THE PSYCHOLOGY EPIDEMIC AND ITS CURE[1]

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The church's right to counsel from the Bible has been reconfirmed in court rulings of recent times. Yet in many instances the church has surrendered that right and responsibility because of the "professionalization" of the counseling ministry among Christians. This is tragic because the behavioral sciences are not, as is commonly believed, scientific. Neither have they proven effective in changing the human heart. "Christian psychology," with its claim of a secret knowledge about dealing with people, has made deep inroads into the church, but it is no more than a duplication of its secular counterpart with Scripture references occasionally interspersed. A reliance on Christ, the "Wonderful Counsellor," and God's sufficient Word as dispensed by spiritually gifted Christians to one another is the church's only solution in meeting the spiritual needs of its people.

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In 1980, Grace Community Church became the object of a lawsuit charging that the pastors on staff were negligent for trying to help a suicidal young member of the church by giving him biblical truth. It was the first clergy malpractice case ever heard in the American court system. The secular media had a field day as the case dragged on for years. Some nationally aired tabloid-type programs even alleged that the church had encouraged the young man to kill himself, teaching him that suicide was a sure way to heaven. Of course, that was not true. He knew from Scripture that suicide is wrong. We urged him to let the Word of God lead him to intimate knowledge and appropriation of the resources available in the One who wanted to heal his troubled mind. Tragically, he refused our counsel and took his life.

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[1]This essay is adapted from Chapter 3 of John F. MacArthur, Jr., *Our Sufficiency in Christ* (Waco, TX: Word, 1991) 55-77.

One of the key issues the case raised was the question of whether churches should have the legal right to use the Bible in counseling troubled people. Many would argue that giving someone advice from Scripture is a simplistic approach to counseling. The Bible may be fine as an encouragement to the average person, they say, but people who have *real* problems need the help of a psychological expert.

Therefore, this lawsuit contended, church counselors are required to refer seriously depressed and suicidal people to the mental-health professionals. To attempt to counsel these troubled people from the Bible amounts to irresponsibility and negligence for which church counselors should be held morally and legally culpable.

The truth that came out in court received little or no coverage on the network news. Testimony showed that this young man *was* under the care of professional psychiatrists. In addition to the biblical direction he received from the pastoral staff, he had sought psychiatric treatment. Moreover, the staff had seen to it that he was examined by several medical doctors to rule out organic or chemical causes for his depression. He was receiving every kind of therapy available, but he chose to end his life anyway. We did all we could to help him; he rejected our counsel and turned his back on his spiritual sufficiency in Christ.

Not only did the courts view the issue as a First Amendment right of religious freedom into which government should not intrude, but all three times Grace Church won the case, the judges also expressed the opinion that the church had *not* failed in its responsibility to give him proper care. Their judgment was that the staff had more than fulfilled their legal and moral obligations by trying to help this young man who had sought our counsel. Eventually the case was appealed all the way to the United States Supreme Court. The High Court refused to hear it, thereby letting stand the California State Supreme Court's ruling, which vindicated the church. Most important of all, the case affirmed every church's constitutional right to counsel from the Bible, establishing a legal precedent to keep secular courts from encroaching on the area of counseling in the church.

THE PROFESSIONALIZATION
OF THE COUNSELING MINISTRY

Unfortunately, the privilege of counseling people with biblical truth may be in jeopardy anyway, not because of any legal barrier imposed from outside the church, but because of the attitude toward Scripture within the church. During the trial, a number of "experts" gave testimony. Most surprising were the so-called Christian psychologists and psychiatrists who testified that the Bible alone is not sufficient to meet people's deepest personal and emotional needs. These men were arguing before a secular court that God's Word is not an adequate resource for counseling people about spiritual problems! What is truly appalling is the number of evangelicals who are willing to take the word of such "professionals" on this subject.[2]

Over the past decade a host of evangelical psychological clinics have sprung up. Though almost all of them claim to offer biblical counsel, most merely dispense secular psychology disguised in spiritual terminology.[3] Moreover, they are removing the counseling ministry from its proper arena in the church body and conditioning Christians to think of themselves as incompetent to counsel. Many pastors, feeling inadequate and perhaps afraid of possible malpractice litigation, are perfectly willing to let "professionals" take over what used to be seen as a vital pastoral responsibility.[4] Too many have bought the lie that a crucial realm of wisdom exists outside Scripture and one's relationship to Jesus Christ, and that some idea or technique

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[2]Cf. Martin and Deidre Bobgan, *PsychoHeresy* (Santa Barbara, CA: EastGate, 1987) 53-54. The Bobgans list eight evidences of the "psychologizing of the church."

[3]"Nearly all recent counseling books for ministers, even conservative ones, are written from the Freudian perspective in the sense that they rest largely upon the presuppositions of the Freudian ethic of non-responsibility" (Jay E. Adams, *Competent to Counsel* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1970] 17-18). Adam's extraordinarily accurate analysis of the state of counseling in evangelicalism is now more than twenty years old, but is more apropos than ever. He has given the church an indispensable corrective to several trends that are eating away at the church's spiritual vitality. Christian leaders would do well to heed his still-timely admonition.

[4]Jay E. Adams, *More Than Redemption* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979) x-xi.

from that extrabiblical realm holds the real key to helping people with their deep problems.[5]

True psychology (i.e. "the study of the soul") can be done only by Christians, since only Christians have the resources for understanding and transforming the soul. The secular discipline of psychology is based on godless assumptions[6] and evolutionary foundations and is capable of dealing with people only superficially and only on the temporal level. The Puritans, long before the arrival of godless psychology, identified their ministry with people as "soul work."

Scripture is the manual for all "soul work" and is so comprehensive in the diagnosis and treatment of every spiritual matter that, energized by the Holy Spirit in the believer, it leads to making one like Jesus Christ. This is the process of biblical sanctification.

It is reasonable for people to seek medical help for a broken leg, dysfunctional kidney, tooth cavity, or other physical malady. It is also sensible for those who are alcoholic, drug addicted, learning disabled, or traumatized by rape, incest, or severe battering to seek help in trying to cope with their trauma.

Certain techniques of human psychology can serve to lessen trauma or dependency and modify behavior in Christians or non-Christians equally. There may also be certain types of emotional illnesses where root causes are organic and where medication might be

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[5]E.g. Gary R. Collins, *Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide* (Waco, TX: Word, 1980) 19. Collins believes the Bible "does not claim to be nor is it meant to be God's sole revelation about people-helping." He writes, "During the past century, God has permitted psychologists to develop careful research tools for studying human behavior and professional journals for sharing their findings. Perhaps hundreds of thousands of people have come for help and professional counselors have learned what makes people tick and how they can change."

[6]Cf. the comments of a psychological counselor cited in Bobgan, *PsychoHeresy* 5-6.: "At the present time there is no acceptable Christian psychology that is markedly different from non-Christian psychology. It is difficult to imply that we function in a manner that is fundamentally distinct from our non-Christian colleagues."

needed to stabilize an otherwise dangerous person. Such problems are relatively rare, however, and should not be used as examples to justify the indiscriminate use of secular psychological techniques for essentially spiritual problems. Dealing with the psychological and emotional issues of life in such ways is *not* sanctification.

"Christian psychology" as the expression is used today is an oxymoron. The word *psychology* no longer speaks of studying the soul. Instead it describes a diverse menagerie of therapies and theories that are fundamentally humanistic. The presuppositions and most of the doctrine of psychology cannot be successfully integrated with Christian truth.[7] In addition, the infusion of psychology into the teaching of the church has blurred the line between behavior modification and sanctification.

The path to wholeness is the path of spiritual sanctification. It is foolish to exchange the Wonderful Counselor, the spring of living water, for the sensual wisdom of earth and the stagnant water of behaviorism. The Lord Jesus reacted in a perfect and holy way to every temptation, trial, and trauma in life`the most severe ones that any human life could ever suffer. It should be clear that perfect victory over all life's troubles must be the result of being like Christ. No "soul worker" can lift another above the level of spiritual maturity he is on. So the supreme qualification for psychologists would be Christlikeness.

If one is a truly Christian psychologist, he must do soul work in the realm of the deep things of the Word and the Spirit and not be following around in the shallows of behavior modification. Why should a believer choose to do behavior modification when he has the tools for spiritual transformation? This would be like a surgeon wreaking havoc with a butter knife instead of using a scalpel. The most skilled counselor is the one who most carefully, prayerfully, and faithfully applies the divine spiritual resources to the process of sanctification, shaping another into the image of Jesus Christ.

The stampede to embrace the doctrines of secular psychology

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[7]Ibid., 5-6.

may be the most serious threat to the life of the church today. These doctrines are a mass of human ideas that Satan has placed in the church as though they were powerful life-changing truths from God. Most psychologists epitomize neo-gnosticism, claiming to have secret knowledge for solving people's real problems. Some of them even claim to perform a therapeutic technique they call "Christian counseling" when, in reality, they are using secular theory with biblical references tacked on to treat spiritual problems.[8]

The result is that pastors, biblical scholars, teachers of Scripture, and caring believers using the Word of God are disdained as naive, simplistic, and altogether inadequate counselors.[9] Bible reading and prayer are commonly belittled as "pat answers," incomplete solutions

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[8]E.g. Frank B. Minirth, *Christian Psychiatry* (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1977) 186. Minirth advises counselors to "interject Scripture" with caution: "Proper timing and readiness are important. Once the counselee knows the counselor really cares, Scripture can usually be shared without any offense. The Scripture must meet the specific need of the individual, and a few verses are preferable to many."

[9]E.g. Larry Crabb recounts an anecdote where he challenged a friend committed to the utter sufficiency of Scripture to suggest how he would counsel an anorexic girl. Crabb writes, "It is difficult to come up with a biblical answer to a question that the Bible never seems to consider. My friend therefore changed the question from the one I (as well as the girl's parents) was asking to one that, in his mind, we *should* have been asking. . . .

"Two passages in the Bible (1 Cor. 3:16-17 and 2 Cor. 6:16) tell us that we are the temple of God; one passage indicates that our bodies are themselves temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19). My friend turned to those verses and explained that anorexia can be understood as rebellion against our responsibility to care for the Spirit's temple. This so-called biblical counseling will focus on developing in the anorexic a respect for her body and exhorting her to treat her body accordingly. At best, the results of such counseling will be external conformity. The counselee will not be freed by truth to enter more deeply into loving relationship with God or others.

"When we limit the questions we are allowed to ask to those that the Bible specifically answers, the result will often be a nonthinking and simplistic understanding of life and its problems . . ." (Larry Crabb, *Understanding People* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987] 57-58).

for persons struggling with depression or anxiety.[10]   Scripture, the Holy Spirit, Christ, prayer, and grace are the traditional solutions Christian counselors have pointed people to.   But the average Christian today has come to believe that none of them *really* offers the cure for people's woes.[11]

HOW SCIENTIFIC ARE THE BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES?

Psychology is not a uniform body of scientific knowledge, like thermodynamics or organic chemistry. It rather refers to a complex menagerie of ideas and theories, many of which are contradictory. Psychology has not proven itself capable of dealing effectively with the human mind and with mental and emotional processes. Thus it can hardly be regarded as a science.

Many will object to classifying psychology as a pseudo-science,[12] but that is exactly what it is`the most recent of several human inventions designed to explain, diagnose, and treat behavioral problems without dealing with moral and spiritual issues. Little more than a century ago, the debate was over a different kind of "behavioral science" called phrenology.   Phrenology held that personality characteristics were determined by the shape of someone's skull. The phrenologists' diagrams were maps of the head with specific areas labeled, showing which zone of the brain determined a particular emotion or characteristic. A phrenologist would feel people's skulls,

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[10]Ibid., 203.

[11]Crabb believes the church "promote[s] superficial adjustments while psychotherapists, with or without biblical foundations, . . . do a better job than the church of restoring troubled people to more effective functioning" (ibid., 129). Later he adds, "Secularists sometimes seem to have a corner on honestly facing the disturbing complexity of life while Christians recite clichs that push away real questions of the heart. As a result, nonbelievers often help people with emotional problems more effectively than Christians" (ibid., 211).

[12]Most advocates of psychology assume rather than argue that psychology is truly scientific (cf. Collins, *Christian Counseling* 19).

diagnosing their problems by the location of bumps on their heads.[13]

If you think behavioral science has advanced greatly since then, ask yourself how reasonable it is to surround an adult in the fetal position with pillows so he can get back in touch with his prenatal anxieties.[14] Given the choice, someone poking around on one's head sounds preferable.

Modern psychologists use hundreds of counseling models and techniques based on a myriad of conflicting theories, so it is impossible to speak of psychotherapy as though it were a unified and consistent science.[15] However, the following views, popularized by psychology, have filtered down into the church from the assorted stuff in the psychological tank and are having a profound and disturbing effect on its approach to helping people:

> < Human nature is basically good.
> < People have the answers to their problems inside them.
> < The key to understanding and correcting a person's attitudes and actions lies somewhere in his past.
> < Individuals' problems are the results of what someone else has done to them.
> < Human problems can be purely psychological in nature`unrelated to any spiritual or physical condition.
> < Deep-seated problems can be solved only by professional counselors using therapy.

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[13]Leo Steiner wrote, "Where will psychoanalysis be even 25 years from now? . . . I predict it will take its place along with phrenology and mesmerism" (Leo Steiner, "Are Psychoanalysis and Religious Counseling Compatible?" (paper read to the Society for Scientific Study of Religion, Harvard University, Nov 1958, cited by Adams, *Competent* 18-19). Obviously Steiner's prediction failed to materialize, but his characterization of psychoanalysis was right on target.

[14]Primal therapy was popularized by Arthur Janov, *The Primal Scream* (New York: Dell, 1970). Daniel Casriel, *A Scream Away from Happiness* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1972), expanded on Janov's ideas and formulated a group scream therapy, where group members hold hands and shriek at each other to work out their problems.

[15]Sigmund Koch, "Psychology Cannot Be a Coherent Science," *Psychology Today* (Sept 1969) 66.

< Scripture, prayer, and the Holy Spirit are inadequate and simplistic resources for solving certain types of problems.

Ironically, even before the church became so infatuated with "behavioral science," those who know it best were beginning to question whether psychotherapy is a science at all. Eleven years ago, *Time* magazine ran a cover story called "Psychiatry on the Couch." It said,

> On every front, psychiatry seems to be on the defensive. . . . Many psychiatrists want to abandon treatment of ordinary, everyday neurotics ("the worried well") to psychologists and the amateur Pop therapists. After all, does it take a hard-won M.D. degree . . . to chat sympathetically and tell a patient you're-much-too-hard-on-yourself? And if psychiatry is a medical treatment, why can its practitioners not provide measurable scientific results like those obtained by other doctors?
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> Psychiatrists themselves acknowledge that their profession often smacks of modern alchemy`full of jargon, obfuscation and mystification, but precious little real knowledge. . . .
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> As always, psychiatrists are their own severest critics. Thomas Szasz, long the most outspoken gadfly of his profession, insisted that there is really no such thing as mental illness, only normal problems of living. E. Fuller Torrey, another antipsychiatry psychiatrist, is willing to concede that there are a few brain diseases, like schizophrenia, but says they can be treated with only a handful of drugs that could be administered by general practioners or internists. . . . By contrast, the Scottish psychiatrist and poet R. D. Laing is sure that schizophrenia is real`and that it is good for you. Explains Laing: it is a kind of psychedelic epiphany, far superior to normal experience.
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> Even mainline practitioners are uncertain that psychiatry can tell the insane from the sane.[16]

The article went on to chronicle the failures of psychiatry, noting that "of all patients, one-third are eventually `cured,' one-third are helped somewhat, and one-third are not helped at all."[17] But, as the article

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[16]"Psychiatry on the Couch," *Time* (Apr 2, 1979) 74.
[17]Ibid., 79.

further stated,

> The trouble is that most therapies, including some outlandish ones, also claim some improvement for two-thirds of their patients. Critics argue that many patients go into analysis after a traumatic experience, such as divorce or a loved one's death, and are bound to do better anyway when the shock wears off. One study shows improvement for people merely on a waiting list for psychoanalytic treatment; presumably the simple decision to seek treatment is helpful.[18]

The article concludes with a pessimistic forecast by Ross Baldessarini, a psychiatrist and biochemist at the Mailman Research Center. He told *Time*, "We are not going to find the causes and cures of mental illness in the foreseeable future."[19]

Several years later, a conference in Phoenix, Arizona, brought together the world's leading experts on psychotherapy for what was billed as the largest meeting ever on the subject. The conference, called "The Evolution of Psychotherapy," drew 7,000 mental-health experts from all over the world. It was the largest such gathering in history, billed by its organizer as the Woodstock of psychotherapy. Out of it came several stunning revelations.

The *Los Angeles Times*, for example, quoted Laing, who "said that he couldn't think of any fundamental insight into human relations that has resulted from a century of psychotherapy. `I don't think we've gone beyond Socrates, Shakespeare, Tolstoy, or even Flaubert by the age of 15,' he said."[20] He added,

> "I don't think psychiatry is a science at all. It's not like chemistry or physics where we build up a body of knowledge and progress."
> He said that in his current personal struggle with depression, humming a favorite tune to himself (he favors one called "Keep Right on to the End of the

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[18]Ibid.

[19]Ibid., 82.

[20]Ann Japenga, "Great Minds on the Mind Assemble for Conference," *Los Angeles Times* (Dec 18, 1985) 5:1.

Road") sometimes is of greater help than anything psychotherapy offers.[21]

Time magazine, reporting on the conference, noted that in a panel discussion on schizophrenia, three out of four "experts" said there is no such disease.[22]

> R. D. Laing, the favorite shrink of student rebels in the '60s, retains his romantic opinion of schizophrenics as brave victims who are defying a cruel culture. He suggested that many people are diagnosed as schizophrenic simply because they sleep during the day and stay awake at night. Schizophrenia did not exist until the word was invented, he said. . . . At a later panel, a woman in the audience asked Laing how he would deal with schizophrenics. Laing bobbed and weaved for 27 minutes and finally offered the only treatment possible for people he does not view as sick: `I treat them exactly the same way I treat anybody else. I conduct myself by the ordinary rules of courtesy and politeness.'[23]

One clear truth emerged in the conference: among therapists there is little agreement. There is no unified "science" of psycho-therapy, only a cacophony of clashing theories and therapies. Dr. Joseph Wolpe, a leading pioneer of behavioral therapy, characterized the Phoenix conference as "a babel of conflicting voices."[24]

Indeed it was. One specialist, Jay Haley, described what he called his "shaggy dog" technique. He evidently means his technique is like a fluffy animal that appears to be fat until it gets wet`there appears to be more substance than really exists. This is his approach to therapy:

> Get the patient to make an absolute commitment to change, then guarantee a cure but do not tell the patient what it is for several weeks. "Once you postpone, you never lose them as patients," he said. "They have to find out what the cure is." One bulimic who ate in binges and threw up five to 25 times a day was told she would be cured if she gave the therapist a penny the first time

[21]Ibid., 17.

[22]"A Therapist in Every Corner," *Time* (Dec 23, 1985) 59.

[23]Ibid.

[24]Japenga, "Great Minds" 16.

she vomited and doubled the sum each time she threw up. Says Haley: "They quickly figure out that it doubles so fast that they can owe the therapist hundreds of thousands of dollars in a few days, so they stop."[25]

Jeffrey Zeig, organizer of the conference, said as many as a hundred different theories may exist in the United States alone. Most of them, he said, are "doomed to fizzle."[26]

Not only do psychologists sell supposed cures for a high price, but they also invent diseases for which the cures are needed. Their marketing strategy has been effective. Invent problems or difficulties, harp on them until people think they are hopelessly afflicted, then peddle a remedy. Some of the supposed problems are pathetically trite. Self-image, looks, co-dependency, emotional abuse, mid-life crisis, unfulfilled expectations`today's "infirmities" were once seen more accurately as the pains of selfishness. Egocentricity has become a major market strategy for psychotherapists. By fostering people's natural tendency toward self-indulgence, psychology has sold itself to an eager public. The church has witlessly jumped on the bandwagon.

Psychology is no more a science than the atheistic evolutionary theory upon which it is based. Like theistic evolution, Christian psychology is an attempt to harmonize two inherently contradictory systems of thought. Modern psychology and the Bible cannot be blended without serious compromise to or utter abandonment of the principle of Scripture's sufficiency.

Though it has become a profitable business, psychotherapy cannot solve anyone's spiritual problems. At best it can occasionally use human insight to superficially modify behavior. It succeeds or fails for Christians and non-Christians equally because it is only a temporal adjustment`a sort of mental chiropractic. Even experts admit it cannot change the human heart.

THE FAILURE OF "CHRISTIAN" PSYCHOLOGY

[25]"Every Corner" 59.
[26]Japenga, "Great Minds" 16.

Meanwhile, however, the attitude within the church is to accept psychotherapy more than ever. If the Christian media serve as a barometer of the whole church, a dramatic shift is taking place. Christian radio, for instance, once a bastion of Bible teaching and Christian music, is overrun with talk shows, pop psychology, and phone-in psychotherapy. Preaching the Bible is pass. Psychologists and radio counselors are the new heroes of evangelicalism. Christian radio is the major advertising tool that has made psychology extremely lucrative.

The church is thereby ingesting heavy doses of dogma from psychology, adopting secular "wisdom" and attempting to sanctify it by calling it Christian, thereby redefining evangelicalism's most fundamental values. "Mental and emotional health" is a new buzzword. It is not a biblical concept, though many seem to equate it with spiritual wholeness. Sin is called sickness, so people think it requires therapy, not repentance. Habitual sin is called addictive or compulsive behavior, and many surmise its solution is medical care rather than moral correction.[27]

Human therapies are embraced most eagerly by the spiritually weak, those who are shallow or ignorant of biblical truth and who are unwilling to accept the path of suffering that leads to spiritual maturity and deeper communion with God. The unfortunate effect is that these people remain immature, held back by a self-imposed dependence on some pseudo-Christian method or psycho-quackery that actually stifles real growth.

The more secular psychology influences the church, the further people move from a biblical perspective on problems and solutions. One-on-one therapists are replacing the Word, God's chief means of grace (1 Cor 1:21; Heb 4:12). The counsel these professionals dispense is often spiritually disastrous. Not long ago I listened aghast as a Christian psychologist on live radio counseled a caller to express anger

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[27]Adams responds skillfully to this kind of thinking, citing O. Hobart Mowrer, *The Crisis in Psychiatry and Religion* (Adams, *Competent* xvi-xvii).

at his therapist by making an obscene gesture at him. "Go ahead!" he told the caller. "It's an honest expression of your feelings. Don't try to keep your anger inside."

"What about my friends?" the caller asked. "Should I react that way to all of them when I'm angry?"

"Why, sure!" this counselor said. "You can do it to anyone, whenever you feel like it. Except those who you think won't understand`they won't be good therapists for you." This is a paraphrase of the conversation, the broadcast of which is recorded on tape. Actually, the counselor suggested something much more explicit, but it is inappropriate to put it in print.

That same week, I heard another popular Christian broadcast that offers live counseling to callers nationwide. A woman called and said she has had a problem with compulsive fornication for years. She said she goes to bed with "anyone and everyone" and feels powerless to change her behavior.

The counselor suggested that her conduct is her way of striking back, a result of wounds inflicted by her passive father and overbearing mother. "There's no simple road to recovery," this radio therapist told her. "Your problem won't go away immediately`it's an addiction, and these things require extended counseling. You will need years of therapy to overcome your need for illicit sex." It was then suggested that the caller find a church that would be tolerant while she worked her way out of the "painful wounds" that were "making" her fornicate.

What kind of advice is that? First, the counselor in effect gave the woman permission to defer obedience to a clear command of Scripture, "Flee immorality" (1 Cor 6:18; cf. also 1 Thess 4:3). Second, he blamed her parents and justified her vengeance toward them. Third, he seemed to suggest she could taper off gradually from her sin`under therapy, of course.

Furthermore, he gave his nationwide audience the clear message that he has no real confidence in the Holy Spirit's power to transform a person's heart and behavior immediately. Worse, he

encouraged churches to tolerate a person's sexual sin until therapy begins to work.

The profound simplicity of Gal 5:16 is in contrast to both radio counselors' advice: "Walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh." Is it possible that years of therapy could bring people to the point of walking by the Spirit? Certainly not if the therapist is someone who recommends obscene gestures, delayed repentance, and churches tolerant of chronic immorality! No biblical justification for such counsel exists. In fact, it flatly contradicts God's Word. The apostle Paul instructed the Corinthian church to turn an adulterer over to Satan, putting him out of the church fellowship (1 Corinthians 5).

Thanks is due to God for men and women in the church who depend on the Bible when counseling others, for godly counselors who urge troubled people to pray and who point them to Scripture, to God, and to the fullness of His resources to meet every need. There is no quarrel with those who use either common sense or social sciences as a helpful observer's platform to look at human conduct and develop tools to assist people in getting some external controls on their behavior. This may be useful as a first step for providing a real spiritual cure for them. But a wise counselor realizes that all behavioral therapy stops on the surface, far short of solutions to actual needs of the soul which can be resolved only in Christ.

On the other hand, those who exalt psychology above Scripture, intercession, and the perfect sufficiency of God should not be tolerated. People who mix psychology with divine resources and sell the mixture as a spiritual elixir should not be encouraged. Their methodology amounts to a tacit admission that what God has given in Christ is not adequate to meet the deepest needs of troubled lives.

God Himself does not think very highly of counselors who claim to represent Him, but rely instead on human wisdom. Job 12:17-20 says,

> He makes counselors walk barefoot [a sign of humiliation],
> He makes fools of judges.

> He loosens the bond of kings,
> And binds their loins with a girdle.
> He makes priests walk barefoot,
> And overthrows the secure ones.
> He deprives the trusted ones of speech,
> And takes away the discernment of the elders.

