His footnotes are extensive, as is his bibliography. The writer's addition of scriptural, subject, and author indexes is very helpful. Additionally, his lexical summary study on conversion is an added feature.

Although the structural analysis of the Gospel of Mark in Chapter 6 is important to his argumentation, it may be viewed as parenthetical rather than central by some readers, for it is very detailed and possibly even distracting from the central purpose of the book. A brief overview would have been sufficient. A second weakness concerns the book's lack of emphasis on sin. Even though the writer views the importance of repentance and turning from evil, the emphasis on the latter was less than this reviewer expected.

Because the author has examined the NT and applied his findings to today's evangelism approaches, his contribution is significant. This book will encourage further reflection on methods of reaching people for Christ today, especially as readers contemplate the role of process evangelism in conversion. Evangelistic approaches that encourage "customer" or "selling the gospel" methods must be reconsidered as to their eventual effectiveness. Commitment and following Christ, not decisions, are the needs to be emphasized today.

John Piper. *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy*. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2000. 160 pp. \$17.99 (cloth). Reviewed by Richard L. Mayhue, Professor Theology and Pastoral Ministries.

John Piper looks at three famous Fathers of the Christian church who shared a similar theme in their lives and work. Aurelius Augustine (354-430), Martin Luther (1483-1546), and John Calvin (1509-1564) “ministered in the reality of God’s Omnipotent Grace.” Each was seriously flawed, in that Augustine grappled with sexual passion, Martin Luther struggled to control his tongue, and John Calvin fought the battle of faith with the world’s weapons. Yet, God used each of these men in a mighty way.

According to Piper, Augustine’s vision of salvation through Jesus Christ and of living the Christian life was rooted in his understanding and experience of grace. Prayer was the basis of Luther’s approach to studying God’s Word. Through the Scriptures the Holy Spirit provided Luther the enlightenment he sought. A breakthrough came for him in 1518 when his study of the Word led him to understand justification by faith alone, apart from the works of law. Calvin was “taken captive to preaching” when he saw the majesty of God in His Word.

The author’s examination of these three famous men leads him to offer the following advice:

“Do not be paralyzed by your weaknesses and flaws.”

“In the battle against sin and surrender, learn the secret of sovereign joy.”

“Supernatural change comes from seeing Christ in His sacred Word.”

“Therefore, let us exult over the exposition of the truth of the Gospel and herald the glory of Christ for the joy of all peoples.”

Centuries after their deaths, the lives and messages of Calvin, Luther, and Augustine continue to resonate clearly. *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy* is inspirational reading for every pastor who wants to understand God’s grace more fully and minister more powerfully as a result of it.

Randall Price. *The Coming Last Days Temple*. Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House, 1999. 732 pp. \$14.99 (paper). Reviewed by James Rosscup, Professor of Bible Exposition.

Price compiles great detail to defend dispensational belief about rebuilding a literal temple during the future Tribulation period and a larger literal temple in the future Millennium. A more accurate title would be plural, *The Coming Last Days Temples*. This is the most prolific effort to date to amass data on the subject.

The author gained his Th.M. in Old Testament and Semitic Languages at Dallas Theological Seminary and his Ph.D. in Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. He is President of World of the Bible Ministries.

Among the book's features are reasons for temple restorations, a history of the temple, main Bible predictions of last-days temples, groups that expect a future temple, and barriers such as Moslem possession of the site believed to be the temple area (Mount Moriah). Lengthy detail explores texts such as Dan 9:27, Matt 24:15, 2 Thess 2:4 and Rev 11:1-2 on a Tribulation temple, and Ezek 40-47 on a millennial ediface. Price argues that sacrifices are sensible and in harmony with other Scripture as the Book of Hebrews.

The work has several illustrations, diagrams, pictures, and charts. Readers see sketches of the temple in Solomon's day and other times. Price invested years to research, made trips to the Holy Land, and contacted people interested in the concept. Notes on pp. 645-707 document and develop points in chapters. Indexes appear on subjects, Scripture, Jewish texts, and sources for further study