God's wisdom is so vastly superior to man's that the greatest human counselors are made into a spectacle. Vv. 24-25 of Job 12 add,

> He deprives of intelligence the chiefs of the earth's people,
> And makes them wander in a pathless waste.
> They grope in darkness with no light,
> And He makes them stagger like a drunken man.

If anyone had to endure the folly of well-intentioned human counselors, it was Job. Their irrelevant, useless advice was as much a grief to him as the satanic afflictions he suffered.

The depth to which "sanctified" psychotherapy can sink is quite profound. A local newspaper recently featured an article about a thirty-four-bed clinic that has opened in Southern California to treat "Christian sex addicts."[28] (The article does not explain the reasons for beds in this kind of clinic.) According to the account, the clinic is affiliated with a large and well-known Protestant church in the area. Its staff comprises specialists described as "real pioneers in the area [of sexual addiction]. These are all legitimate, licensed psychotherapists who happen to have a strong Christian orientation to therapy," according to the director.[29]

Does their "Christian" orientation happen to be solid enough to allow these psychotherapists to admit that lasciviousness is sin? Evidently not. Interviews with several of them were in the article. They consistently used the terms *illness*, *problem*, *conflict*, *compulsive*

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[28]Nicole Brodeur, "Center Aids Christian Sex Addicts," *Orange County Register* (Feb 13 1989) 1.
[29]Ibid.

behavior, treatment, and *therapy.* Words with moral overtones were carefully avoided. Sin and repentance were never mentioned.

Worse than this, these so-called experts scoffed at the power of God's Word to transform a heart and break the bondage of sexual sin. The article quoted the center's program director as he explained why he believes his treatment center specifically for Christians is essential: "There are some groups of Christians who believe the Bible is all you need."[30]

That statement is the echo of neo-gnosticism. Belittling those who believe the Bible is sufficient, these latter-day "clouds without water" (Jude 12) insist that they are privy to a higher, more sophisticated secret knowledge that holds the real answer to what troubles the human soul. Christians must not be intimidated by their false claims. No higher knowledge, no hidden truth, nothing besides the all-sufficient resources that are in Christ exists that can change the human heart.

Any counselor who wants to honor God and be effective must see the goal of his efforts as leading a person to the sufficiency of Christ. The view that man is capable of solving his own problems, or that people can help one another by "therapy" or other merely human means, denies the doctrine of human depravity and man's need for God. It replaces the Spirit's transforming power with impotent human wisdom.

WONDERFUL COUNSELOR

It is significant that one of the biblical names of Christ is Wonderful Counselor (Isa 9:6). He is the highest and ultimate One to whom Christians may turn for counsel, and His Word is the well from which they may draw divine wisdom. What could be more wonderful than that? In fact, one of the most glorious aspects of Christ's perfect sufficiency is the wonderful counsel and great wisdom He supplies in times of despair, confusion, fear, anxiety, and sorrow. He is the

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[30]Ibid.

quintessential Counselor.

That is not to denigrate the importance of Christians counseling each other. A crucial need exists for biblically sound counseling ministries within the body of Christ. The important role of those who are spiritually gifted to offer encouragement, discernment, comfort, advice, compassion, and help to others is unquestionable. The truth is that one of the very problems leading to the current plague of bad counsel is the failure of churches to do as well as they could have in enabling people with those kinds of gifts to minister effectively. The complexities of the contemporary scene make it more difficult than ever to take the time necessary to listen well, serve others through compassionate personal involvement, and otherwise provide the close fellowship necessary for the church body to enjoy spiritual health and vitality.

Churches have looked to psychology to fill the gap, but it has not worked. Professional psychologists are not a substitute for spiritually gifted people, and the counsel psychology offers cannot replace biblical wisdom and divine power. Moreover, psychology tends to make people dependent on a therapist, whereas people with spiritual gifts always turn people back to an all-sufficient Savior and His all-sufficient Word.

King David was a person who occasionally sought advice from human counselors, but he always turned to God for answers in the end. As many of the psalms reveal, he was especially dependent on God alone when he struggled with personal problems or emotions. When hit with depression or inner turmoil, he turned to God and wrestled in prayer. When the problem was his own sin, he was repentant, broken, and contrite. He prayed, "Examine me, O Lord, and try me;/ Test my mind and my heart" (Ps 26:2). The spiritually mature always turn to God for help in times of anxiety, distress, confusion, or unrest in the soul, and they are assured of wise counsel and deliverance.

The reason for this assured deliverance is that every need of the human soul is ultimately spiritual. Such a thing as a "psychological problem" unrelated to spiritual or physical causes is nonexistent. God

supplies divine resources sufficient to satisfy completely all the spiritual needs. David understood that. His writings reflect the depth of human experience, emotion, and spiritual insight of one who had fully experienced the extremities of life. He knew the exhilaration of going from shepherd to king. He wrote of everything from absolute triumph to bitter discouragement. He wrestled with pain so deep he could hardly bear to live. His own son Absalom tried to kill him and was then killed. He suffered from horrible guilt because of immorality and murder. His children brought him constant grief. He struggled to understand both the nature of God and his own heart. Of God he said, "Great is the Lord" (Ps 145:3), while of himself he said, "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,/ And cleanse me from my sin" (Ps 51:2). He told God what he felt and cried out for relief, though he admitted God had every right to punish him.

At the end of some of David's psalms he looked out a window of hope, and sometimes he did not. But David always went to God because he understood God's sovereignty and his own depravity.

Christians of this day and time, following David's example, should rest assured that their all-sufficient Savior alone has the answers to their needs and the power to apply those answers. They should stand convinced that those answers are to be found in the truth about God revealed in His Word, which is itself absolutely sufficient. The sufficient God has revealed Himself in His sufficient Word.

THE PRIORITY OF PRAYER IN PREACHING

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Prayer is not an elective but the principal element in the kaleidoscope of spiritual characteristics that mark a preacher. These traits unite into a powerful spiritual force. They build a spokesman for God. Jesus, the finest model, and other effective spokesmen for God have been mighty in prayer coupled with the virtues of godliness and dependence on God. The composite that centers in prayer is conspicuous in God's long line of proclaimers in the OT, NT, and church history even to the present day. Some books on essentials for preaching slight prayer, but others acknowledge its invaluable role. Preachers who follow the biblical model take prayer very seriously. In sermon preparation, they steep themselves in prayer.

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The preacher who follows the biblical way finds prayer to be a superb weapon. Prayer, blending in composite harmony with other spiritual priorities, is evident in biblical preaching throughout history as an essential quality for the proclaimer through whom God displays His power.

THE NECESSITY OF PRAYER FOR SPIRITUALITY

If the preacher is to deliver God's message with power, prayer must permeate his life and furnish a life-long environment for the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22, 23). His spiritual example causes others to take his message seriously. As a follower of God, his spiritual credibility forcefully attracts others to follow himself, because as a trail-blazer, he practices single-minded devotion to God. He humbly renders all glory to God and submits to His Word. He demonstrates honesty and discipline of the tongue, time, mind, and body, along with fervent resourcefulness. As he calls others to obedience, God uses his trail-blazing leadership to mark the way. All desirable spiritual qualities, particularly godliness and dependence on God, are basic ingredients

in the experience of a praying preacher.

Godliness

A noble man of God, a man of prayer, is passionate in pursuing God and His values (Ps 42:1, 2). He runs hard after God in a life shaped by the godliness he recommends for others. He is deeply serious about God's principle of following righteousness and wants God to show him His salvation (Ps 50:23). God's light shines ever more brightly in him, compelling his hearers to seek the beauties of God.

The preacher's greatest example is Jesus. From boyhood, the heart of the Savior was fixed on "the things of My Father" (Luke 2:49). His passion as He entered public ministry was "to fulfill all righteousness" (Matt 3:15). Taking His resolute stand for God against the devil, He experienced severe testing and made godly value choices based on the Word of God (Matt 4:1-11). Near the end of His life, He celebrated it as having been godly: "I have glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which Thou has given Me to do" (John 17:4).

A further example is Paul. He had been crucified with Christ (Gal 2:20). In light of this, he lived in godliness that consistently reflected his death with Christ. His empowering secret was, "not I but Christ lives in me." Paul was an example of Christ in godly values and service (1 Cor 11:1). He did not take the easy way, but faced the hardships entailed in a godly pursuit (1 Cor 4:8 ff.; 2 Cor 6:3-10).

A modern example. Phillips Brooks (1835-1893) had power in heralding God's Word at the Church of the Holy Trinity, Philadelphia, and Trinity Church, Boston. Piety was of utmost importance in his sermon preparation.

> Nothing but fire kindles fire. To know in one's whole nature what it is to live by Christ; to be His, not our own; to be so occupied with gratitude for what He did for us and for what He continually is to us that His will and His glory shall be

the sole desires of our life . . . that is the first necessity of the preacher. . . .[1]

Godliness does not stand alone. It includes dependence, its inseparable companion.

Dependence on The Power of God

Jesus covered His territory like a flame, preaching God's Word in the Spirit's power (Luke 4:14). "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me," He said, "because He anointed Me to preach the Gospel . . ." (Luke 4:18). Through the Spirit's enablement He proclaimed release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind. "The Father abiding in Me does His works," He acknowledged (John 14:10). If Jesus the man depended on divine power, how much more do other preachers need to do the same.

Paul relied on the Spirit (Rom 15:19). He thus counselled other believers (Gal 5:16-18). To the Corinthians he spoke "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Cor 2:1-5). God was his sufficiency (2 Cor 3:5, 6; 4:7). In preaching, he took to heart the principle of Christ, "Without Me, you can do nothing" (John 15:5).[2]

Prayer with its composite of spiritual virtues is indispensable in biblical preaching. It saturates the preacher and godly preaching, fulfills the preacher's dependence on God, and is authentically biblical.

THE NECESSITY OF PRAYER IN SERMONS OF THE BIBLE

In ministries during Bible times, prayer perpetually played a major role. Since biblical days, prayer remains as a top priority for preachers.

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[1]Phillips Brooks, *The Joy of Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1989) 47.

[2]"Nothing" defined by its context is the opposite of "fruit." The person abiding in Christ bears *some* fruit (John 15:2b) and can bear *more* fruit (John 15:2b) and *much* fruit (John 15:5, 8).

Books That Slight Prayer's Importance

It is puzzling that books on essentials of sermon preparation frequently do *not* discuss prayer. This is the more perplexing when these authors claim to teach the *biblical* pattern.   Prayer is not prominent among their essentials. They discuss what they consider important, as though prayer has no vital part.[3] Neglect of prayer casts it in a minor role. A sense of fairness would give these writers the benefit of the doubt and questions whether they intended such an impression. Yet when little or nothing is said about prayer and much is made of human craft and polish, only one conclusion is possible.[4] Some books require a long search to find any idea, even brief, of private prayer's importance. The reader does not see it in chapter titles, sub-headings, or topical indices.[5] It may appear at the end or in

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[3]E.g. Don M. Wardlaw, *Preaching Biblically* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983); John E. Baird, *Preparing for Platform and Pulpit* (New York: Abingdon, 1968). Wardlaw focuses on good things such as learning biblical structure, style, content, and imagery as crafted and managed by the preacher. Prayer and dependence on the Spirit are not integrated in any way to show the whole picture. Baird correctly refutes the logic that the Spirit prepares a man, so the man needs no study (8). Yet he offers no balance when emphasizing a one-sided picture, preparation by human skills alone.

[4]Cf. R. E. O. White, *A Guide to Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973). He covers preaching as worship, values of biblical preaching, hermeneutics, technique, gathering and shaping materials, aids to style, zeal, etc. Prayer is given little place. "Of the preacher's private preparation for the pulpit little need be said. [Why?] Most men find they must have opportunity before every service for quiet prayer, recollection, and mental rehearsal . . ." (152). White surely must not have intended it, but the weight of details suggests dependence on what the *preacher* can do. More attention to what only *God* can do (cf. Acts 6:4) would give a better perspective.

[5]E.g. Dwight Stevenson and Charles Diehl, *Reaching People From the Pulpit. A Guide to Effective Sermon Delivery* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958). The book says it covers all topics essential to effective oral communication (81). Prayer is not in the table of contents, sub-headings, or index. There may be a vague reference in the statement that the preacher can help others because he has found a power not of himself to give him sobriety (81). An opportunity to include prayer comes in "Preparing the Man" (100-2), but the focus on full sleep, good health, full vigor, freedom from distractions, and bringing "all his powers to bear" (99) crowd prayer

a short discussion as an afterthought. Happily, some authors who at times write little about prayer grant it a crucial place in other books.[6] How can a writer ever give prayer so little attention if Scripture makes it of such urgent consequence in preparation to preach?

Books That Emphasize Prayer's Importance

Other books on preaching, or biographies of preachers, assign much space to prayer. They refer to it often,[7] or put it first,[8] or state strong convictions about its cruciality in preparing messages.[9] Some entire books are devoted to prayer's significance in preaching.[10]

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out. Among these excellent suggestions, one wonders why prayer was not added to balance the preacher's power with the power of God.

[6]Cf. two books by Andrew W. Blackwood. In *Preaching From the Bible* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1941), he gives no arresting focus to the Holy Spirit, power, holiness, or prayer. A terse comment at the end of the Foreword says the Holy Spirit should be our teacher (9). The statement that the preaching in the apostolic church was in a spirit of prayer (18) is rather buried in other emphases. Prayer gets brief mention in the last paragraph of Chapter 11 (196), and brief words about prayer are elsewhere (207-8, 218, 222). More is made of prayer in *The Preparation of Sermons* (New York: Abingdon, 1948), e. g. 36, 208, and in the statement "the Scriptures and prayer go together as inseparably as the light and heat of the sun . . ." (45).

[7]E.g. Asa Cummings, *A Memoir of the Rev. Edward Payson* (New York: American Tract Society, 1830); Andrew Bonar, ed., *Memoirs of McCheyne* (Chicago: Moody, 1947).

[8]E.g. R. A. Bodey, ed., *Inside the Sermon. Thirteen Preachers Discuss Their Methods of Preparing Messages* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990) 28-35. Bodey says "faithful, earnest prayer and long hours of diligent, believing study of the Word of God" are more necessary than anything else (28).

[9]Roger Martin, *R. A. Torrey, Apostle of Certainty* (Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord, 1976). J. I. Packer rightly applauds Richard Baxter's words: "Prayer must carry on our work as well as preaching: he preacheth not heartily to his people, that prayeth not earnestly for them. If we prevail not with God to give them faith and repentance we shall never prevail with them to believe and repent" (Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor* [London: Banner of Truth, 1974] 120-23, cited by J. I. Packer, *A Quest For Holiness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* [Wheaton: Crossway, 1990] 289).

[10]Gardiner Spring, *The Power of the Pulpit* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1986 rpt.

The truth is, many things are important in preaching. No conscientious herald of God will consciously choose to neglect any of them. He will labor hard on the exegesis of his text, use reliable sources, stimulate his mind from a breadth of reading, take pains to be accurate, and get a clear outline. He will search for vivid analogy, memorize Scripture, nourish an evangelistic and edifying aim, and be always looking to God. He may write out his message entirely or preach it from notes. He will integrate details and form clear transitions. He will know the people to whom he speaks. He will pay attention to earnestness, enthusiasm, artistic touches, forcefulness, grace, and tasteful humor. He will be concerned about enunciation, gestures, courage, posture, timing, eye-contact, and other matters, and will guard against hurtful remarks.

The emphasis on prayer need not undercut any of these aspects, but *these others should not remove the spotlight from the necessity of prayer*. Unfortunately preachers get unbalanced in several ways:

(1) They emphasize prayer alone and lazily shirk the responsibility to be God's workmen through faithful study.

(2) They put all their emphasis on human aspects of sermon preparation and have no pervasive dependence on God in prayer. God can, in spite of this, bless, but the preacher serves up only a product of human craft. Its fine technique is impressive, but it lacks vital forcefulness.

(3) They emphasize homiletical ingenuity, but offer only a shallow exposure to God's Word through neglect of diligent labor in study and prayer. They have little to feed the hungry and reflect little dependence on God.

But there is good news! Preachers can be balanced. They emphasize a prayerful choice of a text, prayerful diligence studying the passage and books that clarify the meaning. They search diligently for relevant illustrations, labor earnestly to organize their material

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of 1948 ed.), especially "Ministers Must Be Men of Prayer" 137-44; W. E. Sangster, *Power in Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976 rpt. of 1958 ed.). Chapter 7 is "Steep it in Prayer" 96-107.

well, and build good transitions. They pray the whole time. Then they deliver their messages, fortified by a godly life and a spirit relying on God. This is the preferred way. Prayer is a major force, but the other essentials are not taken lightly.

Proclamation in OT Times

What role has prayer played during Bible times and since? An examination of prayerful preaching by men with a great impact for God is very informative.

Moses. The law-giver Moses had a ministry similar to today's preacher. He spoke God's Word and made it relevant to needs of his day. Prayer figured heavily in his ministry.[11]
One example is Moses' pleading with God to spare Israel after their idolatrous worship of a golden calf. He interceded with God to retain His purpose in *redemption* of Israel from Egypt. Second, he was zealous that God preserve His *reputation* from all taint of dishonor before the ungodly. He also implored God to furnish a *remembrance* of His own covenant pledge (Exod 32:11-13). He begged God to forgive His people (Exod 32:32).

Samuel. To encourage his people, Samuel, a priest and a prophet, used God's loyalty to His covenant aim for Israel's good (1 Sam 12:22). He saw the Lord's steadfastness as consistent with His reputation. For God to renege on His promise would make Him unfaithful to His Word and character, sacrificing His very honor. Samuel knew God's covenant purpose to possess Israel and submitted his will to God's purpose. Walking in step with God, he told his hearers, "Far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by

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[11]Prayer is frequent in Moses' life. Some instances are Exod 3:1-4:17, 5:22-23; 6:12, 30; 8:12, 30; 9:33; 15:1-18, 25; 17:8-13; 19:23; 32:7-14, 30-34; 33:18; Num 11:2, 11-15, 21-22; 12:13; 14:13-19; 16:15, 22; 27:15-17; Deut 3:23-28; 9:7-29; 32:1-43.

ceasing to pray for you" (1 Sam 12:23).

The link between *preaching* God's Word to them and *praying* for them is evident. Prayer harmonizes with God's will. The preacher Samuel, rather than sinning by failing to pray, took the God-honoring way: "I will instruct you in the good and right way" (1 Sam 12:23). He set an example for every preacher in his *perception* of the will that God's Word articulated, *prayer* for the people to relate to that will, and *proclamation* of that will. All three elements, including prayer, were crucial.

Daniel. Daniel was the human channel God used to record His prophetic plan for centuries to come. Daniel's preparation for this task revolved about prayer. He made it paramount in receiving God's *information* about Nebuchadnezzar's dream. He also sought the *interpretation* by prayer (Daniel 2). Later, he meditated on Jeremiah 25 and 29 about the seventy years God had set for Israel to be in Babylonian exile (Daniel 9) and made three requests for his people: the restoration of Jerusalem (Dan 9:16), the rebuilding of the temple (Dan 9:17), and the return of the people (Dan 9:18, 19). God's answer was His plan to grant all three in His time (Dan 9:24-27). In Daniel 10, Daniel humbled himself for three weeks of fasting and prayer (Dan 10:2-3). He prayed (Dan 10:12) and received God's Word about developments in Persia, Greece, and later powers (Daniel 10 ` 12).

Proclamation In NT Times

Jesus. The Savior used prayer to prepare Himself for ministry.[12]
 Luke refers more often to His prayer than the other gospel writers.
This fits Luke's emphasis on Jesus' humanity. Jesus is king (Matthew),
servant (Mark), and God (John), but is also man and prays as a man.

Prayer was of overwhelming importance in the preaching of
Jesus. The Son of man commenced and consummated His ministry on
earth in prayer (Luke 3:21, 22; 24:49-51). He saw prayer as vital when
people were thronging to hear Him preach. Differing from some of
today's preachers, Jesus took the awesome demand on His time as a
call to keep prayer as a priority. He ". . . would slip away to the
wilderness to pray" (Luke 5:16). The desert solitude with God was an
essential before serving a multitude that gathered to hear.   For
preachers sensitive to His heart-beat, bent knees are as crucial to the
kingdom as opened lexicons. His vigil before God reflected His value
system. Jesus depended on God even though He was Himself God in
the flesh!

Back from such a rendezvous in prayer (Luke 5:16), Jesus was
ready to preach and confound antagonistic religious experts (Luke
5:17). One wonders what the lips of the preacher had prayed. Was it
for wisdom to meet trials or for the crowds to have their blinders
removed to see their desperate spiritual need (Luke 5:15, 26)? One
thing is certain. Whatever He prayed, the Jesus who preached was the
Jesus who prayed.

Before appointing the twelve disciples, Jesus "went off to the
mountain to pray" (Luke 6:12). Exhibiting His dependence on and
submission to God by an all-night session in prayer, Jesus later
preached the Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6:20-49). Still later, one of the
twelve requested, "Lord, teach us to pray . . . " (Luke 11:1).   In

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[12]Cf. Charles E. Hoekstra, "An Examination of the Prayer Life of Jesus to Ascertain
the Relation of Prayer to the Pastor's Work" (DMin dissertation, Covenant Theological
Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, 1987). Besides surveying instances in Jesus' ministry,
Hoekstra relates prayer to pastoral work and suggests applications.

response, the praying preacher taught "The Disciples' Prayer" (Luke 11:2-4) and other matters related to prayer (Luke 11:5-13).

Prayer preceded Jesus' announcements about the church and the keys of the kingdom (Matt 16:18-19; Luke 9:18) and about His death, resurrection, a man losing his soul, men being ashamed of Him, and His future coming (Luke 9:18, 29-35). It also prefaced His transfiguration (Luke 9:18, 29-35).

Jesus urged His disciples to pray. He dealt with men He was molding into preachers. "Beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest" (Matt 9:38). Observing that priority could keep the preachers praying all their lives.

Early Christians. An urgency to pray gripped early Christians. In Acts they prayed in many circumstances.[13] Luke continued his emphasis on prayer in this, his second volume. The prayers of these early saints are a great stimulant to others who want to please God.

They prayed, awaiting the Spirit's coming with power at Pentecost (Acts 1:14; cf. 1:5-7; 2:33), an important preparation for Peter's potent message of Acts 2. Their prayers also sought God's choice in replacing Judas among the twelve (Acts 1:15-26).

Prayer was one of four Christian essentials (Acts 2:42). If it was that important then, how crucial must it be for preachers today. Believers prayed on a regular schedule (Acts 3:1; 10:9) as well as at any moment of urgency. Peter and John furnish an example. They were God's channels for His miraculous healing of the lame man (Acts 3:7-10). Later, they with others prayed for boldness in witnessing (Acts 4:29-31), a prayer that God answered in enabling them to face enemies. They were empowered, unified, and selfless. Later, the apostles gave the importance of prayer in preaching: "We will devote ourselves to

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[13]Cf. Hermann Wang, "The Prayers of Acts" (unpublished ThM thesis, Talbot School of Theology, La Mirada, CA, 1988), a treatment of most prayers in Acts; Warren Wiersbe, *Something Happens When Churches Pray* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1984). Wiersbe sees God's Word as the source of wisdom in prayer, successful efforts stemming from prayer, the Spirit's power through prayer, etc.

prayer, and to the ministry of the Word" (Acts 6:4). The order is interesting.[14] Even if the mention of prayer first is not significant, it is certain that prayer is just as primary for preachers as the Word.

Paul. Paul prayed that God would help new converts grow (Acts 14:23). Apparently he viewed prayer as inseparable from preaching as did his predecessors (cf. Acts 6:4). Behind the prayer of Acts 14:23 and the appointment of elders lies the reminder of God's concern for new believers. Their spiritual growth depended on the appointment of elders who could exhort them and feed them from the Word of God (cf. Acts 14:22). Prayer was needed to undergird this process.

Paul and his associates prayed when they preached God's Word in Europe (Acts 16:13). They penetrated the heavenly curtain before they penetrated the human curtain (Acts 16:14). God used prayer to prosper their ministry, which was also *His* ministry.

Paul's dependence on prayer in preaching is synonymous with his dependence on God rather than human ability (cf. 1 Cor 2:1-5). This did not rule out his skillful use of effective techniques of communica-tion, however. Just as Jesus adopted good methods, such as parables, so did Paul.[15] Paul, however, depended ultimately on the cross-centered content of God's Word and the power of God's Spirit for effectiveness in preaching, a dependence exhibited in prayer.

Paul's dependence on God also surfaces in appeals for others to pray for him. An example is Eph 6:18-20. As a part of his call for Christians to don God's armor, he details that armor and bids them pray "all-out" for him (note the fourfold use of "all").

(1) All situations. Pray "through (δι [*dia*]) all prayer and petition." Engage in every form of prayer. The word προσευχω

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[14]Sinclair Ferguson wonders about the significance of the mention of prayer before preaching in Acts 6:4, without drawing a conclusion (Bodey, *Inside* 82).

[15]Jesus and Paul used introductory devices, good organization, vivid examples, appeals for a verdict, etc.

(*proseuchs*) can mean prayer in general, in all its expressions,[16] such as praise/thanks, confession, petition, and intercession. "Petition" (desevw [*deses*]) specifies each request.[17]

(2) All seasons. "At every time" takes in all the opportunities when believers pray. Pray "in the Spirit" for the success of the preacher and the preached Word. Ask in submission to the Spirit's will and wisdom, with reliance on His power and motives keyed to His values.

(3) All steadfastness.   Paul wants them "alert with all perseverance and petition."   "Keep alert" (grypnv [*agrupne*]) refers to staying awake to carry out a task.   Alert prayer is with "all perseverance" (proskartrhsiw [*proskartersis*]). The related verb means "to hold fast to."[18] The same word is used for the early Christians who *clung* to the Word (Acts 2:42). Paul wants alert, tenacious people praying for him, in every specific request (dhsiw [*desis*]).