On views arguing for literal animal sacrifices in the future, Price has copious comment. He does not support the popular dispensational view that OT offerings were a covering (atonement) for sin, which God reckoned effective at the time by His crediting them with value via the efficacy of Christ's offering that He was yet to provide (Heb 10:4). Such a view has millennial offerings looking back as tangible memorials in *retrospection* to the expiation of the cross, as it reasons that God saw proper OT sacrifices in *anticipation* as having the efficacy He would work through the cross. Price, instead, holds that terminology for OT offerings (as in Leviticus) and also the intent of the millennial offerings pertain not to atonement but to *ritual purification*, i.e., cleansing from ceremonial contamination in the corporate worship group (554-57). Some will feel that he never is very clear or convincing on how such literal sacrifices would fit well under the New Covenant, since NC benefits include full sufficiency for cleansing from all things (cf. Acts 13:38-39). Price sees many millennial things yet needing purification via *animal* sacrifices. He reasons that Christ's bodily presence among His people requires literal sacrifices to effect purification, so that people can approach God's holy presence. He regards this outward, corporate, ceremonial sense of cleansing as distinct from but compatible with inward spiritual salvation and sanctification of individuals through the cross. Once readers grasp his view, they will respond differently as to whether they accept the necessity of his logic and whether it is consistent, or why Christ's sufficient sacrifice would not already fully cover all, even "ceremonial" details.

Much of the logic to support Ezekiel 40-47 as anticipating a literal future temple and offerings is compacted in C. L. Feinberg's paper at the Jerusalem Congress on Prophecy ("The Rebuilding of the Temple," *Prophecy in the Making*, Carl F. H. Henry, ed. [Carol Stream, Ill.: Creation House, 1971] 89-112).

Jerome D. Quinn and William C. Wacker. *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*. Eerdmans's Critical Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000. 918 pp. \$65.00 (cloth). Reviewed by James Rosscup, Professor of Bible Exposition.

Immense detail explores views on problems in verses and shows wide awareness in scholarship. Quinn wrote it before his death in 1988, after finishing the Anchor Bible work on Titus, issued in 1990. Wacker, Quinn's last student at St. Paul Seminary, St. Paul, Minn., brought the present book to publication.

Due to Quinn's death, the bibliography, though 55 pages in length, lacks many works written since then, though Wacker added some. The commentary begins with a detailed outline, bibliography, and 23-page introduction to the Pastorals. Later it has a 2-page introduction to 1 Timothy, and 1½-page introduction to 2 Timothy. After this are notes on both epistles, then indexes of modern names, Scripture, and a long list of ancient sources.

The introduction delves into the history of the earliest forms of the Pastoral Epistles (PE), many terms peculiar to the PE in biblical Greek (about 1/3 of the words do not occur in other Pauline epistles, 4), stylistic matters of syntax, and the practical nature of the content to help in such matters as pastoral issues, faith, prayer, and ethical conduct. Quinn favors Pauline authorship, but a composition of the letters as they now exist ca. A.D. 80-85, bearing a strong flavor of Paul's ideas (18-20). He often refers to details as by Paul (e.g., 54) or "in Paul's name" (225). Quinn gives a new translation as he works through sections. He outlines step by step though he had given full outlines earlier.

The commentary remarks are often meticulous on verses, far more than teachers or pastors normally need even for careful instruction. Clarity usually prevails, but on some matters the crux of things is not obvious. An example is the great detail on "endless genealogies" (1 Timothy 1) with much on word meanings and hints at what Paul might mean, but no clear, composite focus in reaching a conclusion. At times one reads much to find the essential thrust of passages. Excellence is often evident as in expressing what 1 Tim 1:12 means on *strengthening* Paul. On 1 Tim 2:5 amid much detail, only a general statement results on Jesus' death having universal efficacy (187), without reasons for limited or unlimited atonement. Quinn sees 1 Tim 2:11-15 as a Christian wife refraining from teaching a public audience with men (222). The silence is not total, but desisting from aggressive confrontations, as by questions airing irritations from home life. The text does not bar women from engaging in what all worshipers did—e.g., prayers, hymns, confessions (223).

"Husband of one wife" (3:2) means one marriage per lifetime for a man who aspires to the episcopate (256), even if the wife dies. In 2 Tim 1:6, the gift is given through the laying on of hands by the presbytery. The author sheds much light on 3:16-17. On 4:8 the crown involves victory and glory, bestowing the holiness that is the quality for a believer after victory in the test at God's judgment seat (789).

This is one of the most informative recent works on the epistles to Timothy. On word meanings, and usually on main views and issues in verses, this is

recommended as rich for teachers in schools. It also can help pastors who study detail. Its ponderous nature will drive some to works that are competent while quicker to the point.

Rolf Rendtorff. *The Covenant Formula: An Exegetical and Theological Investigation*. Translated by Margaret Kohl. Old Testament Studies. Ed. by David J. Reimer. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1998. xiv + 105 pp. \$35.95 (cloth). Reviewed by William D. Barrick, Professor of Old Testament.