(4) All subjects. Paul wants prayer warriors to intercede for "all the saints," including himself: "pray on my behalf" (v. 19). Pray for what? Paul mentions "boldness" twice. He wants to wield the sword of the Spirit, preaching "as I ought to speak." Speaking with boldness suits the fact that if filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:18), Paul would speak "in the strength of His might" (Eph 6:10). Boldness is necessary if the preacher is to triumph over fear and the forces pitted against his success (Eph 6:12). It also matches a message that provides every spiritual blessing (Eph 1:3) and an inheritance with God (Eph 1:11, 14). The preacher should not voice such truths in a vague, weak, or confusing way.

The prayer that drenched Paul's sermons is also suggested in Phil 4:6. "In everything" includes more than sermons as objects of prayer, but it certainly includes every aspect of sermon preparation

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[16]J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Philippians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1953 [rpt.]) 160.

[17]Lightfoot, *Philippians* 160.

[18]W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Cambridge: University Press, 1979) 715.

too. "By prayer" uses the word προσευχ (*proseuch*), a general word for prayer, again.[19] Paul continues, "with supplication" (δησιω [*desis*]), a "special petition [request] for the supply of wants. . . ."[20] Paul exhorts, "Let your requests be made known." These requests (ατματα [*aitmata*]), as Lightfoot supposes, are "the several objects of δησιω."[21]

Such praying is "with thanksgiving." Why? The praying person wants to show gratitude for past answers that sweetened life. Thanks is also apropos for God's present bounty in granting His audience and action. Thanksgiving is due the Spirit for His help (Rom 8:26, 27; Eph 6:18-20; Phil 1:19). These illustrate the many reasons for gratitude.

Prayer continues through the centuries of church history since the NT era.

THE NECESSITY OF PRAYER
FOR POWER IN PREACHING TODAY

The clarion call for prayer as preparation for preaching resounds in preachers of relatively modern times up to the present. Preachers pray and solicit others to pray for their messages. God's power in preaching results.

Power Through Preachers' Prayers

R. Kent Hughes, current senior pastor of the College Church of Wheaton, assessed scores of books on preaching, and was frequently disappointed that authors said little or nothing about prayer. This led him to comment,

This, and what experience God so far has given me in preaching and prayer, has brought a conviction. Should I ever write a book on essentials for

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[19]Lightfoot, *Philippians* 160.
[20]Ibid.
[21]Ibid.

preaching, I know now that I would devote at least a *third* of it to spiritual preparation in matters such as prayer. This would be the *first* third.[22]

E. M. Bounds (1835-1913) served as a Civil War chaplain for the confederacy. He later pastored several churches and became a man driven by prayer. His morning habit was to pray from four to seven. His listeners commented on his powerful public prayers and his messages. At least eight of his manuscripts on prayer have been published,[23] and a biography is soon to appear.[24] Bounds' books have aroused many to greater fervor in prayer. He wrote,

> The young preacher has been taught to lay out all his strength on the form, taste, and beauty of his sermon as a mechanical and intellectual product. We have thereby cultivated a vicious taste among the people and raised the clamor for talent instead of grace, eloquence instead of piety, rhetoric instead of revelation, reputation and brilliancy instead of holiness.[25]

Much in this is true, but it is not an "either/or" situation. The combination of homiletical skill *and* much prayer is the answer. Bounds also wrote, "Light praying will make light preaching. Prayer makes preaching strong [the God who answers prayer does this] . . . and makes it stick."[26]

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[22]R. Kent Hughes, personal conversation, Dec. 21, 1990; cf. Kent and Barbara Hughes, *Liberating Ministers from the Success Syndrome* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1987). The chapter "Success is Prayer," 71-81, esp. 77, emphasizes the primacy of prayer; cf. also R. Kent Hughes, *Ephesians, The Mystery of the Body of Christ* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1990), where he discusses Eph 6:18-20.

[23]All published in recent editions by Baker Book House. Cf. E. M. Bounds, *Purpose in Prayer* (Grand Rapids: Baker, n.d.). A biographical sketch on Bounds is given on pp. 5-7 and the back cover.

[24]Authored by Lyle W. Dorsett (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, July, 1991 [tentative]), according to personal letter from Dorsett, Jan 18, 1991. The second part of Dorsett's book has selections from Bounds' writings, especially some long-lost essays in Christian papers. He has data, including pictures, from Bounds' descendants.

[25]E. M. Bounds, *Power Through Prayer* (Grand Rapids: Baker, n.d.) 74.

[26]Ibid., 31.

David Larsen, Professor of Homiletics at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, has emphasized prayer:

> Strange it is that any discussion of preaching should take place outside the context of believing prayer. We have not prepared until we have prayed. . . .
> We cannot represent God if we have not stood before God. It is more important for me therefore to teach a student to pray than to preach. . . .[27]

After a powerful message by Alexander Whyte (1836-1921), pastor of Free Saint George's West in Edinburgh, Scotland, a listener exulted, "Dr. Whyte, you preached today like you had just emerged from the throne chamber of the Almighty." The preacher replied, "In point of fact, I have."[28]

At an ordination of a man preparing to preach, Whyte advised, "Be up earlier than usual to meditate and pray over it. Steep every sentence of it in the Spirit. . . . And pray after it."[29]

A biographer says that as much as Whyte valued public worship and prepared diligently for it, secret prayer was more important to him. The "master notes of his preaching"[30] were discipline, prayer, inner motive, humility before God and men, and purity attained through suffering. The same writer notes that Whyte's secret prayer led to public prayer that had a powerful impact on people. One of Whyte's students spoke of the days when "`every sermon in Free St. George's was a volcano, and every opening prayer a revelation.'"[31]  Whyte "never grew weary of emphasizing the need of prayer and of discipline in the Christian life`the need of humility and

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[27]David Larsen, *The Anatomy of Preaching. Identifying the Issues in Preaching Today* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989) 53-54. Chapter 4 is helpful on spiritual preparation, stressing identity in Christ, the Word, prayer, the Spirit's power, and personal holiness.

[28]Ibid., 55.

[29]G. F. Barbour, *The Life of Alexander Whyte* (New York: George H. Doran, 1923) 296-97.

[30]Ibid., 307.

[31]Ibid., 309.

of `ever-new beginnings.'"[32]

A "morning watch" was almost as regular as the sun rising for H. A. Ironside (1876-1951). This expositor meditated in his Bible and prayed for an hour,[33] and afterward gave himself to more intensive study and further prayer. Rivers of living water overflowed from his times with God to crowds who heard him. He insisted, "If we would prevail with men in public, we must prevail with God in secret."[34]

Those at Trinity Chapel in Brighton, England, heard searching messages by Frederick W. Robertson (1816-1853). Some have called him the greatest of the English preachers. In early years, he concentrated on reading about David Brainerd and Henry Martyn.[35] He bathed his life in communion with God, longing to be conformed to the image of Christ and adjusting his values to His ideals.[36] He prayed without ceasing, different concerns drawing his attention each day: Sun., parish and outpouring of the Spirit; Mon., special devotion; Tues., spread of the gospel; Wed., kingdom of Christ; Thurs., self-denial; Fri., special examination and confession; Sat., intercession.[37]

Charles Finney (1792-1875), evangelistic in focus, lived like Jesus, slipping away to engage in special vigils of prayer and fasting. Speaking after much prayer, he saw God bring great blessing on his ministry.[38] He was convinced about the importance of prayer:

> Without this you are as weak as weakness itself. If you lose your spirit of prayer, you will do nothing, or next to nothing, though you had the intellectual endowment of an angel. . . . The blessed Lord deliver, and preserve His dead

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[32]Ibid., 388-89.

[33]E. S. English, *H. A. Ironside, Ordained of the Lord* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1946) 176.

[34]H. A. Ironside, *Praying in the Holy Spirit* (New York: Loizeaux Brothers, n.d.) 59.

[35]Stopford A. Brooke, *Life and Letters of Fredk. W. Robertson, M. A.* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1865) 60.

[36]Ibid., 60.

[37]Ibid., 60-61.

[38]L. G. Parkhurst, *Charles G. Finney's Answers to Prayer* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1983). See, for example, Chapter 25.

church from the guidance and influence of men who know not what it is to pray.[39]

Finney said, "I would say that unless I had the spirit of prayer I could do nothing."[40] If even for a moment he lost the sense of the spirit of grace and prayer, he could not preach with power and was impotent in personal witness.

A famous Methodist preacher of England, William Sangster (1900-1960), felt closeness to God to be of utmost importance in preparing a message, because after prayerful study,

> the preacher seems to fade out and leave the hearers face to face with God. . . . If we are driven to make comparisons, we must insist that grace-gifts are more important than natural gifts. It is true that the Holy Spirit can work on very little, and if *effectiveness* is borne in mind rather than popularity, the unction of the Spirit is the greatest gift of all.[41]

For more than forty-six years George W. Truett (1867-1944) pastored the First Baptist Church, Dallas, Texas. After time with his family each evening, he went to his library to study and pray from 7 p.m. until midnight.[42] He also prepared at other hours. Once he was aboard a ship tossed by heavy winds and waves. The distress prompted a request for Truett to preach. He went alone with God, seeking a fitting message. After prayer, he found the message in Hebrews, "Ye have need of patience." When he announced his subject, the storm-weary people smiled their approval.[43]

Truett had a passion that people be saved. He said that the

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[39]Ibid., 126-27.

[40]Ibid., 59; cf. John 15:5, inability without Christ to do anything that will bear fruit. Bearing fruit (doing what counts as success before God) is related closely to prayer (John 15:7, 8).

[41]William Sangster, *The Approach to Preaching* (London: Epworth, 1951) 18; cf. also n. 10 in this article.

[42]Joe W. Burton, *Prince of the Pulpit* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1946) 26.

[43]Ibid., 27.

person who will win others to Christ must pray much for himself and for them.[44] Requests came from all over the world for Truett to pray. On a Dallas street, he met a noted elderly criminal lawyer. "Dr. Truett," the man said, "I was at your church Sunday, and heard what you said about prayer. I don't suppose you ever pray for a sinner like me." Truett responded, "I have prayed for you, by name, daily, for years," and produced a notebook with the lawyer's name in it to prove it. The lawyer's lips trembled and his eyes grew moist. "Thank you, Doctor, thank you for remembering a hardened old sinner."[45]

Thomas Armitage paints this picture of prayer:

> A sermon steeped in prayer on the study floor, like Gideon's fleece saturated with dew, will not lose its moisture between that and the pulpit. The first step towards doing anything in the pulpit as a thorough workman must be to kiss the feet of the Crucified, as a worshipper, in the study.[46]

Whitesell, a teacher of preaching, bears down on prayer:

> The preacher must be a man of prayer. . . . He should pray for his messages . . . soak them in prayer, . . . pray as he goes into the pulpit, pray as he preaches insofar as that is possible, and follow up his sermons with prayer. . . .[47]

Also in support of this point is Sinclair Ferguson, Scottish pastor who since 1982 has been Professor of Systematic Theology at Westmin-ster Theological Seminary:

> For me, it is of primary importance that all my preparation be done in the context of a praying spirit . . . looking to the Lord and depending on the grace of His illuminating and enlivening Spirit. This is punctuated by specific

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[44]Ibid., 65.

[45]P. W. James, *George W. Truett. A Biography* (New York: Macmillan, 1945) 267-68.

[46]Thomas Armitage, *Preaching: Its Ideals and Inner Life* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1880) 170.

[47]Faris D. Whitesell, *The Art of Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1950) 86; cf. the essentials of preaching in Chapter 3.

ejaculations and periods of petition for both exposition and application. . . .

To use a picture from John Owen, I think of the Spirit moving among the people, giving to each a parcel of identical shape, size, and wrapping (the sermon); but . . . the gift inside is specially appropriate to each. My prayer, therefore, is that my material may be in harmony with His purpose and my spirit sensitive to His gracious character, so that I may not distort Him in my words or by my spirit.[48]

An expositor at many Plymouth Brethren conferences, Henry Holloman, Professor of Systematic Theology at Talbot School of Theology, has said,

Behind every good biblical preacher is much hard labor in preparation (1 Tim 5:17; 2 Tim 2:15). However, only prayer can assure that his work is not wasted and that his message will spiritually impact the hearers. As the biblical preacher interweaves prayer with his preparation, he should focus on certain petitions: (1) that he will receive God's message . . . in spiritual as well as mental *comprehension*, 1 Cor 2:9-16; (2) that God's message will first grip his own heart in strong *conviction*, 1 Thess 1:5; (3) that he will clearly and correctly convey God's message in the power of the Spirit in effective *communication*, . . . 1 Thess 1:5; (4) that the Spirit will use the message to produce proper response and change, . . . spiritual *transformation*, 2 Cor 3:18 . . . and (5) that the whole process and finished product will accomplish God's purpose in *glorification* of God through Christ, 1 Cor 10:31; 1 Pet 4:11.[49]

Holloman clarifies that "knowledge and organization is what we must do, but prayer gives us what only God can do."
John MacArthur, pastor-teacher of Grace Community Church, Sun Valley, CA, sees prayer as inseparable from preparing and preaching.

During the week . . . locked up with my books, . . . study and . . . communion mingle as I apply the tools of exegesis and exposition in . . . open communion

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[48]Sinclair B. Ferguson, cited by Bodey, *Inside* 82-83.
[49]Personal letter, Jan 14, 1991.

with the Lord. I seek His direction, thank Him for what I discover, plead for wisdom and insight, and desire that He enable me to live what I learn and preach.

A special burden for prayer begins to grip my heart on Saturday evening. Before I go to sleep, I . . . spend one final time going over my notes. That involves an open line of communication with God as I meditatively and consciously offer my notes up to the Lord for approval, refinement and clarity.

I awake Sunday morning in the same spirit of prayer. Arriving at the church early, I spend time . . . in prayer, then join elders who pray with me for the messages. On Sunday afternoon, I go through a similar time of reviewing my evening message prayerfully. . . .[50]

John Stott says a preacher, like a father (1 Thess 2:11), should pray for his church family. Preachers will only make time for this hard and secret work if they love people enough. "Because it is secret and therefore unrewarded by men, we shall only undertake it if we long for their spiritual welfare more than for their thanks. . . ."[51]

Robert Murray McCheyne (1813-1842) pastored St. Peter's Church in Dundee, Scotland. References to prayers sprinkle his journal almost as thickly as heather blooms on a Scottish meadow. He wrote to Dan Edwards on October 2, 1840, after Dan had been ordained for missionary service to the Jews and for study in Germany:

I know you will apply hard to German; but do not forget the culture of the inner man. . . . How diligently the cavalry officer keeps his sabre clean and sharp; . . . Remember you are God's sword, His instrument. . . . In great measure, according to the purity and perfections of the instrument, will be the success. It is not great talents God blesses [He does bless, using gifts He gave as they are given back to Him] so much as great likeness to Jesus. A holy minister is an awful weapon in the hand of God.[52]

Andrew Blackwood, long-time Professor of Homiletics at

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[50]Personal letter, "Expository Preaching," Jan 16, 1991.

[51]John R. W. Stott, *The Preacher's Portrait* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961) 98-99.

[52]Bonar, *Memoirs* 95.

Princeton Theological Seminary, counsels the preacher to lay down one rule and never make an exception: start, continue, and end with prayer.[53] A biblical sermon, he says, will likely be worth whatever the preacher invests in it, the time he devotes, the thought he gives, and the prayer. For

> in his study the prophet can build his altar and on it lay the wood. There he can lovingly place his sacrifice . . . sermon . . . but still he knows that the fire must come down from God. Come it will, if he prays before he works, and if he works in the spirit of prayer.[54]

Edward Payson (1783-1827) exemplified sermon preparation by diligent study infused with hours of prayer. He pastored the Second Congregational Church, Portland, Maine.   His reading rapidity, sharpness in assimilating details, and good scholarship were notable.[55] He studied the writings of Jonathan Edwards and others,[56] but his greatest zeal was in studying the Bible and praying for God's help interpreting and applying it.[57] Prayer was "the most noticeable fact in his history. . . ."[58] He ". . . studied theology on his knees. Much of his time he spent literally prostrated with the Bible open before him, pleading the promises."[59]

Payson's discipline led him to guard his time.   His usual schedule was twelve hours a day for study, two for devotion, two for relaxing, two for meals and family devotions, and six for sleep.[60]   In his diary and letters, comments like the following recur: "Was much assisted in my studies . . . enabled to write twelve pages of my sermon.

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[53]Andrew W. Blackwood, *The Preparation of Sermons* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1948), 36.

[54]Blackwood, *Preaching* 196.

[55]Asa Cummings, *Memoir* 13-14.

[56]Ibid., 65.

[57]Ibid., 71.

[58]Ibid., 242.

[59]Ibid., 74.

[60]Ibid., 75.

 It was the more precious, because it seemed to be in answer to prayer."[61] He wrote on March 17, 1806, that since beginning to plead God's blessing on his preparation, "I have done more in one week than in the whole year before. . . ."[62]

Even in cases when Payson felt he had been weak in preaching, his people were refreshed. When lifeless in devotions, he often prayed on to victory.[63] God greatly enlivened this preacher as He quickened the psalmist.[64] Payson prayed hours for the lost and often witnessed to them. He saw many saved and added to the church.

A brother told Payson he felt discouraged about preaching because of inexperience and ignorance. Payson wrote to him admitting that he himself always felt inadequate:

> This led me to pray almost incessantly. ... He who has thus guided me, and thousands of others equally foolish will, I trust, guide you. ... If we would do much for God, we must ask much of God; ... I cannot insist on this too much. Prayer is the first thing, the second thing, and the third thing necessary for a minister, especially in seasons of revival. ... Pray, then, my dear brother, pray, pray, pray. ...[65]

The greatly used preacher Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892) put heavy emphasis on prayer. He felt that ministers ought to pray without ceasing (1 Thess 5:17). "All our libraries and studies are mere emptiness compared with our closets. We grow, we wax mighty, we prevail in private prayer,"[66] he wrote. He prayed in choosing a topic, getting into the spirit of a text, seeing God's deep truths, lifting those truths out, receiving fresh streams of thought, and for delivery. For

> nothing can so gloriously fit you to preach as descending fresh from the mount

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[61]Ibid., 81.

[62]Ibid., 59.

[63]Ibid., 106.

[64]Cf. Ps 119:25b, 37, 88.

[65]Ibid., 255-56.

[66]Helmut Thielicke, *Encounter With Spurgeon* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1963) 117.

of communion with God to speak with men. None are so able to plead with men as those who have been wrestling with God on their behalf.[67]

Spurgeon studied hard, but he got some of his best thoughts while preaching.[68] Or, feeling fettered, he secretly groaned to God and received unusual liberty. "But how dare we pray in the battle if we have never cried to the Lord while buckling on the harness!"[69]

After preaching, Spurgeon found prayer strategic. "If we cannot prevail with men for God, we will, at least, endeavor to prevail with God for men."[70]

So, the preacher who does his work God's way prays, but he also enlists others to pray for the success of the Word.

Power Through Others' Prayers

Early in this century, John Hyde prayed for speakers at conferences in India. He and R. M'Cheyne Paterson prayed for a month for a conference in 1904. George Turner joined them for three of those weeks.[71] God saved hundreds of people and renewed believers. Hyde knelt for hours in his room, or was prostrate on the floor, or sat in on a message while interceding for the speaker and the hearers.

Dwight L. Moody (1837-1899), founder of the Moody Bible Institute, often saw God work in power when others prayed for his meetings in America and abroad. He often wired R. A. Torrey at the school, urging prayer. Faculty and students prayed all evening or into the early morning or all night.[72]

After Moody's death, Torrey (1856-1928) preached in many countries. He too had prayer backing. In Australia, 2,100 home prayer

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[67]Ibid., 118.

[68]Ibid., 119.

[69]Ibid.

[70]Ibid.

[71]E. G. Carr, ed., *Praying Hyde* (South Plainfield, NJ: Bridge, 1982) 13-14.

[72]R. A. Torrey, *Why God Used D. L. Moody* (Chicago: Moody, 1923) 16-17.

groups met for two weeks before he arrived. God turned many lives around.[73]   After Torrey died, Mrs. Torrey said, "My husband was a man of much prayer and Bible study.   He denied himself social intercourse with even his best friends, in order that he might have time for prayer, study, and the preparation for his work."[74]

Torrey said, "Pray for great things, expect great things, work for great things, but above all pray."[75]   He told church members, "Do you want a new minister? I can tell you how to get one. Pray for the one you have till God makes him over."[76]   He believed, "Prayer is the key that unlocks all the storehouses of God's infinite grace and power."[77] He was for many years pastor of the Chicago Avenue Church, later called Moody Memorial Church.   Much of the growth there resulted from prayer by Torrey and his praying people who met on Saturday nights and Sunday mornings.[78]

Payson, already mentioned, rallied people to meet for prayer in "Aaron and Hur Societies" in fours and fives for an hour. They prayed before Payson preached.[79] A preacher needs to lead in prayer and also to get the church

> excited to pray for the influences of the divine Spirit; and that they should frequently meet for this purpose. . . .   In that duty we explicitly acknowledge, not only to Him, but to our fellow-creatures, that nothing but the influences of His Spirit can render any means effectual, and that we are entirely dependent . . . on His sovereign will.[80]

Payson depended on others' prayers.   His speaking schedule

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[73]Martin, *Torrey* 139; for the impact after people prayed, see 110, 131-32, 134, 144, 169-70, 173, 186.

[74]Martin, *Torrey* 279.

[75]Ibid., 166.

[76]R. A. Torrey, *The Prayer of Power* (New York: Revell, 1924) 35.

[77]Torrey, *Prayer* 17.

[78]Martin, *Torrey* 110.

[79]Cummings, *Memoir* 180.

[80]Ibid., 256.

was often heavy. He prepared four sermons a week and sometimes sermons for the press. Within a two-month period he also had three ordination messages, two messages for missions societies, and one for a women's asylum.[81] No matter how busy, he kept his own prayer vigils. His biographer says that "prayer . . . was eminently the business of his life . . . through which he derived inexhaustible supplies."[82] He adds that "his conversation was in heaven."

Spurgeon said much about others praying. The preacher, no matter how brilliant, godly, or eloquent, has no power without the Spirit's help:

> The bell in the steeple may be well hung, fairly fashioned, and of soundest metal, but it is dumb until the ringer makes it speak. And . . . the preacher has no voice of quickening for the dead in sin, or of comfort for living saints unless the divine spirit [Spirit] gives him a gracious pull, and begs him speak with power. Hence the need of prayer for both preacher and hearers.[83]

Spurgeon said he would plead even with tears for others' prayers.[84] Only by abundant intercession could the church prosper or even continue. He saw the Monday night prayer meeting at London's Metropolitan Tabernacle as "the thermometer of the church."[85] A large part of the main auditorium and first gallery were filled at this meeting for years.[86] In Spurgeon's mind, the prayer meeting was "the most important meeting of the week."[87]

CONCLUSION

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[81]Ibid., 260-61.

[82]Ibid., 122.

[83]Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Quotable Spurgeon* (Wheaton: Harold Shaw, 1990) 207.

[84]Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim, 1971 rpt. of 1874 ed.) 19(1873):169.

[85]Susannah Spurgeon and Joseph Harrald, *C. H. Spurgeon Autobiography* (2 vols., Vol 2, The Full Harvest, 1860-1892, rev. ed.; Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1987) 321.

[86]Ibid.

[87]Ibid., 322.

Prayer reigns supreme along with the Word of God in ministries of the Old Testament, New Testament, and since then. The preacher today, as always, needs a wise balance between different aspects of sermon preparation that depend on human skill and the facets that call on God for His almighty power. The man who represents God in the pulpit should cultivate an ever-growing passion to be the most prayerful and diligent channel he can be for broadcasting the greatest message of all time.

SUGGESTIONS FOR EXPOSITIONAL PREACHING OF OLD TESTAMENT NARRATIVE

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A large and significant part of the Bible is devoted to sections of narrative literature, also referred to as "story." The advantages of preaching from this type of passage have not been fully realized because preachers have not preached the sections just as they are in the text. Advantages to be capitalized on include the intrinsic interest involved in such stories, the patterned nature of the stories, the timeless truths illustrated in the stories, and the way the stories lend themselves to easy application. Yet certain precautions are necessary in preaching narrative sections. An artificial structure must not be imposed on them. They must not be used solely as a resource of illustrations for the rest of the Bible. They are not just examples of obeying or disobeying God's law. By observing these guidelines and precautions, the expository preacher can utilize narrative sections to great advantage in his preaching.

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Song titles such as "I Love to Tell the Story," "Tell Me the Old, Old Story," and "Tell Me the Story of Jesus" reflect the important role of stories in a Christian's life. For example, evangelistic efforts commonly include the use of stories, just as Stephen and others told (e.g. Acts 7:2-50). A "testimony" is *the believer's* story about how Jesus has worked in his life. It is the essence of the gospel message`*Jesus'* story about His exemplary life and substitutionary death. In Christian educational programs, teachers instruct children in one of the most effective ways possible: they tell them stories, both biblical and contemporary. If all the above are true, then why do preachers usually not preach biblical narratives (i.e. stories[1]) as stories? Often expositors

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[1]The English word "story" sometimes conveys the notion of a fictional account. In this essay, however, the word is always used to denote what is factual and in accord with actual happenings. The "God-breathed" quality of Scripture guarantees the

use an illustration (i.e. a story) to clarify a point, apply a principle, or wake up a sleepy congregation. They do this because stories make sermons clear, relevant, and interesting.[2]   Yet many seem uncomfortable in preaching narrative as story, perhaps fearing to appear ridiculous or sound condescending. Consequently, they either refrain from preaching narrative, or in preaching it, reduce the narrative to the stereotypical, three abstract propositions/points without dealing with the story's plot or allowing the story to have its full impact on the reader. Either of these reactions is unnecessary. Narrative makes its own point(s) in an interesting and effective manner, while the selection and arrangement of the story's details provide clues for finding them.[3]

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historical accuracy of narrative portions.

[2]Adams argues that stories are the best teachers, particularly where the story appeals to the senses: "It is true that we learn best what we see, touch or hear and that, in discursive language, a story comes closest to the very experience of an event" (Jay E. Adams, "Sense Appeal and Storytelling," *The Preacher and Preaching* [ed. Samuel T. Logan, Jr.; Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1986] 350). A well-known preacher describes how he was impacted by the narrative sermons of evangelist Billy Sunday who captivated thousands: "When he preached on Elijah, he did it so vividly that I thought I was looking at Elijah. When he preached on Naaman going down into the dirty Jordan, I suffered all the agony that Naaman suffered. For nearly an hour Naaman lived in Billy Sunday" (William Ward Ayer, "The Art of Effective Preaching," *BibSac* 124 [Jan-Mar 1967] 38).

[3]The present discussion will focus on preaching the narrative portions of the OT. It will not deal with either narrative preaching, which turns every passage or topic into a narrative preaching format, or narrative theology, a theological system in which stories play a major role. Neither will it deal comprehensively with characteristic features or methods of preaching biblical narrative. Much has already been written on this subject. Works dealing specifically with the nature of OT narrative and the method of preaching it are Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *The Old Testament in Contemporary Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973); *idem.*, *Toward an Exegetical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981); *idem.*, *Toward Rediscovering the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987); Tremper Longman, III, *Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987); and Leland Ryken, *How to Read the Bible as Literature* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984). A comprehensive text which deals with all types of biblical literature and methods of preaching them is Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988). Perhaps the three best brief discussions of the nature of biblical narrative are John Goldingay, "Preaching on the Stories in Scripture," *Anvil* 7/2 (1990) 105-14; Tremper Longman, III, "Storytellers and Poets in the Bible," *Inerrancy and Hermeneutic: A Tradition, a*

Challenge, a Debate (ed. Harvie M. Conn; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988); and Leland Ryken, "And It Came to Pass: The Bible as God's Storybook," *BibSac* 147/586 (Apr-June 1990) 131-42. A thought-provoking application of Longman's work coauthored by Raymond Dillard addressing the use, sometimes misuse, of biblical narrative by Christian counseling theorists is Tremper Longman, III, and Raymond B. Dillard, "Hermeneutics and Counseling," *The Institute of Biblical Counseling Perspective* 2/1 (1988) 21-30.

Nearly one-third of the Bible is narrative. Because the story-format of biblical narrative hinders expositors from preaching this large proportion, two general suggestions in understanding and preaching OT narrative will help the expositor capitalize on this gold mine of preaching material.

PREACH THE STORY LINE

Following the story line[4] facilitates a grasp of some of the characteristics of narrative. "Narrative, in its encompassing sense, is an account of events and participants moving over time and space, a recital with beginning and ending patterned by the narrator's principle of selection."[5] Biblical narratives are stories in which the message is "embodied in a structure of events and persons, rather than in a structure of verbal generalizations."[6] Why change the format when preaching them? If the preacher's goal is to be expositional, what is more expositional than preaching the text in its story-line form?

The following are characteristics that mark biblical narrative as story-like. These features of narrative are best preserved by preaching narrative as God gave them, i.e. in story form.

Narrative Has Literary Power

"Story" means story-like history. Biblical narrative combines qualities of literature and history. From a literary standpoint,

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[4]The "story line" is the plot or general plan of a story.

[5]Gabriel Fackre, "Narrative Theology: An Overview," *Int* 37/4 (1983) 341.

[6]Henry Grady Davis, *Design for Preaching* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1958) 157. These characteristics make narrative easier to preach with few or no notes for the simple reason that the message is couched in real life situations involving people, places, and events. Research has demonstrated that stories are easier than most sermon formats to remember, both for the preacher as he delivers the sermon, and for the congregation as they take the message with them. For an interesting study of how professional storytellers learn the stories they recount for hours at a time, see Albert B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960).

narrative is very carefully written and employs a set of conventions not combined in other types of biblical literature.[7] Even many of the dialogues embedded in narratives display unique literature-like features.[8] On the other side, history focuses on the cause-and-effect relationships of events. Understanding the cause of an event enhances one's understanding of the event itself. Comparing biblical narrative with a history of Israel shows that the literary features of narratives do more than inform historically. So a narrative's concentration is not so much on historicity versus fictionality as it is on how biblical writers chose to recount historical events.[9] Spirit-inspired writers were not trying to report all that happened, because most biblical narrative is narrowly focused. God led these writers to include what He wanted recorded and to do it in the way He wanted it recorded and without error. Because narrative blends features of history and literature, the story is the best format for preaching the narrative's message in the form God gave.

Biblical narrative, then, is neither history, strictly speaking, nor is it prose.[10] Prose does appear in the OT, in letters (e.g. 2 Sam 11:15),

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[7]In this way narrative behaves like the story, selectively "omitting much that is irrelevant or that in real life may distract, while focusing on and emphasizing the major factors in the event" (Adams, "Sense Appeal" 351).

[8]Savran maintains that much of the direct discourse of narratives is artistically patterned: "The phenomenon of quotation describes the intersection of a number of central aspects of the narrative. It is both direct speech of the present narrative moment and recollection of prior words. It presents the quoting character as the teller of his own story, but also as the subject of the narrator's discourse. Perhaps most important is the way quoted direct speech functions as an exegetical exercise, a rereading or respeaking of the past at a later time and in a new context" (George W. Savran, *Telling and Retelling: Quotation in Biblical Narrative* [Blooming-ton: Indiana University, 1988] ix).

[9]Regarding the confusion of story line with fiction, Sternberg argues, "With God postulated as double author, the biblical narrator can enjoy the privileges of art without renouncing his historical titles" (Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* [Bloomington: Indiana University, 1985] 82).

[10]Defining prose continues to present a major challenge to all who attempt to

proclamations (e.g. Ezra 1:2-4), some dialogues (e.g. 2 Sam 9:1-4), and other forms, but it does not share many of the characteristics of biblical narrative.[11] The latter is a different type of literature and should be preached in a way that maintains its distinctiveness.[12] One of the qualities that separates biblical narrative from prose and provides clues for its interpretation and preaching is the thoughtful structuring displayed in its symmetrical format and patterns of expression.

Narrative Is Patterned.

Patterning, a primary characteristic of OT narrative that notes its formation into a specific literary plan, offers two advantages in preaching. First, it presents a unifying framework essentially marking the narrative's parameters. The story follows a prescribed but general pattern which identifies it as a story.[13] A more complex pattern

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systematize genre. For purposes of this discussion, prose is "the ordinary form of written or spoken language without rhyme or meter" (*Webster's Unabridged Dictionary* [2nd ed.; New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972] 1445). When writers like Polzin speak of biblical Hebrew prose, they intend a broader connotation (Robert Polzin, *Late Biblical Hebrew: Toward an Historical Typology of Biblical Hebrew Prose* (Missoula: Scholars, 1976). The line between prose (narrative) and poetry in biblical Hebrew is fine. James Kugel sees the distinction as western and artificial (James Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981] 69). W. T. W. Cloete challenges Kugal's thesis on the grounds that "the lines or cola . . . are the distinguishing characteristic of verse" (W. T. W. Cloete, "Verse and Prose: Does the Distinction Apply to the Old Testament?" *JNSL* 14 [1988] 13).

[11]Prose tends "to suppress ornamentation or figures of speech. A general principle is that, the more the author intends to inform about the real world, the more literariness decreases" (Tremper Longman, III, "Storytellers" 138).

[12]Normally, the resulting "message" of the narrative cannot be reduced to theological propositions without losing its uniquely persuasive character. Also, didactic biblical literature (letters, commandments, etc.) can be restated concisely in lists of admonitions and prescriptions more easily than narrative (Robert C. Tannehill, "Narrative Criticism," *A Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* [eds. R. J. Coggins and J. L. Houlden; Philadelphia: Trinity, 1990] 489).

[13]A story is a series of events that can be seen to have a beginning, a middle, and an end. It is important, of course, to recognize the logical relationships among these

occasionally unites the entire story, giving it a deliberate symmetry. For example, some narratives form an "X" or chiastic pattern, where the middle through the last episodes parallel closely the first through the middle ones, but in reverse order. One oft-used saying illustrates this pattern: "When the going gets tough, the tough get going."

A second aspect of patterning is its provision of a form for the sermon. This helps in capturing the text's intended emphases, one of the hardest, but most important parts of sermon preparation. One of the most difficult decisions for a preacher before preaching is determining the form of his message. Expository preaching purposes to preach the *message* of the biblical text. What about the *form* of the scriptural message? Form is part of the text, too.

In a sense, preaching requires the messenger to make at least minimal changes of the message from one form, say a psalm, a letter, or a narrative, into another called a sermon. In other words, a preacher must structure his sermons, unless he merely reads the text.[14] His message, then, may be in a form or forms inconsistent with the text treated.

Both the preacher who moves verse by verse through a well-studied passage and the one who preaches without a preplanned text or message have decided on the form of their sermons. The former chooses to follow a commentary-application format, probably because he feels that it is the truest to the original. The latter follows a stream-of-consciousness format, perhaps because he feels that he must rely

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three parts. The beginning always describes a situation of need that must be addressed through some kind of action. The middle grows out of the beginning by describing what is done about this needed action. The end in turn grows out of the middle by showing what happens as a result of the action taken in the middle. At the same time, the end relates to the beginning by resolving its situation of need. The end allows the reader to say, "Yes, this is `the end,'" either by showing how the need described in the beginning has been met . . . or by describing how all reasonable opportunity for future action has been cut off (Thomas O. Long, *Preaching and the Literary Forms of the Bible* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989] 71-72).

[14]Donald E. Demaray, *Introduction to Homiletics* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990) 103.

directly on the Holy Spirit. Part of the frustration of expositors in trying to preach narrative comes in attempting to translate the form of the text into a sermonic structure. What form should it assume?

If the sermon needs to represent the entire message of the original, will the usual point-by-point outline suffice? What will constitute the individual points? Summaries of the separate episodes? Behaviors or attributes of the characters in the narratives? Theological propositions inferred from the text? No wonder would-be expositors are often perplexed by narrative.

The structuring stage is greatly simplified by selecting the story line as the format to represent his narrative passage and by following the emphases in the patterning of the narrative for deriving emphases for the sermon. This requires deliberate effort by the preacher, because narrative sermons should stress the message of the narrative. A simple retelling of the story may not do this. As one homiletician suggests, the preacher must "move in and out of the story with analogues, explanations, and interpretations as the plot line of the story moves along."[15] Whether he does this with points of the sermon or with pauses for elaboration at the text's points of emphasis is a matter of individual judgment. But by preaching the story, the expositor can simplify a potentially complex task of representing patterns and preserve the narrative's patterned quality most effectively.

Narrative Is Timeless and Universal.

Biblical narrators concern themselves with relaying facts, that is, they do indeed convey historical information.[16] Yet they also guide perspective and responses to events.[17] It is this subtly prescriptive

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[15]David G. Buttrick, *Homiletic: Moves and Structures* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987) 335.

[16]John Goldingay, "That You May Know that Yahweh Is God: A Study of the Relationship between Theology and Historical Truth in the Old Testament," *Tyndale Bulletin* 23 (1972) 58-93.

[17]Longman, "Storytellers" 146.

quality of biblical narrative that makes it inherently "sermonic." Biblical narrative assumes "that what happens to the characters in the story is somehow a model of the enduring human situation"[18] and that the characteristics of God in the story are timeless as well. When people hear or read a biblical narrative, they have a strong tendency to say, "I can relate to that."   Preachers sometimes refer to the generalizations drawn from such passages as "timeless principles" and the activity of drawing such generalizations as "principlizing the text."[19]

But not all that occurs in narrative is truly timeless. In fact, much of the detail is culture-specific, such as the sacrifices and offerings prescribed for Israel under the law. Issues of this type are affected by progressive revelation, e.g. the nexus between Israel and the church. All such items that fall under the continuity/discontinuity rubric must be considered carefully. The tendency to become overly prescriptive or exemplary to the exclusion of the Bible's forward movement in redemption history must be avoided. Each passage must be interpreted carefully to learn its intended message before being taught and applied. But one of the best formats for bringing out

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[18]Ryken, *How to Read* 44. Not all agree that narrative is capable of this universal quality. "An opposing view is skeptical or agnostic about how narrative relates to universal human experience (if, indeed, there is any such reality), and starts with the specific characteristics of Christianity. . . .   The first [position] assumes a common basis in human consciousness; the second questions that and stresses specificity and differences" (David F. Ford, "Narrative Theology," *A Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* [eds. R. J. Coggins and J. L. Houlden; Philadelphia: Trinity, 1990] 490).   The perspective of Martin Noth ("The `Representation' of the O. T. in Proclamation," *Essays on Old Testament Hermeneutics* [ed. Claus Westermann, trans. James Luther Mays; Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1964] 86) that biblical characters cannot function as "ethical models" is unacceptable.

[19]Walter C. Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981) 92. "To `principlize' is to state the author's propositions, arguments, narrations, and illustrations in timeless abiding truths with special focus on the application of those truths to the current needs of the Church" (ibid., 152). Cf. also Richard L. Mayhue, "Rediscovering Expository Preaching," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 1/2 (Fall 1990) 121.

either the narrative's timeless and universal character or its redemption-historical development is the story-line sermon.

Narrative Relates Experience.

A natural tendency in preaching narrative is to sound like a historian. Extreme manifestations exasperate congregations as, for instance, when the sermon becomes a lecture on cultural anthropology. This extreme points once again to confusion regarding the major distinction between historical writing and biblical narrative. Historiography, as traditionally conceived, seeks to reconstruct historical events based on facts. The objective is to tell what *happened*. Biblical narratives aim to impact readers with what *happens*, that is, "they provide a vicarious *experience* of the truth to be taught, and thus they move persons to identify with and live by that truth."[20] In short, narrative as story is very application-oriented. For this reason, the story line in the sermon tends to preserve the narrative's experiential quality more cogently than most other formats.

On the other hand, because narrative impacts its audience in such subtle ways, it is difficult to codify fully into a set of interpretive principles or procedures. In the Joseph story, for example, the listeners' sympathy for poor Joseph being led off as a slave could be

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[20]Henry H. Mitchell, "Preaching on the Patriarchs," *Biblical Preaching: An Expositor's Treasury* (ed. James W. Cox; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983) 37. But to what the narratives are calling their reader has been debated repeatedly. Should the congregation be looking for ethical directives, theological instruction, or both? We cannot deny that the teaching of the narrative will somehow result in some form of ethical response (Carl G. Kromminga, "Remember Lot's Wife: Preaching Old Testament Narrative Texts," *Calvin Theological Journal* 18/1 [1983] 33). For a historical chronicling of the ethical vs. theological debate over the purpose of biblical narrative, cf. Sidney Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura: Problems and Principles in Preaching Historical Texts* (Toronto: Wedge, 1970). Goldingay combines theology and ethics when he argues that the narratives aim at the following: (1) the *commitments* which faith entails; (2) the *experiences* which the faith may involve; and (3) the *events* on which the faith is based (Goldingay, "Preaching" 106-9).

lost unless time for audience reaction is not allowed at that point. For this reason, reduction or cutting the story down in size and scope, is a great challenge. Some would say it is impossible, but not if one presents the story line carefully.

Narrative Is Difficult to Reduce.

Reduction is the process whereby the expositor takes a larger and more detailed block of text and summarizes it, perhaps in a brief single sentence, clause, or word. A question could be raised regarding the wisdom of reducing biblical narratives to sermon propositions and points. If the biblical writer intended a strictly propositional format to communicate his message, why did he employ narrative?

Perhaps the answer is that narrative communicates that particular message better. This does not mean that the preacher may never use summary points, propositions, or theological abstractions. It seems that the message of a narrative must be reduced somehow, either by the preacher or the listener, before it can become contemporary. If nothing else, time requires this. So the process of generalizing requires at least some reduction.

Even from the standpoint of pedagogy, when some might contest the narrative's capacity to teach, the story line can hold its own. This is the lesson of the OT itself. Much of OT religious symbolism and many OT rituals, monuments, feasts, etc., were designed to prompt the children to ask questions like "What does this rite mean to you?" (Exod 12:26) or "What do these stones mean to you?" (Josh 4:6). The teaching response was almost always a story.

The issue remains, "What is the best way to preach biblical narrative?" In most cases, presenting the narrative as story is technically the easiest, exegetically the safest, rhetorically the most effective, and lends itself to the most natural application. "Moreover, developing the sermon in the same form as the text will enable the congregation all the better to follow the exposition of the text and to

test and remember the sermon."[21]   Attempts to handle narrative sections in other than a story-line format may account for the frustration of expositors in trying to preach narrative.

LOOK TO THE TOTAL THEOLOGICAL MESSAGE

A second general suggestion in handling narrative revolves around three possible ways of mishandling such portions. Special precautions are necessary to avoid overlooking major theological emphases.

Substituting the Preacher's Conceptual Structure
 for the Narrative's Unifying Structure

Biblical narratives are complete stories. Even the Joseph story (Genesis 37-50),[22] although part of a larger complex of narrative, has its

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[21]Greidanus, *Modern Preacher* 225. An added advantage of preaching narrative as story applies to developmentally handicapped believers who need a strong plot structure, simple vocabulary, concrete language, and a clear beginning, middle, and end to the lesson. They will comprehend narrative sermons better than the abstract types (August Baker and Ellin Greene, *Storytelling: Art and Technique* [New York: R. R. Bowker, 1977] 77).

[22]It is tempting to draw ethical examples from the Joseph story. Some think the author intended Joseph's behavior to be a moral example, because they view the text as wisdom literature. Characteristically, wisdom literature is well-suited for exemplary purposes in that it prescribes behavior as an ethical response to the fear of God. In Joseph's words "You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good" (Gen 50:20a), Von Rad hears echoes of Prov 16:9: "A man's mind plans his way, but Yahweh directs his steps" (James L. Crenshaw, *Gerhard Von Rad* [Waco, TX: Word, 1978] 122-26). Crenshaw has persuasively argued against Von Rad's classification of this as wisdom literature, however (James L. Crenshaw, "Method in Determining Wisdom Influence upon `Historical' Literature," *JBL* 88 [1969] 129-42). Another major problem in determining whether the Joseph story is ethical, theological, or both is that many narratives such as this are part of the larger literary context of Redemption History. What, then, constitutes a preaching unit within such large narrative units? Because the Joseph story is introduced with the **/odO?** (*tldt*, "the generations of") formula (cf. Gen 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10, 27; 25:12, 19; 36:1, 9), it is safe to take Gen 37:2 to

own introduction and conclusion.   Unifying patterns, in joining together parts of the story, give it a cohesiveness that makes it a story. The preacher sometimes ignores a narrative's inherent unity, however, by focusing on some of its tantalizingly colorful details.

Does the following exemplify a familiar title, proposition and outline of a narrative sermon?

Text: Genesis 37`50
Title: "Joe Christian"
Proposition: BE LIKE JOSEPH: Respond Correctly
A.*Flee Immorality:* Potiphar's wife enticed Joseph.
B.*Work Hard:* The jailer and the Pharaoh assigned work to Joseph.
C.*Forgive Others:* The brothers mistreated Joseph.

This arrangement is right as far as it goes.   The title, proposition, and outline focus on the attributes and behavior of Joseph.   All three outline-points are supportable by clear didactic passages elsewhere in Scripture. They are not unbiblical. But they do not go far enough.[23]

Sermons that focus primarily on the behavior or character of an individual in the narrative (sometimes called "biographical sermons") *may* miss the passage's broader theological teaching. Some narratives do prescribe behavior, but the Joseph story does not merely present a model of how young people should be or behave. If the preacher is looking for an exemplar and settles on the Joseph story, he has

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mark its beginning and the end of Genesis its conclusion. Setting limits for a preaching unit is not always this easy, however.

[23]This is not to say that subsections of narratives may not be used to preach or teach topical, biographical, or other conceptual formats originating with the preacher or another writer of the Bible. Smaller units of stories do affirm various truths, but do not do so independently of the total narrative of which they are a part. The function of such lessons as subordinate to the primary message of the whole story must be kept in perspective. This is the only way to assure that one's interpretation of the passage and expositional preaching based on it will capture the intention of both its divine and human authors.

exchanged the story's unifying structure for his own conceptual structure. He chooses the narrative only for the sake of select details within the story. Joseph's behavior may well be part of the message, but the preacher has made it the whole message. This inevitably leads to no more than prescriptive mimicry.

A simple corrective for this is to focus on the entire message to its original audience instead of having the congregation identify with specific characters in the story.

Searching for Details in the Narrative
      to Illustrate NT or Other OT Passages

A second mistaken approach preaches OT narrative only to illustrate NT or other OT principles. Illustrations, if not overdone, perform an important function in teaching or preaching situations. Using OT stories as illustrations of either good or bad behavior is not wrong. Joseph's behavior toward Potiphar's wife, his ten brothers, and God is exemplary.[24] Using OT narrative *only* to illustrate NT teaching, however, results in ignoring much OT instruction that may serve as background for NT theology or else as teaching not repeated in the NT. Creation, law, and covenant are in OT narrative which if ignored or used for illustrations only, will create many problems of biblical imbalance. An adequate theological framework must include the whole OT (cf. 2 Tim 3:16, "All Scripture . . .").

NT writers use characters, events, and all kinds of phenomena from the OT as illustrations (e.g. Hebrews 11, etc.). Nevertheless, this does not prove that the incorporation of details of an OT narrative for illustrative purposes is the way to *preach* that OT narrative. An OT narrative as a textual unit presented an entire theological message to

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[24]For some, Joseph's attitude toward his dreams and treatment of his brothers after their arrival in Egypt raise a question of just how exemplary his behavior was (e.g. G. W. Coats, "From Canaan to Egypt: Structural and Theological Context for the Joseph Story," *Catholic Quarterly Monograph Series 5* [Washington: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1976] 82-86).

its original audience. Through theological abstraction, it may have called for an ethical change, either directly or indirectly. Or it may move the history of redemption forward, demonstrating how God's redemptive purpose is at work in the world. Should it not do the same in sermons today? To preach the message of a narrative passage is to take it in its entirety, not to dwell just on character/behavior traits of individuals in the narrative.

An expositor should use great caution in proving a theological or ethical principle by employing an OT narrative. He should find clear admonitions of "do or believe this" or "do not do or believe this" elsewhere in Scripture before drawing on narrative illustrations to elaborate on the point. Adopting the theology of Job's counselors indiscriminantly, for example, is not wise. Similarly, a blind following of the ethical example in narrative portions of Scripture is unsafe. In other words, the expositor wants to assure that the Bible advocates a certain doctrine, attribute, or behavioral quality *before* illustrating it with an OT narrative. Professing Christians have at times wrongly justified bad theology or immoral actions on inferior grounds, that "so and so, an otherwise virtuous Bible character, spoke/did it."[25]

Limiting the Narrative to an Ethical Reflex of the Law

A different but related way of mistreating narrative is to use it to show what happens when God's people obey or disobey His law.[26]

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[25]Stuart's advice is wise: "Avoid the principle of imitation (the idea that because someone in the Bible does it, we can or ought to do it, too). This is the most dangerous and irreverent of all approaches to application since virtually every sort of behavior, stupid and wise, malicious and saintly is chronicled in the Bible" (Douglas Stuart, *Old Testament Exegesis: A Primer for Students and Pastors* [2nd ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984] 84).

[26]This approach should not be confused with Carmichael's. He argues that the Deuteronomic laws and perhaps some or all of Proverbs were based on earlier narrative portions (Calum M. Carmichael, *The Laws of Deuteronomy* [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1974]). Briefer explanations of Carmichael's theory of narrative and law are found in his articles "Uncovering a Major Source of Mosaic Law: The

Following this assumption is a way of strengthening ethical norms not specifically stated in Scripture. In this third interpretive scheme, Joseph's good behavior and subsequent reward are viewed as part of the complex of the blessing and cursing which came as a result of his obeying or disobeying the law. A case in point is his ascendancy to the role of second-in-command in Egypt because of his obedience to God's law. Preaching of this type often dwells on disobedience as a cause of lost blessing or punishment. Using narrative thus seems to make good sense, for characters in the narratives are demonstrating either good or bad ethical behavior. In a certain sense, it is correct. Yet the question is the same: "Is this *all* that the narrative teaches?" or more significantly, "Is this what the narrative was intended to teach?" Clearly, some narratives have more to say.[27] A problem here is that the sovereign grace of God, clearly prominent in the Joseph story, is omitted because of exclusive attention to human works.

The three misuses of OT narrative just summarized emphasize the need for caution in preaching. *What the Bible itself teaches* often differs considerably from *the ways one uses the Bible to teach*. Without special precautions, the expositor may use narrative characters to teach something that is only supported in another part of the Bible, whether it be through substituting the preacher's propositions/points, careless use of illustrations, or ill-advised choice of legal-case exemplars. The Joseph story does not merely affirm this young man's exemplary behavior. A sermon reflecting the story's true emphasis must take the complete message, the theological dynamic of Joseph's character within God's sovereign plan`salvation history.

Joseph's response to his brothers' pleas for forgiveness pointedly summarizes the details of the whole story. The God-given

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Evidence of Deut. 21:15`22:5," *JBL* 101 (1982) 505-20, and "Forbidden Mixtures," *VT* 32 (1982) 394-415.