The Old Testament Studies series of which this book is a part seeks to engage its readers in a fresh discussion of new perspectives in the areas of biblical history, theology, and literature. This volume is the English translation of Rolf Rendtorff's *Die Bundesformel* (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1995). Rendtorff, Emeritus Professor of Old Testament at Heidelberg University, is the leading German dissident in the field of pentateuchal criticism. By "covenant formula," Rendtorff refers to the biblical phrase "I will be your God and you shall be my people" and its variants (3).

This brief (and expensive) volume is divided into four chapters: "Some Preliminary Considerations of Method" (5-10), "A New Look at 'The Covenant Formula'" (11-37), "The Covenant Formula in Its Exegetical Context" (39-56), and "An Attempt at a Theological Survey" (57-92). The back material includes an appendix entitled "Table of Formulas with לְהִיוֹת לִי" (93-94), a "Bibliography of Literature Cited" (95-99), an "Index of Names" (101-2), and an "Index of Selected Biblical References" (103-5).

The volume opens with a discussion and evaluation of the methods of historical criticism and form criticism. Rendtorff criticizes the circular reasoning and hypothetical assumptions that are characteristic of much literary and source criticism. In his opinion, the primary exegetical task is not to isolate and reconstruct hypothetical traditions. "The exegetical task is . . . to understand and interpret the text in the shape in which we now have it, in its final 'canonical' form" (8). Looking at the present canonical form of the text is what he terms the synchronic examination (7). His primary goal is to answer the question, "Are there different covenants or a single covenant?" (8, emphasis in the original).

In the second chapter, the author first recounts a brief history of published research on the covenant formula commencing with Rudolf Smend's 1963 work (11). Next, Rendtorff describes the formula's linguistic form in the OT. In the remainder of the book he utilizes a threefold classification: A = "I will be God for you," B = "You shall be a people for me," and C = the two statements (A and B) combined in a single formula (13). Having established the history of the study and the method for identifying the three different linguistic forms, he takes the reader on a passage-by-passage survey of the formula's employment in the "Priestly

Pentateuch” (Genesis 17; Exodus 6; Leviticus 26; and a few other pericopes), Deuteronomy, the books of Samuel and Kings, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Zech 8:8. In the midst of this survey, Rendtorff inserts an excursus on Exod 19:4-6 (26-28).

The author proceeds to demonstrate that the contexts of the covenant formula include other formulaic elements (39-49): a transitional reflection (“in order to be”), the term “covenant” (*bĕrît*) itself, an exodus (or, deliverance) statement, a self-introductory formula (“I am Yhwh”), and a recognition formula (“they will/you will know”). Ultimately, three key texts stand out from all the rest as the primary statements employing the covenant formula: Genesis 17, Exodus 6, and Leviticus 26. All three are in the so-called “Priestly Pentateuch.” Rendtorff employs this distinction in order to emphasize the distinctive theological context of Deuteronomy where emphases on election and obedience (keeping the divine commandments) are added to the various contexts of the covenant formula.

By means of literary analysis, exegetical examination, and theological survey Rendtorff pushes his readers along a path that concludes that

there are no differences in the formulations of the covenant formula, whether these relate to the patriarchs, to the deliverance from Egypt, to the encounter with God at Sinai/Horeb, or to a ‘new’ covenant still impending. . . . In the canonical context of the Hebrew Bible, therefore, it must be said that God laid the foundation for his relationship to Israel in his covenant with Abraham (Genesis 17) and then, with the Exodus generation, extended it to the people of Israel (Exodus 6). . . .

From this point of departure, there can in fact really be no other further covenant. The covenant has been made once and for all, and at its very foundation God had already called it an ‘everlasting covenant’ (Gen. 17.7, 19) (83).

In his opinion, therefore, each covenant context merely confirms the original covenant rather than establishing a subsequent and separate covenant distinct from the previous. This conclusion is, therefore, the summation of what can be legitimately called “covenant theology” (92).

Although Rendtorff believes that he has successfully applied James Barr’s criticism of those who make “distinctions where no distinction is meant” (82 n. 39), he appears to have fallen off the road into the opposite ditch where similarity of formulaic vocabulary is assumed to indicate an identical covenant. The entire study is a perfect example of how far afield the interpreter can be led theologically when the OT is treated in isolation from the NT. The concept of a single covenant throughout the progress of OT revelation is in direct contradiction to Rom 9:4 (“Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons and the glory and the covenants [αἱ διαθήκαι]”). Likewise, Rendtorff’s over-emphasis on formulaic similarities ignores many contextual and theological differences. This reviewer has dealt with those distinctions elsewhere (William D. Barrick, “Inter-covenantal Truth and Relevance: Leviticus 26 and the Biblical Covenants” [paper read at the Far West Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, La Mirada, Calif., 1999]).