[27]Note that this approach to OT narrative would probably ignore Joseph's important statement, "You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good" (Gen 50:20a). These words capture the major theological lesson of the story.

dream (Genesis 37) is fulfilled by God when the brothers, upon recognizing Joseph, fall before him (Gen 50:18). Thus the dream marks the beginning and ending of the preaching unit *and* provides clues to an interpretation featuring God's providential care and guidance. Joseph's two statements to his fearful brothers are also part of the narrative patterning. These two emphasize God's sovereign control over all that has happened as a result of their sin: "You sold me. . . . God sent me" (Gen 45:5; cf. 45:7, 8) and "You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good" (Gen 50:20a). The brothers had evil intentions and bad behavior. God allowed the latter, but curtailed the former that His purpose to build a nation, even from such a poor breed as slave traders, might not be thwarted.

The point is that the expositor should not indiscriminantly use Joseph or any other biblical character as an example. Far more importantly, he should not neglect to preach and teach such portions for their truth intentions as represented in the entire textual unit. Or more boldly, if he focuses on Joseph's behavior only, he has not preached Genesis 37-50.

The question remains, "How does one preach narratives like the Joseph story?" Perhaps the easiest, most effective way, the way truest to the biblical form, is just to retell the story, allowing the story itself to heighten points of application. Is this not the way that Sunday School teachers teach children these stories? Why stop at age 8 or 9? Why reduce the story to three points (often just three examples of good behavior), when telling the whole story brings honor to the sovereign hand of God? Homiletically speaking, which has more impact, hearing an abstract proposition about God's sovereignty (e.g. "God is sovereign") or seeing it borne out in the experience of God's people? When a preacher states an abstraction, he usually follows it with an illustration to enhance comprehension of the abstraction. Narrative preached as narrative has already incorporated the illustration.

CONCLUSION

One final question may enter the preacher's mind when

approaching OT narrative. Who is sufficient for the task of preaching OT narrative? It is true that identifying the conventions of narrative, then formulating them into interpretive guidelines is as complex as it is important,[28] but those who read and study the narrative portions of Scripture come to understand these conventions intuitively. Not only does understanding come through careful reading, but also "there is a certain commonality among narrative traditions of whatever age and culture, just as there is a certain commonality among different language systems."[29]   Readers "tend to apply most of these rules intuitively, simply as close readers to the biblical text."[30]

Preaching narrative is important.   If the expositor has committed himself to preaching "the whole counsel of God," he will soon discover that a large portion of Scripture is either narrative or narrative-like. Because narrative follows a story line, (1) it has literary power, (2) it is patterned, (3) it is timeless and universal, (4) it relates experience, and (5) it is difficult to reduce. In light of these factors, the expositor does well to maintain the story format.

Preaching the story line in its entirety has the advantage of guarding against at least three common shortcomings in the

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[28]Cautioning the reader against assuming correspondences between narrative traditions in western literature and the Bible, Longman writes, "In ordinary reading, much of this understanding comes automatically. We passively let the narrator shape our interpretation of the event he or she is reporting to us; we make an unconscious genre identification. But as interpreters of the text, it is important to make these explicit. This is doubly so for the Bible, since it is an ancient text and the conventions employed are often not ones we are used to" (Longman, "Storytellers" 148, alluding to Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description* [Grand Rapids: Eerd-mans, 1980]).

[29]V. Philips Long. "Toward a Better Theory and Understanding of Old Testament Narrative," *Presbyterion* 13/2 (Fall 1987) 105.

[30]Ryken, *How to Read* 68. Regarding the real but often unspoken fear that narrative interpretation is an impossibly complex process, Ryken responds, "Such a myth of complexity, however is to be rejected. The literature of the Bible is subtle and artistically crafted but essentially simple. . . . Talking about the Bible's literature does not require intricate tools and theories. It does, however require *literary* tools" (Ryken, "And It Came" 137).

interpretation of narrative: (1) ignoring the narrative's unifying structure for the sake of the preacher's conceptual format, (2) searching for details in the narrative merely to illustrate NT and other OT passages, and (3) limiting the narrative to an ethical reflex of the law. None of these methods handles the entire textual unit or looks for the complete theological and ethical message.

When preaching narrative, one should take the spotlight off the Joseph-like heros and shine it on the only praise-worthy character in the story`God. Perhaps because of such a focus, those to whom he preaches will make God the focus of their life stories. As a byproduct, human behavior will probably improve also, and not in just a threefold way to correspond to a three-point message.

PHILOSOPHY AND BELIEF IN GOD:
THE RESURGENCE OF THEISM
IN PHILOSOPHICAL CIRCLES

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A new interest in the God of the orthodox Hebrew-Christian tradition has arisen recently among contemporary philosophers. This new interest in theism can be traced to the demise of logical positivism, a lack of intellectual rigor in theological liberalism, and the increased sophistication of theistic arguments. Two arguments illustrate the many contemporary proofs for theism that have attracted wide interest. One argues that belief in God is rational apart from any special evidence. The other, called the kalam cosmological argument, maintains that everything which begins has a cause, the universe had a beginning, and therefore, the universe has a cause. This argument is supported by the reasonableness of a series of choices, beginning with whether or not the universe had a beginning. These arguments are satisfying proof of the existence of God for those who are philosophically inclined.

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About twenty-five years ago President James McCord of Princeton Seminary declared with exuberance that Protestant theology's Death-of-God movement was ushering in a "whole new era in theology."[2] Nevertheless, *Time* magazine's ominous front cover, which asked the question, "Is God Dead?," was not really as prophetic

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[2]"Toward a Hidden God: Is God Dead?," *Time* (Apr 8, 1966) 82 ff.

as President McCord had thought, but rather, was more analogous to the boy who cried wolf or the emperor's non-existent clothes. Only five years later, *Time* on its front cover heralded the sudden revival of evangelical faith among Roman Catholic and Protestant young people with a psychedelic portrait of Jesus of Nazareth, labeled "The Jesus Revolution."[3] In 1980 *Time* ran a story about the sudden reexamination of God within contemporary philosophical circles.[4] Although still a distinct minority in secular universities, since 1980 this movement has increased in numbers and already shows an increased sophistication of argument. The reason for and the nature of this resurgence of belief in God in philosophical circles is the subject under current consideration.

DEFINING THE TERMS

Anyone acquainted with philosophy knows the extreme importance of how a thinker defines his terms. For the sake of clarity, "God," "belief," and "philosophy" will be defined. *God* is the God of the Hebrew-Christian tradition, the God most Americans know best through their church affiliation or the practice of their neighbors. He is a Rational Spirit Being Who is all-powerful, all-knowing, all-loving, omnipresent, unchangeable, transcendent, and eternal, and the Personal Creator of all that is. On occasion He may decide to act in ways called miraculous.

Belief is the act of human consciousness that makes a personal commitment to a proposition. To believe in something is to have faith in something that is consistent with what you believe is good evidence, but the act of belief itself goes beyond the evidence. For example, marriage is an act of belief. Prior to getting married, you believe you have sufficient evidence to justify a commitment that goes beyond the evidence. In another context, you may act on faith by putting 100% of yourself in a departing airplane, though you are aware that the evidence for a safe journey is less that 100% certain. When a theistic philosopher says he believes in God, he does not mean that he has indisputable evidence to support his commitment. Rather, he means

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[3]"New Rebel Cry: Jesus Is Coming!," *Time* (July 21, 1971) 56 ff.
[4]"Modernizing the Case for God," *Time* (Apr 7, 1980) 65 ff.

that he is within his intellectual rights in holding this belief. This essay will examine two important arguments by Christian theists to support the contention that the theist is within his intellectual rights in believing in God.

Philosophy is the intellectual discipline which critically examines the foundations of other fields of study. Philosophy departments in universities and colleges all over the world aim to examine questions of fundamental importance in other disciplines, whether in the realm of science (e.g., do scientific theories tell us about the world?), theology (e.g., is it rational to believe in God?), or ethics (e.g., what is right and wrong?).

Unfortunately, many Christians believe that philosophy is inherently anti-Christian, basing their conclusion on the atheistic or agnostic orientation of many philosophy professors. Yet many fine Christian philosophers employ the critical thinking-skills of philosophy in assessing classical theological issues. In fact, philosophy can contribute to a Christian's defense of his faith.

For example, suppose you are a theist and someone says to you, "Okay, you say that God is all-powerful and He can do anything." You respond, "Yes, that is perfectly correct." Your adversary goes on to ask, "If God is all-powerful, can He make a rock so big that He cannot lift it?" He appears to have you trapped: if God can make the rock, He is not all-powerful because He cannot lift it, but if He cannot make the rock, He is not all-powerful because He cannot make it. Now if you ponder this carefully, you will see that this dilemma is really no dilemma at all. You can respond to your adversary, "Since God is all-powerful, He cannot, by definition, make something that is more powerful than Himself, including a rock He cannot lift. But He can make the biggest rock and He can lift it. To ask an all-powerful God to make something that is more powerful than Himself is similar to asking Him to create a married-bachelor, a square-circle, or a brother who is an only child. Such `entities' are simply nonsense." This is philosophy.

To speak of a resurgence of interest in theological questions among philosophers is not to imply that such questions ever ceased

being asked, but rather that belief in the traditional Hebrew-Christian view of God is being discussed with more vigor and sophistication than ever before in the modern world by those who believe in such a God. Philosopher Roderick Chisolm of Brown University has pointed out that in the last generation atheistic empiricists such as Harvard's Willard V. O. Quine were most influential because "they were the brightest people." Chisolm notes that now the "brightest people include theists, using a kind of tough-minded intellectualism," which was formerly nonexistent in the theist's camp.[5]

Some representative twentieth-century philosophers such as William James, Josiah Royce, Charles Saunders Peirce, Alfred North Whitehead, and John Dewey showed strong interest in God and religious questions, but did not accept the God of the orthodox Hebrew-Christian tradition as a viable option. Neither did they feel He could be defended with rational argument. This situation has changed. A recent *Christianity Today* article cites the example of the Society of Christian Philosophers, with over eight hundred members as being "now the largest special interest group within the American Philosophical Association," which is the leading professional society of American philosophers.[6]

In addition to new innovative arguments by leading theist philosophers, arguments thought to have died during the Enlightenment are being rehabilitated by some of the greatest philosophical minds. These are people, not only in the Roman Catholic and conservative Protestant colleges and universities, but also in some of the leading secular institutions. A perusal of the *Philosophers' Index* reveals a significant increase of articles and books about theism, God, and philosophy of religion in the last twenty-five years. Philosophical arguments about traditional theological problems such as the incarnation of Christ, the Trinity, the relation between body and soul, and the possibility of miracles (issues that are bypassed

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[5]Ibid., 65.
[6]Kristine Christlieb, "Suddenly, Respect: Christianity Makes a Comeback in the Philosophy Department," *CT* 31 (Apr 17, 1987) 32.

by most mainline theologians who are busy trying to be relevant) are discussed with respect and serious interest by theistic and non-theistic philosophers alike.

One example of this is the book by Thomas V. Morris, philosophy professor at the University of Notre Dame, entitled *The Logic of God Incarnate* (Cornell University Press, 1986). He shows effectively and persuasively that the Christian belief that God became man in the person of Jesus of Nazareth is perfectly logical. For workers among false cultists such as Jehovah's Witnesses and The Way International, this kind of treatment is extremely helpful in responding to those who question the rationality of the orthodox doctrines of the Incarnation and the Trinity.

Three main reasons explain traditional theism's comeback in philosophy: (1) the demise of logical positivism, (2) the lack of intellectual rigor in theological liberalism, and (3) the increased sophistication of theistic arguments.

THE DEMISE OF LOGICAL POSITIVISM

Logical positivism was a philosophical position which asserted that only what can be verified by the five senses or is true by definition (e.g., mathematics or tautologies) can be said to have meaning. This was called the Verifiability Criterion of Meaning. Of course, since God is neither an empirical entity nor something that is true by definition, the term "God" is meaningless, according to the positivists. The other side of the Verifiability Criterion of Meaning is the Principle of Falsifiability, popularized by Antony Flew's famous essay, "Theology and Falsification." Flew challenged the believer in God by asking, "What would have to have occurred to constitute for you a disproof of the love of, or of the existence of, God?" Flew wrote, "It seems to people who are not religious as if there was no conceivable event or series of events the occurrence of which would be admitted by sophisticated religious people to be sufficient reason for conceding

`there wasn't a God after all' or `God does not really love us then.'"[7]

To explain his position, Flew employed John Wisdom's parable of the gardener:

> Once upon a time two explorers came upon a clearing in the jungle. In the clearing were growing many flowers and many weeds. One explorer says, "Some gardener must tend this plot." The other disagrees. "There is no gardener." So they pitch their tents and set a watch. No gardener is ever seen. "But perhaps he is an invisible gardener." So they set up a barbed-wire fence. They electrify it. They patrol with bloodhounds. (For they remember how H. G. Wells's *The Invisible Man* could be both smelt and touched though he could not be seen.) But no shrieks ever suggest that some intruder received a shock. No movements of the wire ever betray an invisible climber. The bloodhounds never give cry. Yet still the Believer is not convinced. "But there is a gardener, invisible, intangible, insensible to electric shocks, a gardener who has no scent and makes no sound, a gardener who comes secretly to look after the garden which he loves." At last the Skeptic despairs, "But what remains of your original assertion? Just how does what you call an invisible, intangible, eternally elusive gardener differ from an imaginary gardener or even from no gardener at all?"[8]

Flew said the Believer in God is like the Believer in the Gardener. Since nothing is capable of *falsifying* or *disproving* his belief in God, this belief is meaningless.

While this sort of thinking is somewhat widespread on a popular level (e.g., Carl Sagan, Isaac Asimov, etc.), logical positivism has suffered a philosophical death. Philosopher of science Del Ratzsch outlines problems with the Verifiability Criterion of Meaning, the cornerstone of logical positivism:

> First, it fails as a description of what is considered meaningful scientifically. Some basic principles essential to science are not empirically testable. For example, we cannot establish by experiment that nature is uniform, and that the

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[7]Antony Flew, "Theology and Falsification," *New Essays in Philosophical Theology* (ed. Antony Flew and Alasdair MacIntyre; New York: Macmillan, 1955) 98-99.

[8]Ibid., 98.

principle is not obviously analytic, either. But uniformity is a presupposition without which scientific tests would be pointless. Second, the verifiability principle fails when applied to other sorts of specific examples. For instance, moral truths are not matters of empirical tests. We cannot (it is widely held) *empirically* test the wrongness and sinfulness of murder, but to claim`as some positivists did`that such moral principles are cognitively empty is outrageous both philosophically and morally. Finally, the Verifiability Criteron of Meaning is self destroying. Is the Verifiability Criterion of Meaning *itself* empirically testable? Clearly not. . . .   But if the criterion itself is neither empirically testable nor analytic, then either it is itself meaningless (in which case we needn't further bother about it) or else meaningfulness does not depend on empirical testability and analyticity, in which case the Verifiability Criterion is false (and we needn't bother further about it).[9]

As for Flew's Principle of Falsifiability, it is merely a version of the Verifiability Criterion of Meaning[10] and falls under the same criticism. Furthermore, most sophisticated believers in God challenge Flew head-on and admit possible defeaters to belief in God`such as the inconsistency of God's existence and the existence of evil, the demonstration that the universe is not radically contingent, or that the concept of God is internally incoherent`but they contend that they have adequately responded to these possible defeaters.[11] As Plantinga has with tongue-in-cheek pointed out,

> If after death I were to meet Father Abraham, St. Paul, and St. John (I think I could recognize them), who united in declaring that they had been duped, perhaps I should have sufficient reason for conceding that God does not love us

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[9]Del Ratzsch, *Philosophy of Science* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986) 37-38.

[10]Alvin Plantinga, *God and Other Minds* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1968) 162.

[11]E.g., ibid., 161: Plantinga writes, "My discovering a contradiction in the proposition *God exists* would constitute a disproof of it." See also Alvin Plantinga, "Reason and Belief in God," *The Intellectuals Speak Out about God* (ed. Roy Abraham Varghese; Chicago: Regnery Gateway, 1984) 199; Norman L. Geisler and Winfried Corduan, *Philosophy of Religion* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988).

after all.[12]

The demise of logical positivism included the disappearance of the dogma of scientism, the belief that only what is scientifically testable is true. Hence, the metaphysical door once again opened for serious philosophical discussion about the rationality of belief in God, the existence and nature of God, and the nature and content of religious experience. Before this open door is discussed, a second reason for the resurgence of traditional Hebrew-Christian theism should be addressed: the lack of intellectual rigor in theological liberalism.

LACK OF INTELLECTUAL RIGOR
IN THEOLOGICAL LIBERALISM

Many conservative scholars welcome philosophy's renewed interest in articulating and critically discussing the philosophical implications of traditional orthodox Christian doctrines, but many mainline theologians have not put out the red carpet. In a recent issue of *Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers*, Gordon Kaufman, a liberal theologian at Princeton University, claimed that the reason why theologians like himself are disinterested in recent philosophy of religion is that Christian philosophers assume the plausibility of *traditional* theistic concepts which clearly conflict with the pluralism and epistemological and moral relativism enthusiastically embraced by contemporary theologians.[13]
Kaufman's defense of this view is poorly reasoned, however, and is typical of some theological works that attempt to interact with philosophy.[14] His weak presentation provides further evidence of

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[12]Plantinga, *Other Minds* 161.
[13]Gordon Kaufman, "`Evidentialism': A Theologian's Response," *Faith and Philosophy* 6 (1989) 35-46.
[14]See Francis J. Beckwith, "Identity and Resurrection: A Review Article," *JETS* 33 (Sept 1990) 369-73, for a further illustration of such an attempt.

why Christians interested in feasting on a diet of intellectually rigorous discussions of classical theology are not tempted by Kaufman's invitation to a famine. In a response to Kaufman, Christian philosophers Stump and Kretzman take him to task by showing clearly that a dose of critical thinking can expose the philosophical incoherence of what appears to be "profound" theological insights.[15]

First, they respond to Kaufman's claim that Christian philosophers have ignored religious pluralism, the belief that no one religion is ultimately true and that rejection of religious pluralism entails social intolerance and lack of sympathy for other religions. Stump and Kretzman note that "since Kaufman's position must reject as false all claims made by Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and other religions to know" true things about God's nature and human salvation, therefore, "if lack of sympathy and disrespect are inevitable concomitants of the rejection of religious claims, as Kaufman seems to think, then his position is no more sympathetic and respectful than traditional Christianity with regard to other religions, but less."[16]

Second, Kaufman defends epistemological and ethical relativism on the basis of "the growing awareness of the way in which all our ideas are shaped by the cultural and symbolic framework of orientation within which we are living and thinking."[17] But, as Stump and Kretzman note, Kaufman does not hesitate to condemn the Holocaust and other actions as inherently evil, claim to know that "God is beyond our understanding and knowledge," and assert that God is "that ultimate mystery in which both our being and our fulfillment are grounded."[18] If epistemological and ethical relativism are "true," then "Kaufman is ambivalent or inconsistent in his agnosticism and skepticism, unwittingly abandoning those attitudes when he has a point to make."[19] For instance, when Kaufman claims

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[15]Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzman, "Theologically Unfashionable Philosophy," *Faith and Philosophy* 7 (July 1990) 329-39.

[16]Ibid., 332.

[17]Kaufman, "`Evidentialism'" 42.

[18]Ibid., 44.

[19]Stump, "Theologically Unfashionable" 44.

that God's nature is beyond our knowledge, he is in fact making a knowledge-claim about God's nature, "namely, that God's nature has the property of being unknowable to us. But if Kaufman is able to know one property of God's, his claim falsifies itself."[20]

Furthermore in condemning the Holocaust and other moral atrocities as inherently evil, Kaufman implies that there exists some non-culture-dependent hierarchy of values. If he denies this, his criticism of atrocities such as the Holocaust, not to mention *epistemological relativism itself*, is reduced to nothing more than ideas shaped by cultural orientation. According to this reasoning, ethical and epistemological relativism are more likely than their opposite to produce the mind-set tolerating atrocities such as the Holocaust. Moreover, as an ethical and epistemological relativist, how can Kaufman criticize Christian philosophers for pursuing their interest in traditional orthodox Christian theology? Are not the ideas of Christian philosophers "shaped by the cultural and symbolic framework of orientation within which" they "are living and thinking?" Where is Kaufman's sympathy for *this* "alternative religious movement?" Stump and Kretzman add more, but these criticisms suffice.

The sort of argumentation in Kaufman's article is typical of much liberal theological literature. For this reason, philosophers, who are typically more sensitive to critical thinking skills than those in other disciplines, have found nothing logically incorrect in pursuing rigorous intellectual discussions of traditional theological topics, although in certain theological circles such topics, like last year's designer gowns, may not be fashionable.

INCREASED SOPHISTICATION OF THEISTIC ARGUMENT

Traditionally, four different arguments used to defend the reasonableness of believing in God's existence have been the teleological, the moral, the ontological, and the cosmological.

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[20]Ibid.

Philosophers have also defended belief in God by appealing to miracles, revelation, religious experience, and possible solutions to the problem of evil. Christian philosophers have now revived many of these traditional approaches with unparalleled intellectual rigor and sophistication. A detailed overview of these efforts would require an entire book, so this discussion will limit itself to distilled versions of two contemporary arguments for theism that have attracted considerable interest: (1) Alvin Plantinga's defense of rationality of belief in God apart from evidence, and (2) William Lane Craig's kalam cosmological argument.

Rationality of Belief in God

Plantinga, a Calvinist who holds an endowed chair in the University of Notre Dame's philosophy department, argues that belief in God is rational apart from any evidence, although he does hold to a version of the ontological argument which he believes is plausible.[21]

He argues against what he calls the evidentialist objection to belief in God.[22] Evidentialists, such as the positivists, argue that unless a proposition is either fundamental to knowledge or based on evidence, one is not rationally justified in believing the truth of that proposition. Hence, according to eventialism, since the proposition "God exists" is not foundational to knowledge, it is not rational without sufficient evidence to believe that God exists. However, Plantinga asks why the proposition "God exists" cannot be foundational to knowledge and thus not in need of evidence. The typical evidential response is that only *properly basic* propositions are foundational to knowledge. But how can one know which propositions are properly basic? The evidentialist usually replies that the only properly basic propositions are those which are self-evident

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[21]Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974) 111-12.

[22]Plantinga has presented his position in several texts and articles. An easily accessible article is, "Is Belief in God Rational?," *Rationality and Religious Belief* (ed. C. F. Delaney; Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979) 7-27.

and incorrigible. An example of a self-evident proposition is, "All squares have four sides." "I feel pain" exemplifies an incorrigible truth, because even if my pain is imaginary, it is nevertheless incorrigibly true that I do feel pain. Hence, it follows that since the proposition "God exists" is not self-evident or incorrigible, it is not properly basic. Since it is not properly basic, one needs evidence if he wants to believe in God. Therefore, the evidentialist concludes that belief in God apart from evidence is irrational.

Plantinga responds by asking how one knows that self-evident and incorrigible propositions are the only ones that are properly basic. Cannot the believer in God show the evidentialist that the proposition "only propositions that are self-evident and incorrigible" is itself not properly basic, since it is neither self-evident nor incorrigible? Neither is it supported by evidence. Furthermore, many things in life are rational to believe in apart from evidence. For example, belief that the world was not created ten minutes ago with all the appearances and memories of a world that is billions of years old is a perfectly rational belief for which no evidence exists.[23] Therefore, the evidentialist's criterion is inadequate, and he cannot rule out the possibility that belief in God is properly basic. Plantinga writes that the evidentialist's criterion

> is no more than a bit of intellectual imperialism. . . . He commits himself to reason and to nothing more; he therefore declares irrational any noetic structure that contains more`belief in God, for example, in its foundation. But here there is no reason for the theist to follow his example; the believer is not obliged to take his word for it. So far we have found no reason at all for excluding belief in God from the foundations; so far we have found no reason at all for believing that belief in God cannot be basic in a rational noetic structure. To accept belief in God as basic is clearly not irrational in the sense of being proscribed by reason or in conflict with the deliverances of reason. The dictum that belief in God is not basic in a rational noetic structure is neither apparently self-evident

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[23]I.e., how does one *know* that his senses and memory are accurate unless he *presupposes* as properly basic their reliability? He cannot *use* them to prove this without begging the question.

nor apparently incorrigible.[24]

Obviously, many theists as well as non-theists do not fully accept Plantinga's argumentation, but he, with the intellectual tough-mindedness that Roderick Chisolm described, has put the non-theist on the defensive with his highly influential philosophy of religion.

The Kalam Cosmological Argument

Many theists besides Plantinga offer proof for God's existence. A recent argument that has gained a hearing among philosophers is William Craig's kalam cosmological argument.[25] In fact, in his *magnum opus* against theism, *The Miracle of Theism*,[26] the eminent atheistic philosopher J. L. Mackie wrote a response to the argument only three years after Craig's initial development of the argument was published.

One of the major reasons Mackie saw a need to respond was probably the kalam argument's uniqueness to Western philosophy of religion.

> The kalam cosmological argument gets its name from the word *kalam*, which refers to Arabic philosophy or theology. The kalam argument was popular among Arabic philosophers in the late Middle Ages. Christian philosophers during that period did not generally accept the argument, perhaps due to the

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[24]Ibid., 26.

[25]Craig has detailed this argument in numerous places, but his most extensive presentation of it is *The Kalam Cosmological Argument* (Library of Philosophy and Religion; New York: Macmillan, 1979). He responds to objections to his initial work in *Apologetics: An Introduction* (Chicago: Moody, 1984) 73-93; "*Creatio ex Nihilo*," *Process Theology* (ed Ronald H. Nash; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987) 41-73; and "Professor Mackie and the Kalam Cosmological Argument," *RelS* 20 (1985) 367-75. Other objections to the kalam argument are answered by J. P. Moreland (*Scaling the Secular City* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987] 18-42), Francis J. Beckwith (*David Hume's Argument Against Miracles: A Critical Analysis* [Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1989] chap. 5,), and Francis J. Beckwith and S. E. Parrish, *The Mormon Concept of God: A Philosophical Analysis* [Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1991] 54-59).