Anyone performing detailed research in the area of OT covenants must read

*The Covenant Formula*. Students writing theses or dissertations on Genesis 17, Exodus 6, or Leviticus 26 dare not fail to interact with Rendtorff's work.

Allen P. Ross. *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996. 744 pp. \$34.99 (paper). Reviewed by William D. Barrick, Professor of Old Testament.

*Creation and Blessing* was first published in 1988. This 1996 edition is the first time in paperback. Allen P. Ross is professor of biblical studies at Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry in Ambridge, Pennsylvania. He served as a translator and editor of the New King James Version and wrote the commentaries on Genesis and Psalms in the *Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Chariot Victor Books, 1987). Before the publication of *Creation and Blessing*, Ross published two series of articles on Genesis in *Bibliotheca Sacra* ("Studies in the Book of Genesis" in 1980-81 and "Studies in the Life of Jacob" in 1985).

At the very outset, Ross informs his readers that the volume is not a commentary (13). It is but a guide to the study and exposition of Genesis, as its title announces (14). Indeed, the author's intent is that his readers pursue a detailed exegesis of the text of Genesis on their own.

The volume is divided into five parts: "The Study of Genesis" (21-97), "The Primeval Events" (99-252), "The Patriarchal Narratives About Abraham" (253-427), "The Patriarchal Narratives About the Descendants of Abraham" (429-588), and "The Story of Joseph" (589-717). Four appendixes are provided, covering the interpretation of 1:1-3 (718-23), the Hebrew word for *create* (724-28), Abraham's faith (729-35), and the Hebrew word for *visit* (736-40). Lastly, a brief bibliography of commentaries and monographs closes the volume (741-44). The brevity of the closing bibliography should not mislead the reader of this review, however. Each chapter of Parts 2-5 in the volume concludes with a bibliography tailored for that particular area of study. The entries include books, essays, and journal articles. Ross has provided a wealth of bibliographic data for further research. The volume also includes 34 carefully crafted and strategically placed charts that enhance the study of Genesis. The most lamentable aspect of the book is the absence of indexes.

Part 1 contains an examination of the various interpretive approaches to Genesis, an outline of Ross's own method for studying Genesis, and detailed discussions of both the nature and the composition of Genesis. The author is a strong adherent to Mosaic authorship. He believes that the Book of Genesis was presented to Israel prior to their entry into Canaan, providing them with instruction under the Sinaitic covenant and a historical prologue to the Law (64). The foundation for the Ten Commandments appears in the historical events of the Book of Genesis (96-97). Ross states that the expositor must "ask why the new nation of Israel needed to have this material and to have it written as it is" (102).

Each chapter of Parts 2-5 deals with the exposition of the text of Genesis. Ross provides a brief introduction, a discussion of theological ideas stemming from the passage, an analysis of its structure, a summary of its message, an exegetical outline (employing complete sentences for each point), and the development of the exposition organized along the lines of the exegetical outline.

The author maintains a staunchly evangelical stance. He is irrevocably dedicated to the exegetical exposition of the text itself and uncompromisingly opposed to the creative embellishment of the text that is too often characteristic of modern preaching in Biblical narrative. His overall purpose is the wedding of sound exegesis with effective expository communication.

*Creation and Blessing* should be considered an indispensable guide for expositors and students alike. After reading the text of Genesis itself, turn to this volume and a good exegetical commentary to fill in the details. For the latter, this reviewer recommends Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 2 vols., NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990, 1994).

Robert L. Thomas. *How to Choose a Bible Version: Making Sense of the Proliferation of Bible Translations*. Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2000. 203 pp. \$12.79 (paper). Reviewed by Richard L. Mayhue, Professor of Theology and Pastoral Ministries.

Dr. Robert Thomas, professor of New Testament at The Master's Seminary, has spent a lifetime studying the NT in the original Greek language, and being involved in Bible translation, most notably with the New American Standard Bible. His over four decades of teaching in this area qualify him as a superb authority on this subject. The book is not written to scholars, but rather to Christians who have not had the advantage of extensive specialized studies in the area of translation. His discussion includes historical backgrounds, textual bases, techniques used, theological bias, and types of English Bible translations. This provides a superb and quite readable overview of the subject matter.

Added as an appendix is the article "Dynamic Equivalence: A Method of Translation or a System of Hermeneutics?" This recent departure from a strict grammatical equivalence is discussed thoroughly, particularly as it relates to some of the more recent Bible translations, such as the New International Version.