[26]J. L. Mackie, *The Miracle of Theism* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982) 92-95.

influence of Aquinas, who following Aristotle, rejected it. A notable exception was Saint Bonaventure, a contemporary of Aquinas, who argued extensively for the soundness of the kalam argument.[27]

The kalam argument can be put in the following form:

1. Everything which begins to exist does so through a cause.
2. The universe had a beginning.
3. Therefore, the universe has a cause.

Another way of looking at this argument is as a series of dilemmas, the form to be followed in the present discussion:[28]

universe

beginning   no beginning

caused   not caused

personal   not personal

This argument presents a series of alternatives. First, the universe either had a beginning or it did not. Second, if the universe had a beginning, then it was either caused or uncaused. Third, if the beginning of the universe was caused, then this cause was either personal or impersonal. By showing one part of each alternative to be more reasonable than the other, this argument shows the reasonableness of believing in the existence of a personal Creator, God. A brief examination of each alternative follows.

(A) Alternative one: Is it more reasonable to believe that the universe has a beginning or that it does not have a beginning? Craig has developed four arguments which he believes support the

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[27]Moreland, *Scaling* 18.
[28]Diagram taken from William Lane Craig, "Philosophical and Scientific Pointers to Creation ex Nihilo," *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation* 32 (Mar 1980) 5.

contention that the universe must have had a beginning.[29]   The argument that is philosophically strongest proceeds in the following way:[30]

> 1. The series of events in time is a collection formed by adding one member after another.
> 2. A collection formed by adding one member after another cannot be actually infinite.
> 3. Therefore, the series of events in time cannot be actually infinite.

The first premise can hardly be disputed. When one thinks of a series of events in time, he does not think of them as happening all at once, but as happening one after another. For example, despite the tasteless jokes at bachelor parties, one's wedding and one's funeral do not happen at the same time. The first precedes the second (with many years between them, hopefully).

In the second premise, it must be admitted that an *infinite set* of numbers is one that is complete and cannot be added to, e.g., the infinite set of natural numbers {1, 2 . . . 10 . . . 1,000,000 . . .}. This set contains an *unlimited* number of digits from 1 to infinity. However, since an actual infinite is a *complete* set with an infinite number of members, the series of events in time cannot actually be infinite, because the series of events in time is always increasing (being added to) and one can never arrive at infinity by adding one member after another. The following example should help demonstrate this.

If you were on Interstate 15, driving from Los Angeles to Las Vegas with 280 miles to traverse, you will no doubt eventually arrive in Las Vegas. On the other hand, if you were to drive on Interstate 15 from L. A. to Las Vegas with an infinite number of miles to traverse, you would never arrive in Las Vegas. If you did arrive in Las Vegas, it would only prove that the distance was not infinite. Since an infinite number is unlimited, one can never complete a journey of an infinite

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[29]See Craig, *Kalam*.

[30]William Lane Craig, *The Existence of God and the Beginning of the Universe* (San Bernardino, CA: Here's Life, 1979) 49.

number of miles. When this is applied to the universe, a certain absurdity develops: if the universe had no beginning, then every event has been preceded by an infinite number of events. But if one can never arrive at infinity by adding one member after another, he could never arrive at the present day, because to do so, he would have to "traverse" (or complete) an infinite number of days to arrive at the present day. Philosopher J. P. Moreland explains in his recent defense of the kalam argument:

> Suppose a person were to think backward through the events in the past. In reality, time and events within it move in the other direction. But mentally he can reverse that movement and count backward farther and farther into the past. Now he will either come to a beginning or he will not. If he comes to a beginning, then the universe obviously had a beginning. But if he never could, even in principle, reach a first moment, then this means that it would be impossible to start with the present and run backward through all the events in the history of the cosmos. Remember, if he did run through all of them, he would reach a first member of a series, and the finiteness of the past would be established. In order to avoid this conclusion, one must hold that, starting from the present, it is *impossible* to go backward through all the events in history.
>
>   But since events really move in the other direction, this is equivalent to admitting that if there was no beginning, the past could have never been exhaustively traversed to reach the present.[31]

Since the premises of this argument seem plausible, the conclusion follows that the series of events in time cannot be actually infinite. This being the case, it seems more reasonable to believe the horn of our first dilemma which states that the universe had a beginning.

(B) Alternative two: Is it more reasonable to believe that the universe was caused or uncaused? Since the overwhelming testimony of human experience testifies to the fact that something cannot arise from nothing, once it is established that the universe began to exist, the reasonable person would no doubt have to affirm that the universe has

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[31]Moreland, *Scaling* 29.

a cause. Perhaps one could still affirm that it is logically possible that the universe began uncaused, but this does not appear to be metaphysically possible. Therefore, it is more plausible that the universe was caused if it had a beginning.

(C) Alternative three: Is it more reasonable that the universe has a personal cause or an impersonal cause? Arguing that this cause is personal, Craig asks, "How can a first event come to exist if the cause of that event has always existed? Why isn't the effect as eternal as the cause?" For example, "if a heavy ball's resting on a cushion is the cause of a depression in the cushion, then if the ball is resting on the cushion from eternity, the cushion should be depressed from eternity." But "the only way to have an eternal cause but an effect that begins at a point in time is if the cause is a *personal agent* who freely decides to create an effect in time."[32] It is like a man at rest for all eternity who may will to create a work of art. "Hence, a temporal effect may be caused by an eternally existing agent."[33]

Concurring with Craig, Moreland presents the following example:

> If the necessary and sufficient conditions for a match to light are present, the match lights spontaneously. There is no deliberation, no waiting. In such situations, when *A* is the efficient cause of *B*, spontaneous change or mutability is built into the situation itself.
>
> The only way for the first event to arise spontaneously from a timeless, changeless, spaceless state of affairs, and at the same time be caused, is this`the event resulted from the free act of a person or agent. In the world, persons or agents spontaneously act to bring about events. I myself raise my arm when it is done deliberately. There may be necessary conditions for me to do this (e.g., I have a normal arm, I am not tied down), but these are not sufficient. The event is realized only when I freely act. Similarly, the first event came about when an agent freely chose to bring it about, and this choice was not the result of other conditions which were sufficient for that event to come about.[34]

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[32]Craig, *Apologetics* 93.
[33]Ibid.
[34]Moreland, *Scaling* 42.

Therefore, the only solution to this problem is to conclude that this cause *willed* the universe to come into existence at a temporal moment, and since "will" is an attribute of a rational or personal agent, this cause must be personal. Though it is possible that the cause of the universe is impersonal, it is more plausible to affirm that it is a personal agent. In conclusion, the defenders of the kalam argument believe they have shown that it is perfectly rational to believe in the existence of a personal Creator of all that is. If the premises of this argument are correct, and its detractors have offered no persuasive reason that they are not, the theist possesses a strong argument for affirming God's existence.

CONCLUSION

No doubt, the intellectual battle between belief and unbelief will continue. But what is amazing about the recent resurgence of theism is that it started at a time when God's death had been pronounced, the coroner was preparing for the autopsy, and the smugness of the infidels permeated the landscape of secular orthodoxy.

Some people may say that God is looking down and is amused at the feeble attempts of philosophers to demonstrate the rationality of belief in Him to a world in which so many people, completely unaware of the cosmological argument or any other theistic proof, still believe and trust in God.

Yet such absolute cynicism about the human mind seems inconsistent with a truly robust faith. For if God does exist (and I certainly believe that he does) and has given us minds and hearts with which to think and feel, it is axiomatic that He would be concerned with every minute detail of our intellectual and emotional existence. He would consequently permit the simple to feel secure in a simple faith grounded in an infinitely complex God and those more philosophically inclined to find intellectual satisfaction in the study of an infinitely complex God who is personally encountered only through an act of simple faith. Regardless of whether one finds the resurgence of theistic philosophy disappointing or encouraging, he cannot deny that it is an important and fascinating part of our contemporary intellectual surroundings.

LITERARY GENRE AND HERMENEUTICS
OF THE APOCALYPSE[1]

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A relatively new field of specialized NT study is a careful examination of the literary genre or style of different books. Revelation has often been classified as a kind of literature called "apocalyptic," but the category of "prophetic" is probably a better classification for the book. The book calls itself a prophecy. If the genre were primarily apocalyptic, this might constitute a basis for interpreting the book in a non-literal way. The preterist, tradition-historical, continuous-historical, and idealist approaches to the book have at times spiritualized the book in accord with the assumption that its apocalyptic style makes it different from other books. If the book is basically prophetic, however, only a literal interpretation will suffice. The symbols of the book lend themselves to literal interpretation, with allowances for normal figures of speech.

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Analysis of literary genre has emerged as a relatively new tool for NT study at the end of the twentieth century.[2] Its possible effect on hermeneutics, particularly in interpreting the Apocalypse, justifies an in-depth investigation of relevant issues.

STYLE OF THE APOCALYPSE

This methodology divides the NT books into groups based on comparisons with extra-biblical literature from the periods immediately before, during, and after the composition of the NT.

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[1]This essay is adapted from a portion of the introductory chapter of the forthcoming Volume One of the two-volume commentary on Revelation in the Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary series produced by Moody Press.

[2]Craig L. Blomberg, "New Testament Genre Criticism for the 1990s," *Themelios* 15/2 (Jan/Feb 1990) 40.

Literary features such as structure, style, content, and function are included in these comparisons.[3] Blomberg identifies the categories of general style to which the Apocalypse has been compared as *prophecy*, *apocalyptic*, and *epistle*.[4] To these may be added *edict*, to which Aune has recently likened the messages of Revelation 2-3,[5] and *drama*, for which Blevins has argued.[6]

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[3]D. E. Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987) 13.

[4]Blomberg, "Genre Criticism" 45.

[5]D. E. Aune, "The Form and Function of the Proclamations to the Seven Churches (Revelation 2-3)," *NTS* 36/2 (Apr 1990) 183.

[6]James L. Blevins, "The Genre of Revelation," *RevExp* 77/3 (Summer 1980) 393-408.

No consensus exists as to a precise definition of genre,[7] so discus
attempting to classify portions of the NT, including Revelation, are at best va
A few general observations regarding proposed answers to the question of "v
genre?" are in order, however. The epistolary element is clearly present at ce
points of the Apocalypse, such as in Rev 1:4-5a which has a customary epist
salutation and in Rev 22:21 with its normal epistolary benediction. Yet so mu
the book is clearly of another character that this hardly suffices as an ov
category. Aune's case for likening chapters 2-3 to a royal or imperial edic
merit too, but he nowhere claims that this applies to the whole book. Ble
argument for seeing Revelation as a form of Greek tragic drama pro
interesting historical background derived from the Greek theater at Ephesus
hardly qualifies as an overall literary type.

A recent trend among some scholars has been to view Revelation as prim
apocalyptic. This complicates the problem of definition even further becau
addition to disagreement about what constitutes genre, uncertainty also pre
regarding a definition of "apocalyptic."[8] Aune launches an effort to solve
problem by formulating a proposed definition based on the Book of Revelat
This is appropriate because the term "apocalyptic" arose from the first word o
Greek text of Revelation, poklyciw (*apokalypsis*, "revelation").[10] Yet such an c
prejudices the case in favor of categorizing Revelation in a certain wa
assuming an answer to the question under investigation and not allowing fo
book's uniqueness. Revelation certainly has features in common with the *Shep*
of Hermas and other works of this type, including its extensive use of symbo
vision as the major means of revelation, focus on the end of the current age an
inauguration of the age to come, a dualism with God and Satan as leade
spiritual order determining the course of history, and pessimism about r
ability to change the progress of events.[11]

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[7]David E. Aune, "The Apocalypse of John and the Problem of Genre," *Semeia* 36 (1986) 66.

[8]Aune, "The Apocalypse" 67-91. As for terminology, a distinction between "apocalypse
literature), "apocalyptic eschatology" (as a world view), and "apocalypticism" (as a socio-rel
movement) appears to have wide acceptance among specialists in this area of study (Theodo
Swanson, "The Apolyptic Scriptures," *J.Dharma* 8 [July 1982] 314; James C. VanderKam, "I
Studies in Apocalyptic," *Word and World* 4 [Winter 1984] 71-72; Aune, "The Apocalypse" 67), t
acceptance is by no means universal (VanderKam, "Recent Studies" 73; Adela Yarbro C
"Reading the Book of Revelation in the Twentieth Century," *Int* 40/3 [July 1986] 235-38).
purpose of this study is not to advance proposed distinctions in definition, but to comment o
literary result. The socio-religious movement that produced the Apocalypse is the one beg
Jesus and continued by the apostles, not the apocalyptic spirit that developed among the
following the abuses of Antiochus Epiphanes (contra Swanson, "Apocalyptic Scriptures" 32
Within this framework apocalyptic eschatology cannot be distinguished from prophetic escha
as, for example, being more pessimistic (contra ibid., 314-17). The outlook of the two is no dif
 The brief evaluation here elaborates on the literary factors of Revelation as compared to
"apocalypses."

[9]Aune, "The Apocalypse" 86-91.

[10]David E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean Word* (Grand Ra
Eerdmans, 1983) 108; *idem, The New Testament*, 226-27.

[11]Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (NIC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977) 19-23; I
Achtemeier, "An Apocalyptic Shift in Early Christian Tradition: Reflections on Some Can

But it also differs distinctly from everything else in this class.   ~~O~~
apocalypses are generally pseudonymous, but Revelation is not.   The epist~~~~
framework of Revelation also sets it apart from the works that are similar in ~~~~
respects. Other writings lack the repeated admonitions for moral compliance~~~~
Revelation has (2:5, 16, 21, 22; 3:3, 19). Revelation is not as pessimistic abou~~~~
present as other works in this category.   In others the coming of Messi~~~~
exclusively future, but in Revelation he has already come and laid the ground~~~~
for his future victory through his redemptive death.[12]

Most distinctive of all, however, is the fact that this book calls itself a prop~~~~
(1:3; 22:7, 10, 18, 19). Its contents fully justify this self-claim.[13]   Of the thirty~~~~
characteristics that have been cited in attempts to define apocalyptic,[14] all ~~~~
properly understood could apply to prophecy as well, with the possible exce~~~~
of pseudonymity (which does not apply to Revelation).   Alleged differ~~~~
between the Apocalypse and generally accepted works of prophecy ofte~~~~
upon inadequate interpretations of the former.

The Apocalypse is the product of the NT gift of prophecy,
administered by the Holy Spirit, referred to frequently in the NT as a gift (e.g~~~~
Rom 12:6), as a product of the gift (e.g. 1 Tim 1:18), as a person possessing th~~~~
(e.g. 1 Cor 12:28, 29; Eph 4:11), or as an exercise of the gift (e.g. 1 Cor 14:31). ~~~~
Fully understood, this gift was marked by the following characteristics: (1) i~~~~
involved immediate divine inspiration of the spokesperson or writer.[15]   (2) T~~~~
gift provided exhortation and encouragement (1 Cor 14:3).[16]   (3) It also share~~~~

Evidence," *CBQ* 45/2 (Apr 1983) 232. Ladd is too narrow in his statement that "the central el~~~~
in apocalyptic is the glorious second coming of Jesus Christ, who will raise the dead, judge p~~~~
and usher in the glories of the Age to Come" (George E. Ladd, "New Testament Apocal~~~~
RevExp 78/2 [Spring 1981] 205).

[12]Leon Morris, *The Revelation of St. John* (TNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969) 23-25; M~~~~
Revelation 23-25; Blevins, "Genre" 393; Lowell J. Satre, "Interpreting the Book of Revelation," *W~~~~
(Winter 1984) 60-61.

[13]Paul Feine, Johannes Behm, and Werner Georg Kmmel, *Introduction to the New Testament* (~~~~
A. J. Mattill, Jr.; Nashville: Abingdon, 1966) 324; Morris, *Revelation* 23.

[14]David Hellholm, "The Problem of Apocalyptic Genre and the Apocalypse of John," *So~~~~
Biblical Literature 1982 Seminar Papers (Kent Harold Richards, ed.; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, ~~~~
164-65.

[15]Lindblom writes, "Common to all representatives of the prophetic type here depicted ~~~~
consciousness of having access to information of the world above and experiences originating~~~~
divine world, from which ordinary men are excluded" (J. Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient~~~~
[Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973] 6). The same marked prophets in early Christian communitie~~~~
regarded themselves as spokesmen for an ultimate authority (David E. Aune, *Prophecy ~~~~
Possession of a direct revelation from God was one thing that distinguished true prophecy ~~~~
false prophecy (Wayne A. Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today* [Westcl~~~~
IL: Crossway, 1988] 142-43). Evidence of this characteristic is readily available in the Apoca~~~~
where prophets are a group whose special task is to mediate divine revelation to the churche~~~~
22:6, 9; cf. 1:1) (Aune, *Prophecy* 206).

[16]This characteristic accords with the "forth-teller" etymology of the word προφητηω (*p~~~~
"prophet") (Helmut Krmer, "προφητηω κ. τ. λ.," *TDNT* 6:783-84). This part of the present/~~~~
structure of the gift is easily illustrated in the teachings of Jesus (Aune, *Prophecy* 188). The p~~~~
gives God's call to repentance which torments some (e.g. Rev 11:3, 10) but convicts others to t~~~~

elements in common with the gift of teaching.[17] (4) It incorporated predictio
the future into its function.[18] (5) The gift of prophecy entailed a degree of
authority which was less than that of the OT prophets and the NT apostles, b
some kind of authority was inferred.[19] (6) A further characteristic of the NT
prophet was his ability to discern the validity of other prophecies.[20] (7) Gifte

God (e.g. 1 Cor 14:24, 25) (G. Friedrich, "προφητω κ. τ. λ.," *TDNT* 6:828). He is essentially a proc
of God's word. His παρκλησιω (*paraklsis*, "exhortation") results in the οκοδομ (*oikodom*, "edifica
of the Christian community (David Hill, *New Testament Prophecy* [Atlanta: Knox, 1979] 8-
particular, the Apocalypse is a series of messages to bring consolation and exhortations
Brown, "Prophet," *DNTT* 2:88).

[17]The prophet instructed the church regarding the meaning of Scripture and through revel
of the future (David Hill, "Prophecy and Prophets in the Revelation of St. John," *NTS* 18 [19
406). The prophetic gift should not be confused with the gift of a teacher, however. The mini
prophets was more spontaneous, being based upon direct divine revelations. Teachers, on the
hand, preserved and interpreted Christian tradition, including relevant OT passages, the sayi
Jesus, and traditional beliefs of earlier Christian teaching (Aune, *Prophecy* 202). In regard to t
the "charismatic exegesis" of traditional materials by NT prophets resembled the practice
Qumran community in its *pesharim* (ibid., 252). The practice consisted of finding hidden or syr
meanings which could be revealed only through an interpreter possessing divine insight (Hi
Prophecy 91; Aune, *Prophecy* 133). Paul illustrates this in his handling of Isa 59:20-21 and 27:9 in
11:25-26 (Aune, *Prophecy* 252). Aune feels this practice could have been followed by one wi
gift of teaching also (ibid., 345-46), but this is doubtful.

[18]This was the "foretelling" part which is suggested by the προ- prefix, but which was a
development in the evolution of the word's meaning (Krmer, "προφητω" 783-84; Friedrich, "pr
832-33). This is the chief sense of the word in the Apocalypse, but Paul also predicted the
(e.g. Acts 20:22-23, 29; 27:22 ff.; Rom 11:25 ff.; 1 Cor. 15:51-52; 1 Thess 4:14-17) (Friedrich, "pr
840). Friedrich notes that in Paul, exhortation is dominant in prophecy, but in the Apoca
prediction is the main focus (ibid., 828-29; cf. Aune, *Prophecy* 5). This, he says, puts John mor
the category of OT prophecy than in company with early Christian prophets. Aune disagree
this appraisal, however (Aune, *Prophecy* 6). The predictive element is one of several feature
Colin Brown uses to relate Luke's understanding of the gift to OT prophets, too (Brown, "Prop
87). Hill observes that prediction is clearly not the main function of prophets in Acts (Hi
Prophecy 108). The degree of prediction as compared to exhortation is probably not suf
ground to remove any NT writer's idea of the gift from the realm of NT prophecy, how
Though he could predict the future, the NT prophet should not be confused with the μντιω (*r
"diviner"). This latter figure belonged strictly to a secular setting and discharged nothing
hortatory function of a prophet.

[19]Since they were spokesmen for God, they claimed no personal part in the communicatio
gave (Aune, *Prophecy* 204), so it is inevitable that they possessed authority (Hill, *NT Prophec
The limited nature of this authority is quite obvious, however. Utterances of NT prophets w
many cases challengeable in ways that those of an OT prophet would never have been (1 Cor
(ibid., 135). This limitation may be missed if one takes the prophecies of Paul (1 Cor 7:10; 14:
and John (Rev 22:18-19) as typical. Paul's absolute authority is clear throughout his writings
114) and in the Apocalypse John seemingly places himself into the category of the OT pr
through such things as his inaugural vision (1:9-20), his use of symbolic acts (10:10), and his
oracular formulas (chaps. 2-3) (Rolf Rentdorf, "προφητω κ. τ. λ.," *TDNT* 6:812; Friedrich, "προφητω
Hill, *NT Prophecy*, 87-88). The distinguishing feature was that Paul and John were apostles a
fact that enabled them to write with a higher degree of authority. This was not possible for th
apostolic NT prophet (Hill, *NT Prophecy* 132).

[20]In 1 Cor 14:29, Paul speaks of the need for some to evaluate whenever a prophet was spe

prophets also had an ability to perceive the thoughts and motives of other persons (cf. Luke 7:39; John 4:19; Acts 5:3-4; 8:21 ff.).[21] (8) The use of prophec[y] was sometimes accompanied by symbolic acts.[22] (9) Most often prophets we[re] residents of a single locality, but some were also itinerant.[23] (10) Most NT prophecy was oral, but some was written.[24] (11) Prophetic language was ma[rked] by a variety of literary forms.[25]

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in the local assembly. While there is some disagreement about the identity of the discerners [in that] verse, the most probable answer is that "the others" referred to are the other prophets [in the] congregation (Friedrich, "profhtw" 855; Hill, *NT Prophecy* 133; Aune, *Prophecy* 196).

[21]Friedrich, "profhtw" 842; E. Earle Ellis, "The Role of the Christian Prophet in Acts," *A[postolic] History and the Gospel* (W. Ward Gasque and Ralph P. Martin, eds.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, [1970])- 55. Such ability was widely regarded as a prophetic phenomenon by Jesus' contemporari[es (cf.] Mark 2:5, 8 and pars.; Mark 9:33 ff.; 10:21 and pars.; 12:15 and pars.; Luke 6:8; 9:47; 11:17; 19:5; [Matt] 12:25 and par.; John 2:24-25; 4:17 ff.) (Hill, *NT Prophecy* 60). This ability was a distinctive part [of the] effectiveness of the gift for Paul (1 Cor 14:24-25) (Friedrich, "profhtw" 842).

[22]Here is another trait it has in common with OT prophecy. Agabus signified Paul's c[oming] imprisonment this way (Acts 21:10-11). John swallows a small book (Rev 10:8-11) and measu[res the] temple with a reed (Rev 11:1) (Friedrich, "profhtw" 849).

[23]Hill, *NT Prophecy* 90.

[24]Revelation received was fruitless until communicated to others. Without communica[tion] poklyciw (*apokalypsis*, "revelation") could not be called prophecy (Grudem, *Gift of Prophecy* 14[3]). In spite of the importance attached to written prophecies such as the Apocalypse, most Ch[ristian] prophets appear to have delivered their messages orally (Hill, *NT Prophecy* 93).

[25]For the most part, the NT prophet did not follow stereotyped oracular formulas. A notew[orthy] exception here is the use of tde lgei t pnema t gion (*tade legei to pneuma to hagion*, "these thing[s says] the Holy Spirit") formula by Agabus and John (Hill, *NT Prophecy* 107). Aside from this type o[f] indicator, Christian prophecy had to be recognized on other grounds (Aune, *Prophecy* 317). (12) Exercise of the gift entailed the prophet's being in a special state of mind, sometimes referred [to as] "ecstasy."[25]   [25]This point is debated (Terrance Callan, "Prophecy and Ecstasy in Greco-R[oman] Religion and in 1 Corinthians," *NovT* 17 [1985] 139). Also, implications of the term "ecstasy" a[re not] agreed upon. Nevertheless, something different distinguished the prophet's condition [as he] received divine revelation (Friedrich, "profhtw" 829). (13) The gift of prophecy was in some [way] temporary.[25]   [25]Hill, *NT Prophecy* 137. First Cor 13:8-13 makes this point, though the extent [of the] limited time is debated (see Robert L. Thomas, "Tongues . . . Will Cease," *JETS* 17 [1974] 81-89[;] *Understanding Spiritual Gifts* [Chicago: Moody, 1978] 42-44, 79-81, 106-8, 199-204).

In light of Revelation's self-claims (e.g. Rev 1:3; 22:18-19) and how w[ell it] fulfills the qualifications of NT prophecy, the best overall characterization o[f the] literary style of the Apocalypse is to call it prophetic.[25]   [25]G. R. Beasley-Murra[y, *The*] *Book of Revelation* (NCBC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 19-29; Elisabeth Schssler Fiorenz[a, *The*] *Book of Revelation, Justice and Judgment* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985) 133-156. Hill's opinio[n that] Revelation is atypical of NT prophecy in general does not have foundation (Hill, *NT Proph[ecy*; *idem*, "Prophecy and Prophets" 401-18). A blending of genre such as proph[etic-] apocalyptic[25]   [25]George E. Ladd, "Why Not Prophetic-Apocalyptic?" *JBL* 76 (1957) 192-2[00.] prophetic-apocalyptic-epistolary[25]   [25]Blomberg, "Genre Criticism" 46. is not the[best] answer because it does not allow for the preeminence of the book's prop[hetic] character. As noted already in the descriptive characteristics of NT prophec[y (see] "[11]" in the list above), sufficient variety exists in how prophets communicat[ed to] account for apocalyptic, epistolary, imperial-edict, and dramatic elements, w[ithin]

are doubtless present in the book but are not representative of its overar[ching]
literary character.

At least two other NT literary styles reflect methods of d[ivine]
communication to prophets different from that to the prophet of the Apocaly[pse].
According to John 14:26, stimulation of the memories of eyewitnesses was a m[ethod]
used by the Spirit to inspire the writing of gospel-type literature.   Fo[r the]
epistolary style, according to indications in 1 Cor 2:6-13, he somehow impr[essed]
upon the deep consciousness of the writers some hitherto undisclosed data w[hich]
they in turn transformed into words for communication to an audience.   Fo[r the]
apocalyptic-type communication the message was passed on to the prophet i[n the]
form of visions. Since observed differences in genre relate more to the mann[er of]
revelation than anything else, perhaps a better designation for the Boo[k of]
Revelation would be a "visional-prophetic" genre. Such a term would distin[guish]
it from the gospel and epistolary styles, which in a broader sense are [also]
prophetic.

It is inevitable that elements of literary genre resulting from each mo[de of]
communication differ somewhat from the rest. Yet all fall into the broad cate[gory]
of prophecy as biblically defined. Boring's objection to defining apocalypti[c and]
prophecy as mutually exclusive categories is valid. He says that it leaves "no [room]
for an apocalyptic document such as Revelation to be considered also [a]
genuinely prophetic document directly concerned with the realities of po[litical]
history."[25]   [25]M. Eugene Boring, "The Theology of Revelation, `The Lord Our God the Al[mighty]
Reigns,'" *Int* 40/3 (July 1986) 261. Mickelsen, on the other hand, makes strict distin[ctions]
between genre-types. He deems it impossible for one person to have written [three]
different genres, gospel, epistles, and apocalypse, as tradition attributed to Joh[n the]
apostle.[25]   [25]A. Berkeley Mickelsen, *Daniel and Revelation: Riddles or Realities?* (Nashville: N[elson,]
1984) 19. This alleged impossibility is no problem at all, however, if the genre [type]
was dependent on the manner in which God inspired his prophet.

It may be concluded, therefore, that the literary genre of inspired wri[ting]
was not the choice of the human author, but was an inevitable result of the ma[nner]
in which God chose to reveal his message to the prophet.   This, of co[urse,]
distinguishes them from uninspired but similar works whose writers did, in[deed,]
choose a particular genre.

INTERPRETATION OF THE APOCALYPSE

Proposals for hermeneutical guidelines in interpreting Revelation [are]
correlated at least partially with the literary style assigned to the book. Se[veral]
general approaches to the book reflect, for the most part, the difference bet[ween]
assuming a predominantly apocalyptic genre and one that is more propheti[c: the]
contemporary-historical or preterist, the tradition-historical, the historici[st or]
continuous-historical, the timeless symbolic or idealist, and the eschatologic[al or]
futurist.[25]   [25]Mounce, *Revelation* 41-43; Helge S. Kvanig, "The Relevance of the Biblical Visi[ons of]
the End Time," *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 11/1 (June 1989) 36-37. These categorization[s deal]
principally with the core of the book consisting of Rev 4:1`22:5. The preterist approach

the book is a sketch of first-century conditions in the Roman Empire, the
emphasizing its historical background.[25]   [25]Henry Clarence Thiessen, *Introduction*
New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952) 324. A recent variation of the preterist appro
offered by David Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance* (Ft. Worth, TX: Dominion, 1987). Chilton dat
book in the 60's (3-6) and sees the entire prophecy as being fulfilled shortly thereafter (40). O
assuredly the book must be interpreted in light of its historical setting, b
justify this as the limiting factor, one must assume an apocalyptic genre in v
the language only faintly reflects actual events. For example, this extreme d
of spiritualization requires that one see the words about Christ's second comi
fulfilled in the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70, despite the fact that he di
appear on that occasion.[25]   [25]E.g. Chilton, *Days of Vengeance* 63-64. This does injust
the prophetic nature of the work that requires a second personal appear-an
Christ on earth in fulfillment of Rev 19:11-16.

    The tradition-historical approach views Revelation from the perspecti
background material in Greek or Oriental myths and Jewish tradition.[25]   [25]K
"Relevance" 36. Most certainly the book draws upon these, especially the OT, l
cannot be divested of its predictive element through suppositions of vagu
connected with its alleged apocalyptic language. It is a prophecy whose s
stretches forward to the return of Christ and beyond. To exclude this fro
interpretation denies the prophetic genre that most characterizes the book.

    The continuous-historical approach treats the book as a panorama of ch
history from John's time until the second advent. For proof, the view cites e
during the intervening centuries that match the happenings under the
trumpet, and bowl series. To produce such a match, however, unwarra
allegorization is necessary. It is not uncommon for interpreters to alleg
prophetic portions of Scripture,[25]   [25]Charles L. Feinberg, *Millennialism, the Two Major*
(3rd ed.; Chicago: Moody, 1980), 43-46; Collins, "Reading the Book" 229-31. so the contin
historical approach does not necessarily favor an apocalyptic genre. It can res
this rationale, however, whenever it has difficulty finding events of the Chri
era to correspond to the data of Revelation. Efforts to match prophecy
fulfillment in this manner have proven to be futile. For instance, Elliott's sugg
equation of the hail and fire mingled with blood under the first trumpet judg
(8:7) with the wars of Alaric the Goth and Rhadagaisus the Vandal agains
Western Roman Empire[25]   [25]E. B. Elliott, *Horae Apocalypticae* (4 vols.; London: Seeleys,
348, 351-53. is wholly without exegetical merit. The same may be said of his th
proposing that the fallen star following the fifth trumpet (Rev 9:1) is Mohamm
[25]Ibid., 417-18.   Such suggestions as these reduce the language of Scriptu
meaninglessness because of their propensity to make the words fit
preconceived notion.

    The timeless symbolic or idealist advocate has the Apocalypse represe
the eternal conflict of good and evil in every age, usually in reference t
particular age in which the interpreter lives.[25]   [25]Merrill C. Tenney, *Interpreting Rev*
(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957) 143. The book does not refer to specific events
expresses the basic principles according to which God acts throughout histor
[25]Mounce, *Revelation 43.*   This interpretation leans heavily on the conclusion

Revelation is basically apocalyptic in style, and continues the allegorical appr
to the book so characteristic of the middle ages of the Christian era. It is corre
attributing to God certain principles of action that govern his dealings wit
world in every era, but it is blatantly inadequate in denying the prophetic ger
Revelation. Fulfillment of the events predicted in the book, most notabl
personal return of Jesus Christ to earth, is not found in a repetitive cycle that n
each generation, but will at some future point be historical in the fullest ser
the word.

The timeless-symbolic approach relates closely to the movement of r
hermeneutical   trends   toward   contextualizing   in   interpretation
"Contextualization" is a term coined in a 1972 publication of the World Coun
Churches.[25]   [25]*Theological Education Fund, Ministry in Context: The Third Mandate Programm
Theological Education Fund* (1970-77) (Bromiley, Kent, United Kingdom: New Life Press, 19
also Gabriel Fackre, "Evangelical Hermeneutics," *Int* 43/2 (Apr 1989) 128.   It advo
assigning meaning to the text of Scripture based on cultural and sociopol
factors in contemporary society rather than on the grammatical-historical me
of exegesis. It inevitably leads to substituting one or more of the many pos
applications for the one correct interpretation of Scripture.   Following
assumptions of this approach, various oppressed peoples use the Apocalyp
support their cause.   They advocate translating the first century "rhetoric
situation" into a contemporary one in a way that results in meanings that ma
diametrically opposed to the original ones. For instance, it is held that "we
become conscious of androcentric language and its socializing function" so
"we can detect a quite different rhetorical function and impact" of the sym
language regarding women in Revelation.[25]   [25]Elisabeth Schssler Fiorenza, *The I
Revelation, Justice and Judgment* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985) 199.   This transposin
rhetorical situations enables an interpreter to use the book according to per
preferences, even to the extent of supporting positions as divergent as the po
left and right.[25]   [25]Ibid., 203.

Yet "meaning" in the original setting and "significance" for the pr
situation must be kept separate if literature is to have any coherence. To a
Scripture carelessly without regard to its meaning is to abuse it for the sake of
generated crusades. Without a well-defined interpretation in the setting o
author, applicational control vanishes and the significance for any given situ
becomes a matter of individual whim.[25]   [25]Walter C. Kaiser, "Legitimate Hermene
Inerrancy (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979) 122; Normal L. Geisler, "Does Purpose Dete
Meaning?" *WTJ* 51/1 (Spring 1989) 153-55.

The futurist approach to the book is the only one that grants suff
recognition to the prophetic style of the book and a normal hermeneutical pa
of interpretation based on that style. It views the book as focusing on the
period(s) of world history and outlining the various events and their relation
to one another. This is the view that best accords with the principle of l
interpretation.[25]   [25]Tenney, *Revelation* 139; Collins, "Reading the Book" 231-32. The
interpretation of Revelation is the one generally associated with the premillennial return of
and a view of inspiration that understands God to be the real author of every book of the

(Collins, p. 233). Though he used human authors whose individual backgrounds and writing
are reflected, the divine element in inspiration prevails to the point that the unity of Scripture
assumed (Collins, "Reading the Book" 232-33; cf. also Fackre, "Hermeneutics" 121, 123). Blom
assessment that an "exclusively prophetic interpretation usually insists on an impossibly
hermeneutic which is therefore inevitably applied inconsistently" (Blomberg, "Genre Criticism
reflects a premature and biased judgment about a subject on which the last word has yet
written.

      Attempts to combine two or more of the above approaches into a s
interpretation without allowing for the dominance of prophecy have prod
hermeneutical confusion. An example of such a combination is a merging c
idealist and the futurist.[25]   [25]Kvanig, "Relevance" 46-48. The concept proposes
apocalypses spoke of the historical context in which they were written and ca
transferred to new situations of later generations time after time, with one
reference to the real end-time tribulation. The signs of the end have been pr
in every generation, but only God can decide when the real end will come.
type of analysis makes the details of the text almost useless and satisfies itself
general conclusions about the description. These details are alleged to be
historical.[25]   [25]Ibid., 49-50; Donald Guthrie, *The Relevance of John's Apocalypse* (Grand Ra
Eerdmans, 1987) 30. With a similar approach, Collins' judgment is that the goal of interpreta
"to discern how the text may fulfill its original purpose, or function socially in a way analogous
effect upon its original readers, in the situation of the interpreter" ("Reading the Book" 242), th
symbols [of Revelation] are not primarily informational (predicting future events)" (ibid.), an
"a hermeneutic which takes historical criticism seriously can no longer work with an interven
notion of God" (ibid.). Mickelsen is an example of the combination-approach as reflected
discussion of "Literary Forms in Daniel and Revelation" (*Daniel and Revelation* 24-27).
examples of the combination-approach are presented in Gordon D. Fee & Douglas Stuart, *I
Read the Bible for All Its Worth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982) 205-17, Leland Ryken, *Words
A Literary Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987) 135-47, and M. I
Mulholland, *Revelation, Holy Living in an Unholy World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990).
Ryken (*Words of Life* 143-44) and Mulholland (*Revelation* 18) point out the necessity of wh
psychologists call "right-brain" activity (i.e. the ability think by means of images and intuition)
interpretation of the book, i.e. the effects of parts of the Apocalypse are to be *felt* without cog
interaction. The assessment of Bauckham is more acceptable: "Out of his visionary experienc
has produced a work which enables the reader not to share the same experience at second-hand
to receive its message transposed into a literary medium" (Richard J. Bauckham, "The Role
Spirit in the Apocalypse," *EvQ* 52/2 [Apr-June 1980] 72).

      For example, Beasley-Murray's opinion is that the importance of lo
plague prophecies is not in their detail, and therefore, glaring inconsistencies
are present in them are of no concern to the author.[25]   [25]Beasley-Murray, *Revelatio*
 Mounce describes the fifth trumpet as the language of ecstatic experience
eliminates any possibility of a consistent pattern. He calls this "a montage of d
judgments upon a recalcitrant world."[25]   [25]Mounce, *Revelation* 184. Leon M
speaks of this same section as coming from a "fiery, passionate and poetic s
whose details cannot be pressed as though it were "a pedantic piece of scie
prose."[25]   [25]Morris, *Revelation* 123. Writing in broader terms, Ladd desc
apocalyptic language and vision as generally surrealistic rather than rationa
logically consistent.[25]   [25]Ladd, *Revelation* 124.

      Ryken is quite explicit regarding a combination perspective of the b

After naming and describing the preterist, the continuous historical, the fut
and the idealist as the four major approaches to the Apocalypse, he writes,

> I think that the book is a combination of all of these. We should begin with the situat
> the church to which the book was written. Because of the literary form of the book,
> portrays events symbolically, its relevance extends throughout the history of the w
> Babylon, for example, may have been the Roman empire for John's first century audienc
> in Old Testament times it was literally Babylon, and it has taken many forms throu
> history. The literary mode of symbolism means that the events portrayed in Revelatio
> perpetually relevant and will be ultimately relevant at the end of history.[25]   [25]Ryken, *W
> Life* 144-45.

All the authorities cited above as viewing apocalyptic genre to ex
literal interpretation would insist on interpreting it literally, however, wh
speaks of the personal return to Christ to earth in Rev 19:11-16. They are disti
idealistic in their understanding of earlier sections of the book. Morris is pe
typical of the rest when he writes concerning the trumpet-plagues, "This is
throughout the ages and it will be so till the End."[25]   [25]Morris, *Revelation* 123. Y
their overall approach to the Apocalypse, this group of interpreters mix
idealistic-type interpretations with a futurist viewpoint regarding the ge
thrust of the Apocalypse. They have John in sort of a "dream world" until
personally contrived formula has him revert to a literal mode of predicting
future in more precise terms.

To be sure, the bulk of the Apocalypse resulted from John's prop
trance(s) (cf. n pnemati [*en pneymati*, "in the spirit"], Rev 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10). T
is, however, no justification for equating such a trance with a dream where lo
coherence is nonexistent. Though in some sort of ecstatic state, John's spirit
wide awake and its powers were exercised with unusual alertness and clarity
[25]R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Revelation* (Columbus, Ohio: Luther Book Co
1935) 58. If anything, his senses were *more* alert for details rather than less alert.
shortsighted to dismiss the details of the Apocalypse as meaningless or to ex
them in some idealistic and timeless sense on the basis of John's prophetic state

The combination-approach is deficient on another ground: it leav
human judgment the determination of where the details of a text end an
general picture begins. Allowing this liberty for subjective opinion cannot qu
as objective interpretation. In other words, it cannot satisfy the criteria
grammatical-historical system of hermeneutics such has characterized
evangelical Christian understanding of Scripture. This method must be appli
Revelation also. If Revelation is a prophecy, it must be treated as other prop
and its details must be objectively meaningful and historical. Only in this wa
the general picture of which the details are a part be historical. No provision
be made for elasticity of interpretation that allows for a change in meaning
generation to generation and from place to place.

The preferred approach to the Apocalypse is to interpret accordin
normal principles of grammar and facts of history, remembering the peo

nature of predictive prophecy throughout the Bible.[25]   [25]The original historical set[...]
the prophecy is of utmost importance, but a peculiar characteristic of predictive prophecy is [...]
times, the prophet himself did not grasp the full import of his own prophecy (1 Pet 1:10-12)[...]
being the case, the same limitation applies to his readership and to succeeding generations, un[...]
fulfillment of the prophecy finally illuminates fully the divinely intended meaning.   Th[...]
usually referred to as "literal" interpretation.   One may wonder how a bo[...]
symbols and visions such as Revelation can be interpreted literally.[25]   [...]
Mendham, "Interpreting the Book of Revelation," *Saint Mark's Review* 122 (June 1985) 26.   T[...]
not so difficult to understand if one keeps in mind that the symbols and vi[...]
were the means of communicating the message to the prophet, but they ha[...]
literal meaning unless otherwise indicated in the text.   They do not fu[...]
grounds for interpreting the text in a non-literal fashion. They are to be interp[...]
as one would interpret the rest of the Bible.

The verb σμανεν (*esmanen*, "he signified") in Rev 1:1 furnishes an adva[...]
notice of the symbolic nature of God's communication with John. This has no[...]
to do with how the resultant communication should be interpreted, howe[...]
Ryken makes the same basic mistake as Ironside in taking the Apocalypse to[...]
book of symbols that cannot be interpreted literally.[25]   [25]Ryken, *Words of Life* 143-[...]
A. Ironside, *Lectures on the Book of Revelation* (New York: Liozeaux, n.d.) 13.   Both men f[...]
distinguish between the process of revelation and that of interpretation. Ry[...]
faulty judgment is in not recognizing that literal interpretation makes a[...]
allowance for figures of speech that are clearly represented as such and in se[...]
to make a distinction between "literal" and "historical."[25]   [25]*Ryken, Words of Life* 14[...]
blurring this characteristic of literal interpretation, he opens the door to [...]
details of the text quite loosely. Literal interpretation sees a distinction bet[...]
symbols and symbolic or figurative language. The latter receives full recogn[...]
but the former may have a meaning that is quite literal and historical.

The proper procedure is to assume a literal interpretation of each sym[...]
representation provided to John unless a particular factor in the text indica[...]
should be interpreted figuratively.   For example, John saw in vision fo[...]
dramatization of a multitude of 144,000 (Rev 7:4) which in future fulfillment w[...]
a literal multitude of 144,000 people because nothing in the text indicates tha[...]
number should be understood in some hidden sense. On the other hand, th[...]
where the two witnesses will be slain is called "spiritually" (πνευματικω, *pneum*[...]
Sodom and Egypt (Rev 11:8), indicating that a figurative rather than a l[...]
interpretation of the proper names is in order.[25]   [25]Bauckham criticizes the [...]
πνευματικω as justification for a non-literal interpretation of the two cities and says the adverb[...]
to Spirit-given perception (Richard J. Bauckham, "The Role" 79). Whether the word refers [...]
Holy Spirit or not is debatable, but the end result is the same: this is not a reference to the liter[...]
Sodom or the literal country Egypt. So a literal interpretation is the assumption u[...]
something in the text indicates otherwise.

Literal interpretation refrains from the tendency to find hidden meanin[...]
the Apocalypse. "Green grass" in the first trumpet of Rev 8:7 has at times [...]
seen as a hidden symbol, the grass standing for human beings and the g[...]
portraying the prosperous conditions of those people.[25]   [25]Walter Scott, *Expositio*[...]

Revelation of Jesus Christ (Grand Rapids: Kregel, n.d.) 186. Alford points out the incong
of such an interpretation, noting that the later trumpet judgments disting
clearly between grass as a natural object and men who are distinctly so labell
explicit terminology (Rev 8:11; 9:4, 15).[25]   [25]Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament* (Camb
 Deighton, Bell, & Co., 1903) 4:635. Analogy requires that in the same series of vis
when one part destroys earth, trees, and grass, and another inflicts no injur
earth, trees, or grass, but does harm men, that grass must carry the same mea
i.e. a literal one, in both cases.

The same principle applies, but even more conspicuously, in conjun
with the sixth seal judgment (Rev 6:12-17).   At times, commentators
understood the cosmic disturbances to picture human arrogance and
overthrow of principalities and powers supporting the authority of earthly ki
[25]E. g. William Barclay, *The Revelation of John* (2 vols., 2nd ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster,
2:15; G. V. Caird, *A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine* (HNTC; New York: H
and Row, 1966) 80. The most conspicuous deficiency of this type of interpretati
that the thing allegedly symbolized by the convulsion of the heavens (6:12-14
a convulsion of the nations, is described immediately after the heav
phenomena in literal terms (6:15-17) (the same way as in Hag 2:21-22).[25]   [2]
Bullinger, *The Apocalypse* or *"The Day of the Lord"* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, n.d.) 255.

Another clear distinctive of literal interpretation is its avoidanc
assumptions not justified in the text. Theories that "Babylon" in Revelation 1
16-18 is a code-word for Rome have been widespread.[25]   [25]Mounce, *Revelatio
Beasley-Murray, *Revelation* 225; Mickelsen, *Revelation* 25; Ryken, *Words* 144-45. The fact tha
text of Revelation locates the city on the Euphrates River (16:12) has bee
deterrent to this symbolic understanding. Neither has the fact that Rome, bec
of its geographical location, has never been and could never be the
commercial city described in Revelation 18.[25]   [25]Alford, 4:471.   Babylor
eventually become a code-word for Rome, but not during the period of the
composition.[25]   [25]"Babylon" in 1 Pet 5:13 is not an exception to this generalization.

Attempts to assign a symbolic connotation to the thousand years in
20:2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 have been multiplied. Lewis is typical of the wide assortme
attempts to explain away the literality of a future millennium on earth whe
writes, "The biblical millennium . . . is not the glorious age to come, but this pr
era for giving the message of salvation to the nations."[25]   [25]Arthur H. Lewis, *Th
Side of the Millennium (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980) 65. The trend of this view is to take
thousand as a symbolic number and identify the period with the interval bet
Christ's first and second advents.[25]   [25]Chilton, *Days of Vengeance* 507; Mulholland, *Rev
304-9; Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990) 209
who adopt this tactic, however, are at a loss to explain how two resurrectio
Rev 20:4-5 can be described as separated by one thousand years without refe
the millennium to the future and dispensing with the need to spiritualiz
significance. The two resurrections are designated by the same verb: zhsan (
"they lived," "they came to life"). By common agreement, the latter resurrecti
clearly a bodily one, so the former one must be too, necessitating that bo
future and positing a future thousand-year period between them.[25]   [25]Alford,

33; George E. Ladd, *Crucial Questions about the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952) 14
The literal approach is fair and consistent. To interpret otherwise marks an e
"all definite meaning in plain words."[25]   [25]Alford, 4:252.

Kuyper acknowledges that the language of Rev 20:1-10 found anyv
else would require literal interpretation, but thinks that its surroundings in
book require the terminology to be understood non-literally.[25]   [25]Abraham Ku
The Revelation of St. John (John Hendrik de Vries, trans.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1935) 263.
points out the fallacy of this reasoning. He disagrees with the position that
spiritual interpretation departs from the proper principles of hermeneutics be
this is literature of a different type to which the ordinary rules of hermene
cannot apply."[25]   [25]Ladd, 147. He finds no contextual clue in Rev 20:4-6 to supp
spiritualized interpretation.[25]   [25]Ibid., 146.

Since in broad perspective the Apocalypse is prophetic in nature as i
rest of the NT, a different set of hermeneutical principles is not needed to inte
it. A normal grammatical-historical methodology is the natural and nece
interpretive framework.

CONCLUSION

Hermeneutical confusion on many fronts is the inheritance of bi
interpreters of the 1990's. The indecision that besets students of the Apocaly
an example. It behooves serious exegetes to probe carefully the under
assumptions of currently emerging theories and to formulate sensible evalua
of them. This type of investigation and this alone can alleviate the confused
which otherwise beclouds an accurate understanding of Scripture.

BOOK REVIEWS

Jay E. Adams. *From Forgiven to Forgiving*. Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1989. 168 pages. $14.05 (paper). Reviewed by Irvin A. Busenitz, Professor of Bible and Old Testament.

From Forgiven to Forgiving "is a practical approach to reconciling relationships and entering into a deeper walk with the Lord" (p. 7), according to James Kennedy's preface to the book. In the words of the author, the book has been written "to provide a simple, easy to read reference volume for the average Christian`something he can read, then turn to again and again as the need arises." And "to encounter most of the principal errors currently believed or taught by various persons in the Christian church" (p. 9). It is quickly evident in the opening chapters of the book that Adams' goals have, for the most part, been attained. The book is easy to read, practical, and stimulating. Titles of twenty succinct chapters are descriptive, providing guidance to specific topics with relative ease.

The author begins with a discussion of what forgiveness is as well as what it is not, countering a number of popular notions of the nature of forgiveness. Using Eph 4:32 as his base, he sees forgiveness not as a feeling but rather as a promise, a promise that God will not hold our sins against us. From that point, he moves into the practical areas related to forgiveness and treats matters such as forgiving seven times a day (Luke 17:3-10), forgiveness and unbelievers, keeping the promise, obstacles to forgiveness, and other pertinent topics.

Adams is unafraid to challenge some principal errors and common misconceptions. For example, he concludes that one can truly forgive out of duty (p. 29). On the basis of Matt 18:15-20, he disputes the notions that forgiveness can or should be granted even when not asked for (pp. 31-32) and that we must forgive no matter what response we get from the other person (pp. 37-38), contending that "if we were to grant forgiveness to a brother apart from his repentance and desire for forgiveness, then why bother with the process?" (p. 37). He continues, "God is not interested in forgiveness as an end in itself, or as a therapeutic technique that benefits the one doing the forgiving. He wants reconciliation to take place and that can only be brought about by repentance" (pp. 37-38).

In his vintage style, the author tells it like it is. He frequently interacts with (sometimes complimenting, sometimes contradicting) well-known people who discuss the subject, such as David Augsburger, Lewis Smedes, the Minirth-Meier group, and others. He also enjoys responding to common aphorisms such as "I'm okay, you're okay" or "to err is human, to forgive is divine." He speaks frequently about church discipline and gives practical tips for implementing it.

The author's treatment of Christ's words from the cross, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34), is weak, as is his treatment on the Lord's prayer (Matt 6:12-15). Though his definition of "forgiveness" is exact, his use of the term in these passages and elsewhere lacks the same precision. This has led him to confuse confession with granting forgiveness or to read in the idea of confession where only forgiveness is mentioned (e.g., pp. 42 ff.).

In Chapter 10, he overemphasizes the idea that confession is not a benefit for the one confessing, asserting that it is only for God's honor. Yet elsewhere (e.g., pp. 126, 140, *et. al.*) he admits that it brings great benefit to the individual and "it lifts the burden of guilt from his shoulders" (p. 140).