Perhaps the most helpful portion of the book comes in the chapter titled, "Conclusions," pp. 149-160, where Thomas gives a brief evaluation of each of the major English Bible translations. In a day when one extreme is calling for "King James only" and the other extreme is touting loose paraphrases, the wisdom and balance that Dr. Thomas brings to the discussion are indispensable if Christians are to make an informed choice of both their reading and study Bibles. This book is highly recommended.

Robert E. Van Voorst. *Jesus Outside the New Testament: An Introduction to the Ancient Evidence*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000. Xiv + 248 pp. Reviewed by William C. Varner, Professor of Bible, Director of IBEX, The Master's College.

The last dozen years have witnessed a flurry of books and articles relating to the subject of the "historical Jesus." The infamous "Jesus Seminar" has concluded that the Gospels actually contain very little of the genuine words and works of Jesus of Nazareth. Evangelical reaction to this "Search for Jesus" has spanned the gamut from scorning mockery to abject capitulation before the same higher critical methodology followed by those advocating the "New Quest for the Historical Jesus."

Eerdmans Publishing Company has launched a new series, edited by Bruce Chilton and Craig Evans, called "Studying the Historical Jesus." The editors say that "the purpose of this series is to explore key questions concerning Jesus in recent discussion" (back cover).

Robert E. Van Voorst's *Jesus Outside the New Testament* is the first to appear in this series. Van Voorst is professor of New Testament at Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan. Much of the research for his book was done while he was teaching a related course at Lycoming College (ix, x).

Simply stated, "This book examines the ancient evidence from outside the New Testament for the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus" (ix). While such evidence certainly is important to those scholars who consider themselves part of the "new search for the historical Jesus," the subject is certainly not new. Before the recent spate of writing on this subject, two books by authors affirming the historicity of the Gospels have served their generations well.

F. F. Bruce, that late doyen of twentieth-century NT scholars, contributed a major work, *Jesus and Christian Origins Outside the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974). Bruce, always conversant both with the sources and the secondary literature, covered the field thoroughly in his characteristically irenic manner.

Ten years later appeared *Ancient Evidence for the Life of Jesus* by Gary R. Habermas (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984). Habermas covered the evidence with a particularly "apologetic" slant, seeking always to affirm the historicity of the canonical Gospels while being rather dubious about the value of the non-canonical sources. (Surprisingly, Habermas supports the Shroud of Turin as evidence for Jesus' resurrection. See pp. 156-59. Most books in this genre ignore the Shroud since it is not a written source.)

In what ways, therefore, does Van Voorst's book advance this discussion?

First, *Jesus Outside the New Testament* is thorough, covering all the "sources" (valid and otherwise) that seem to refer to Jesus. The author, after a brief history of research, divides three of the following chapters into "Jesus in Classical

Writing" (19-74), "Jesus in Jewish Writing" (75-134), and "Jesus in Christian Writings after the New Testament" (179-214). His discussions show awareness of the issues and the scholarly literature surrounding each one. His fairly exhaustive "Bibliography" (219-34) indicates that he is aware of the scholarly work on this subject in both English and German.

Second, *Jesus Outside the New Testament* is *unique* in including a chapter that was not found in Bruce or Habermas. Chapter 4 is titled "Jesus in the Sources of the Canonical Gospels" (135-78). In this reviewer's opinion, however, this chapter is the weakest part of the book. Van Voorst's observations are marred by his simply assuming the existence of the mythical "Q," "M," and "L" sources—none of which has ever been found, except in the fervent imagination of source critics. One wonders how this chapter fits into a book that is supposed to examine evidence *outside* the New Testament. Furthermore, every other source Van Voorst examines *post-dates* the canonical Gospels. Are we to conclude that these "sources"—none of which has ever been found—*predate* the form of the canonical Gospels? Asking that of his readers is to ask them to affirm the existence of documents for which there is no external evidence!

Further indication that Van Voorst has capitulated to higher criticism is found in his occasional statements indicating his rejection of the Gospels as reliable sources. In discussing later Rabbinic traditions about Jesus' illegitimacy, the author states that such traditions arose from the Christian doctrine of the virgin birth. "This doctrine was not explicitly formulated by Christians until near the end of the first century (Matthew and Luke), and even then may not have been widely shared as a leading doctrine by other Christians (Pauline and Johannine churches, for example)" (121).

It is Van Voorst's skeptical attitude toward the Gospels that mars an otherwise helpful book. Scholars will still benefit from his handling of issues surrounding these later post-biblical sources. Everyone, however, is still better served in this subject by the volumes written by the "irenic" Bruce and the "tendential" Habermas.