Though the chapter titles are specific and furnish quick access to various aspects of the subject, in light of the stated purpose of the book a Scripture index would be an improvement as a guide to information from the textual perspective. Also, a bibliography is a needed addition.

Adams has an excellent treatise on the contemporary issue of the healing of memories. He debunks the idea of seeking healing by mentally reliving past unpleasant experiences and visualizing Jesus in the experience to make all things go well. He observes that there is nothing biblical about such a process. His treatment of the subject is a welcome oasis in the desert compared to the volumes of false, misleading, and non-biblical strategies advocated today.

Overall, this is an excellent, easy to use tool in counseling. Both pastors and laymen will find the work an often-used part of their library.

Theodore Baehr. *Getting the Word Out: How to Communicate the Gos-pel to Today's World.* San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1986.

337 pp. $17.95 (cloth). Reviewed by David C. Deuel, Asso-ciate Professor of Old Testament.

Pastors and other Christian workers occasionally sense the need to use the media in some way. Theodore Baehr's breadth of knowledge about and experience with the media and his commitment to use it for Jesus Christ make this work a rich source of practical information.

The book's clear expression and thoughtful organization model the author's commitment to communication. In the first of three sections, he explains the foundation of powerful communication by asking and answering the questions, "How Do I Communicate?," "Why Do I Want to Communicate?," "Who Am I?," "Who is My audience?," "What Am I Communicating?," and "What about Genre?"

With this as a basis for the next section, Baehr shows how to communicate successfully through the media. Again, he asks and then answers several questions: "What Medium Should I Use?," "What About Television?," "What About Radio and Auditory Media?," "What About Public Speaking?," and "What About Print Media?"

The author concludes the book with the question, `What does God want me to say?' Here he stresses production quality, individual motives, and discusses available resources.

H. D. Beeby. *Hosea: Grace Abounding, International Theological Commentary Series*. Frederick Carlson Holmgren and George A. F. Knight, eds.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989. 189 pp. $12.95 (paper). Reviewed by Irvin A. Busenitz, Professor of Bible and Old Testament.

In the words of the editors, "*The International Theological Commentary* moves beyond the usual critical-historical approach and offers a theological interpretation of the Hebrew text" (p. vii). The publisher views the purpose of the series as developing the theological significance of the OT and emphasizing the relevance of each book for the life of the church. For the most part, this aim has been achieved by H. D. Beeby, long-time professor of OT at Tainan Theological College in Taiwan and more recently lecturer of OT Studies at Selly Oaks

Colleges in England. The book is extremely practical and furnishes many excellent insights on the text.

Yet this work must be used with caution. The author, especially in the introductory sections, gives too much weight to historical criticism and frequently finds it necessary to exclude portions of text, viewing them as the work of a later redactor. For example, he contends that the names of the southern kings, added by the text to the northern tribes, were almost certainly appended at a later time to the text by editors eager to broaden the scope of Hosea's message to include the southern kingdom (p. 12). Beeby endorses some of these "findings," but is quick to express his refusal to be mired down by the historical-critical approach and his preference to rise above it and take the book at its face value.

Fortunately, the author maintains this attitude throughout the commentary. In his discussion of Chapter 1, Beeby gives excellent background and historical information with an insightful analysis of the names of Hosea's children (pp. 15-18). His treatment of Hosea 1-3 is especially rich in devotional thoughts, extracting much of the richness of the text by maximizing practical relevance from Hosea's love for Gomer and Yahweh's love for Israel. He devotes considerable space to Hos 6:1-3. Many have interpreted these verses as depicting a genuine return of Israel to her God, but Beeby explains the people's response as superficial because of the context in 5:8-15 and 6:4 ff. (pp. 69 ff.).

In his remarks on Chapter 11 (pp. 140 ff.), he argues that this is the most significant part of the book and therefore deserves special treatment.

> It is the clearest statement of Hosea's central theme and as such provides a clue to the interpretation to the rest of the book. It also gives a convenient summary of the book's message. I am confident that here we penetrate deeper into the heart and mind of God than anywhere else in the O.T. Read aright (a most difficult task) and supplemented perhaps by Isaiah 52:13; 53:12, this chapter takes us as near to the Father as it is possible to get without the direct leading of the incarnate Son (p. 140).

He then provides some excellent thoughts on the sonship of Israel and her adoption by Yahweh. Noticeably absent, however, is any reference to Matthew's use of Hos 11:1 (cf. Matt 2:15) and how to

interpret it.

Although the book is devotionally rich and overflows with invitations to appreciate the greatness of our Redeemer, it offers more than just practical help. It contributes many historical, contextual, and theological insights to understanding the text of Hosea. With the above-mentioned cautions in mind, this book provides much valuable material and would make an excellent addition to one's personal library.

C. Hassell Bullock. *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophetic Books.* Chicago: Moody, 1986. 391 pp. $21.95 (cloth). Reviewed by David C. Deuel, Associate Professor of Old Testament.

In this volume, C. Hassell Bullock, Professor of OT Studies at Wheaton College, treats both the major and minor prophets (Christian Canon) or latter prophets (Jewish Canon) according to their chronological rather than their historical interrelationships. His primary concern is to establish "the broad picture, with the individual prophets in their historical and theological niches" (p. 11). This approach is particularly important, because each prophet draws upon the writings of others:

> Though the prophets were not given to quoting one another by name, they did draw upon each other, some more than others. Once that dependence is recognized, a new view of the prophetic movement emerges. They were not lone individualists who knew nothing and cared nothing for what others who bore the name "prophet" had said. Rather they saw themselves in a line of succession and were aware of the tradition they had received from their predecessors (p. 11).

Organizing the prophets historically can be both difficult and artificial because many of the historical relations must be inferred from scanty data. But if one views prophecy as a movement, the fact that the prophets' messages arose as responses to historical and moral crises requires them to be considered within a historical framework (p. 11). The author, recognizing that his approach "carries an element of risk" (p. 11), endeavors to use all available research to accomplish the task. He locates the literary prophets within the three historical periods: the

Neo-Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian, and Persian.

Bullock introduces his discussion with Jonah instead of Amos for three main reasons:

> The early date assigned to Jonah by the writer of Kings (2 Kings 14:25), the book's emphasis on the prophetic career, and the transitional nature of Jonah's prophecy from the preclassical to the classical model (p. 41).

A discussion of each prophet and his literary contribution follows in sequence, furnishing the situation of each book in the overall prophetic movement. A book outline concludes the discussion of each. A bibliography for each book and topics relating to prophecy comes at the end of the volume, along with indices by subject and person, author, and Scripture.

Danna Nolan Fewell and David Miller Gunn. *Compromising Redemption: Relating Characters in the Book of Ruth*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1990. 141 pp. $11.95 (paper). Reviewed by Irvin A. Busenitz, Professor of Bible and Old Testament.

This is the first of a new series entitled *Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation*, edited by the authors of this book. They hold that "questions about origins`authors, intentions, settings`and stages of composition are giving way to questions about the literary qualities of the Bible, the play of its language, the coherence of its final form, and the relations between text and readers" (p. 8). They desire to initiate among readers a discovery

> that the Bible in literary perspective can powerfully engage people's lives. Communities of faith where the Bible is foundational may find that literary criticism can make the Scripture accessible in a way that historical criticism seems unable to do. The goal of the series is to encourage such change and such search, to breach the confines of traditional biblical criticism, and to open channels for new currents of interpretation (p. 8).

Ultimately, Fewell and Gunn focus on what they perceive other readers to have missed and try to account for as many of those

"misses" as possible. In their own words, they "offer a (relatively) subversive reading`a reading that offers no model heros, no simple messages, no unambiguous examples of how we are to live" (p. 13). From the viewpoint of literary critical analysis, they appear to have been relatively successful. They have certainly filled in gaps of the story with creative and imaginative perspectives.

The book divides into three parts. The first retells the biblical story, with significant imaginative enhancement. The second part treats the main characters, with the discussion centered about an analysis of the text. The third section represents notes to parts 1 and 2. The final section is the most helpful aspect of the work. It gives detailed and sometimes lengthy critical and historical data on the text.

On the other hand, unless one wants to write a Sunday School drama based on the book of Ruth, the book has little value. It is based primarily on imagination and speculation. It is true that the authors have tried to put themselves into the mental framework and milieu of Ruth's day by postulating "what might have been," but much of it is interpreted and framed with a twentieth century perspective. Especially inappropriate is the frequent inclusion of profanity (e.g. "damn" and "god," pp. 24, 26, 28, 32). Though some may view such terminology as common, everyday vernacular/conversational English, it is quite out of taste, certainly in a work of this nature, and should be excluded.

Jack Finegan. *Myth and Mystery: An Introduction to the Pagan Religions of the Biblical World.* Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989. 335 pp. $24.95 (cloth). Reviewed by David C. Deuel. Associate Professor of Old Testament, The Master's Seminary.

The author emphasizes both the manner of diffusion and the multiplicity of ideas and practices borrowed from their antecedents by early pagan religions contemporary with Israel and early Christianity. Following the order of the chronological beginning for each religion, Finegan covers the following religions: Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Zoroastrian, Canaanite, Greek, Roman, Gnostic, Mandaean, and the Manichaean. For each one, he discusses history, sources, language, deities, mythology, society, etc. Either at the end of or within each

chapter is an analysis of the extent and manner of interaction between a particular religion and the Bible.

Several examples show how Christianity and paganism, both broadly defined, came to bear upon one another. One such discussion addresses the dating of Jesus' birth on December 25. When the emperor Constantine ascended the throne after defeating Licinius in A.D. 323, he chose not to worship the sun, but its creator (p. 212). Finegan surmises,

> It must have been at this time and with the intent to transform the significance of an existing sacred date that the birthday of Jesus, which had been celebrated in the East on January 6 (Epiphanius [c. 315-403], *Panarion* 51.11.4), was placed in Rome on December 25, the date of the birthday celebration of Sol Invictus (p. 212).

In A.D. 392 the emperor Theodosius I (379-395) placed pagan worship on a par with treason. "In the course of time `paganism' disappeared as a religious system and the once living faiths of the Roman Empire became religions of the past" (p. 215).

In the context of religious systems, the author raises several interesting points regarding the interaction between the so-called "Afro-asiatic" and the Greek and Roman classical civilizations. He then argues for an early and symbiotic relationship between the two. First, the Roman Emperor, "Gaius Caligula (A.D. 37-41) . . . was attracted by everything Egyptian and under him, the Isis cult received official recognition" in Rome (p. 196). Other emperors followed suit. Second, when the Egyptians received permission to establish a temple of Isis in Greece (333 B.C.), the Egyptian historian Manetho joined efforts with an Athenian named Timetheos to develop the cult of Sarapis in Egypt (323-285 B.C.). Third, in the course of Greek and Roman contact (in Magna Graecia in South Italy and in Greece proper, conquered by the Romans in 146 B.C.) the Romans adopted Greek gods such as Apollo and Asklepics. Consequently, equivalences between Roman and Greek deities were multiplied (p. 191). Throughout this period, the Romans adopted many mythologies from Greece, although at least a small measure of the ideological similarities is attributable to a common Indo-European heritage (p. 191).

Other interesting discussions include the origin and nature of the Magi who visited Jesus; the identity of Baal, the Asherah, and Ashteroth against whom the prophets and others polemicized in the OT;

the inception of the earliest law codes and primitive forms of democracy; and the mysterious religious practices of many foreign peoples recorded in the Bible.

Several of the author's conclusions regarding the religious aspects of Mesopotamian and Israelite cultures need clarification. The evidence for a substrate language prior to Sumerian is more extensive than the author concedes. It is not just settlements that bear pre-Sumerian names (p. 191), but according to B. Landsberger, so do occupations and objects of material culture.

Finegan also argues, "Since all the names (Jericho, Megiddo, Beth-yerah etc.) are certainly Semitic this provides evidence that most, if not all of the inhabitants even in these early periods (pre-Israelite) were Canaanites" (p. 122). But equating ethnic groups with linguistic evidence is suspect methodology since ethnic and linguistic associations cannot be linked with certainty.

Familiar theological and biblical terminology employed by the author invites comparison and enhances understanding, but such terms may skew his discussions: prophet, priest, savior, archangel, sacrifice, righteousness, eternal law, vision, seer, hymns, wisdom, truth, the Holy Spirit, salvation, sinner, etc., are but a few of such terms interspersed throughout the book. The author uses them to describe the activities and character of pagan gods, their devotees, and religious trappings but often to the obfuscation of true correspondences with and differences between these and comparable terms in the Bible.

Several editorial oversights need attention: (1) on p. 126 the word hBKL needs a vowel added and a dagesh deleted; (2) on p. 223 the phrase "standing by laughed at them" needs an antecedent; and (3) on p. 227 quotation marks are needed before, (")so Marcion . . . works."

This work is an exceptionally good source of information regarding a select group of ancient religions. In spite of the complex nature of the issues with which it deals, the book is very readable. In addition, discussion of the religions is ordered chronologically, thus helping the reader understand and appreciate extensive borrowing from one religion to the next. Those who desire to study the religious systems that impacted Israel and the early church will find the volume quite helpful.

Wayne Grudem and John Piper, eds. *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism.* Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1991. 576 pp. $19.95 (paper). Reviewed by Richard L. Mayhue, Professor of Pastoral Ministries.

One of the key goals for the church of the 90's will be to reaffirm women as a special part of God's creation and readdress the biblical role of women in the home and the local church. A significant contribution toward this goal is *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, a collection of essays by scholars representing the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (CBMW). CBMW is decidedly conservative, taking a historical view of Scripture that is undergirded by solid exegesis and cogent reasoning.

The position of CBMW has been challenged recently by the newly formed Christians for Biblical Equality (CBE), an organization of "evangelical feminists." Throughout the book, frequent references to literature from the CBE viewpoint permit the reader to trace the recent writings that follow the feminist persuasion.

The editors, John Piper, pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis, and Wayne Grudem, Associate Professor of Biblical and Systematic Theology, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, have assembled contributors who are united in their belief that biblical manhood and womanhood views men as heads of their homes and pastors/elders in local churches. Contributors to *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* teach at such schools as King's College, Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, Westminster Theological Seminary, Western Baptist College, Bethel College, and Knox Theological Seminary. In addition, legal, medical, and scientific professionals contribute as do several well-known women including Elisabeth Elliot, Dee Jepsen, and Dorothy Patterson.

The book has two purposes: first, to lead to a constructive resolving of the controversy over the role of women in the church, and second, to respond to evangelical feminists' writings proposing that gender equality mandates role equality. In their discussions, the authors interact with "evangelical feminists" who support the Bible's authority and truthfulness, but then resort frequently to recent biblical interpretations that differ significantly from generally accepted meanings.

Of particular note are words in the preface that capture the thrust of the book:

> If one word must be used to describe our position, we prefer the term complimentarian, since it suggests both equality and beneficial differences between men and women. We are uncomfortable with the term `traditionalist' because it implies an unwillingness to let scripture challenge traditional patterns of behavior and we certainly reject the term `heirarchicalist' because it overemphasizes structured authority while giving no suggestion to equality or the beauty of mutual interdependence.

The book is in five sections. In Section 1, "Vision and Overview," Piper and Grudem lay out the course of the volume with definitions of manhood and womanhood. They also respond to "feminist objections" to the traditional biblical position espoused by the editors.

Section 2, "Exegetical and Theological Studies," has in-depth studies of such passages as Genesis 1-3, 1 Cor 11:2-16, 1 Corinthians 14, Gal 3:28, Eph 5:21-33, 1 Tim 2:11-15, and 1 Pet 3:1-7. It also examines our Lord's response to women in the gospels.

Section 3 notes the contributions of church history, biology, psychology, sociology, and law to the subject at hand. Section 4 considers appropriate implications and applications.

Section 5, "Conclusion and Prospect," co-written by Piper and Grudem, interacts with the declaration, "Men, Women on Biblical Equality," published by CBE. Their material is a point-by-point commentary on "Men, Women on Biblical Equality." This is followed by irenic biblical responses.

The work has two appendices. The first by Grudem summarizes recent research on kefalh (*kephale*, "head"). The second is the "Danver's Statement," the 1987 position paper issued by the CBMW.

As with any anthology, the research level, thinking, and expression varies, but the editors have done a commendable job in gathering an exceptional collection of essays that demonstrate great unity in their conclusions. The essays are well researched, as evidenced by over eighty pages of detailed documentation. For one unfamiliar with the range of literature on the subject, these literary references alone are worth the price of the volume.

In the foreword, Piper recognizes the singles community by noting that much of the volume deals with relationships between husbands and wives and by acknowledging the importance of singles in the body of Christ. He then admits that he is married and thus is not the best person to write the foreword. To compensate for this deficiency, he frequently uses the writings of mature, single Christians as resources.

One may cringe here and there over a point of exegesis, but this volume represents the traditional interpretation of major biblical passages about the roles of men and women. The most controversial part of the book among those sympathetic toward CBMW is the treatment of the gift of prophecy by Grudem and Piper (Chap. 2). It is important to note that this view is not essential to a biblical understanding of manhood and womanhood. It does not represent the thinking of all the authors or of everyone associated with CBMW.

An understanding of the biblical role of women is of crucial importance and must be transmitted to those in the pew. Because of its depth and length, many will look at this volume and conclude it is only for scholars, but anyone can comprehend it by taking just one chapter at a time. Though it is certainly a "heavyweight," it is worth the effort, both for the sake of the home and the church, to understand the issues and their implications. No other book on the subject is as thorough and comprehensive. Because it is written with a sensitive and gracious spirit, it deserves to be read even by those who do not agree with CBMW. This volume should be the standard on the subject for years to come. This reviewer heartily endorses *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* as "must" reading for every Christian in understanding God's view of women and His design for their fulfilling role in the home and in the church.

Warren J. Hartman. *Five Audiences: Identifying Groups in Your Local Church.* Nashville: Abingdon, 1987. 112 pp. $7.95 (paper). Reviewed by David C. Deuel, Associate Professor of Old Testament.

Five Audiences is a book about audience expectations. Out of 1400 people surveyed across the United States, five major audience-

types emerged. The primary purpose of the book is "to introduce the five audience groups, to describe them, and to suggest some of the implications for local church planning and programming" (p. 14).

The first chapter introduces and draws brief sketches of the five audience groups. Each of the next five chapters focuses on one of the five groups. The next two chapters develop implications of audience groups for teachers (Chap. 7) and churches (Chap. 8).

Though they may not realize it, "each audience group has characteristics and expectations that are unique to that group" (p. 21). "While members of each group are . . . apt to be found in every congregation" (p. 23), smaller churches and small groups within churches tend to polarize around a particular group-type. The longer the group is taught or led by one individual or cluster of individuals with the same leadership style and objectives, the greater is the tendency for those who dislike the style to leave and new people who approve of the style to be attracted. "When this self-selective process becomes operative in a majority of classes and groups, the whole congregation may take on characteristics of the dominant audience group or groups" (p. 24).

Ranked from largest to smallest in America, the generalized audience groups are fellowship, traditionalists (and Neo-traditionalists), study, social action, and multiple (or non-specialized) interest groups. Adding a measure of balance to the discussion, Hartman says, "It is highly unlikely that the composite profile of any given class or group will be 100 percent fellowship, tradition, study or social action. . . . Furthermore, we believe that each member of a class or group is a uniquely complex being who cannot be pigeonholed into one of the four [specialized] audience groups" (p. 117).

Throughout the book, the author has helpful suggestions for putting the audience issue into perspective. For example,

> Teachers and leaders would do well to remember that many times when members of a class or group express disappointment or dissatisfaction with a teacher, the criticism may not be due as much to the quality of teaching or leadership as it is to the style and manner of teaching and leading that is employed (p. 102).

Hartman recognizes that studies of this type tend toward over-generalization. Descriptions of five audiences are "by no means totally accurate, nor can human behavior be predicated with certainty" (p. 15).

Geographical location, national shifts, and denominational issues all bear on the size and distribution of audience groups (p. 15). Also, he notices that individuals "will pass through several audience groups at different times in their lives and at different stages of their faith journey" (p. 24). Shifts may be caused by "changes in family or vocational status, certain personal or religious experiences, growing older, different responsibilities in the local congregation, or, perhaps, the strong influence of someone`a friend, a relative, a church school teacher, or a pastor" (p. 24).

Five Audiences is a helpful reminder that churches are made up of individuals with individual needs and expectations. How and how much church leaders should respond to each set of needs and expectations are questions that must be addressed.

Holy Bible, New Revised Standard Version. Grand Rapids: Zonder-
    van, 1989). 1412 pp. $19.95 (cloth). Reviewed by Robert L.
    Thomas, Professor of New Testament.

The complete Bible of the *Revised Standard Version* (RSV) was first published in 1952 (with the addition of the Apocrypha in 1957). The revision committee of approximately thirty members continued meeting every two or three years subsequently to consider proposed improvements. The committee's constituency has evolved over the years. In the beginning, its members were mainline Protestant in affiliation, with the exception of a Jewish scholar invited to join the OT section at a late stage. In time, it has come to incorporate more and more Roman Catholic scholars and a scholar of the Greek Orthodox Church. The female constituency of the committee has increased during the same period. The committee and the fruit of its labors is now viewed as thoroughly ecumenical.

In 1971 a new edition appeared which was a revision of the NT but contained only minor changes in the OT. Because of social changes in the decade of the sixties and the early seventies, in 1974 the National Council of Churches of Christ (NCCC), sponsor of the project, authorized work leading toward a further revision.[1] This

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[1] Background information for this review is derived in part from essays by two members of the NRSV translation committee: Robert C. Dentan, "The Story of the

revision is now available under the title of the *New Revised Standard Version* (NRSV).

Typical of some miscellaneous changes is a deference to the Jewish connotation of Χριστǿω (*Christos*, "Anointed One") in the NT by rendering it "Messiah" in some passages where it had been "Christ," particularly in the gospels and Acts (e.g. Matt 16:16; Acts 2:36; 17:5; 26:23; Rom 9:5). Sometimes this creates confusion, however, when it is near the name "Jesus Christ" which is always rendered in the conventional manner (e.g. Acts 2:36, 38). Following their new policy, one wonders why the NRSV translators did not use "Messiah" in Hebrews, an epistle whose addressees were of a distinctly Jewish background (for example, see Heb 3:6; 6:1).

Some infelicitous expressions in older editions have been improved. In Ps 50:9 "I will accept no bull from your house" (RSV) has been revised to read, "I will not accept a bull from your house" (NRSV). "Once I was stoned" (RSV) in 2 Cor 11:25 is now "once I received a stoning" (NRSV). Racial sensitivity is reflected in a simple change from "but" to "and" in Song of Solomon 1:5; instead of "very dark, but comely" (RSV), the NRSV reads "black and beautiful."

Apart from miscellaneous changes of this type, the translators concentrated their efforts in three general areas, two of which were socially motivated.

(1) One of the social changes was a movement toward less formality in social relationships, including a less formal style of language in public worship. In response to this trend, the NRSV has eliminated the "thee's" and "thou's" in speech addressed to God that characterized its earlier editions. This usage of pronouns distinguished between language addressed to God and that addressed to human beings, a distinction unsupported in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts of the Bible. Dropping the old-style pronouns has marked most modern versions of the Bible. Besides the RSV, notable exceptions that have not eliminated them are the Modern Language Bible, the New American Standard Bible, and the New English Bible. A recent revision of the NEB, called the Revised English Bible, has now deleted them too.

New Revised Standard Version," *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 11/3 (1990) 211-23, and Walter Harrelson, "Inclusive Language in the New Revised Standard Version," *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 11/3 (1990) 224-31.

This part of the project was the simplest and, for most, the least controversial, though it did at times force some rather difficult decisions. As an example of difficulty, corrected to modern style, the opening phrase of the Lord's prayer, "Our Father who art in heaven" (Matt 6:9), would have become "Our Father who are in heaven," but the committee judged this to have an inferior sound. Following other modern versions, they therefore rendered, "Our Father in heaven," even though it entailed leaving a Greek word untranslated and sounded rather abrupt. They viewed this as the best choice.

(2) The other social change was viewed as more important and has affected the NRSV extensively.   This was the widespread movement to eliminate "sex-biased" language. The pressure to adopt inclusive terminology came from leaders of "main-line" churches, most younger women, publishers, and educational organizations. Consequently, the Division of Education and Ministry of the NCCC which commissioned the project directed that "in references to men and women, masculine-oriented language should be eliminated as far as this can be done without altering passages that reflect the historical situation of ancient patriarchal culture."[2] Without question, this aspect of the committee's responsibility was the most difficult.

The NRSV has used various means of incorporating inclusivist language. A few examples illustrate these. "I will make you fishers of men" (Matt 4:19, RSV) is now "I will make you fish for people" (NRSV). Often "brother(s)" (RSV) has become "brother(s) and/or sister(s)" (NRSV) (e.g. Matt 5:22-24, 47; 18:35) and in one instance, "members of my family" (Matt. 25:40, NRSV). In at least one section "brother" (RSV) is rendered "another member of the church" (NRSV) (Matt 18:15, 21), and an inclusive linguistic standard is maintained by repetition of "member" (Matt 18:17) and by an awkward passive, "if you are not listened to" (Matt 18:16). "Awkwardness" is also the word for the Son of Man being betrayed "into human hands" (Matt 17:22, NRSV). It is unnatural English compared with his betrayal "into the hands of men" (RSV).

Sometimes the inclusivist term "neighbor" (NRSV) substitutes for the masculine "brother" (RSV) (Matt 7:4-5).   "Man" (RSV) is neutralized to "anyone" (NRSV) and "son" (RSV) to "child" (NRSV) in Matt 7:9-10. "Man" (RSV) is labeled "a human being" (NRSV) in Matt

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[2]Bruce M. Metzger, "To the Reader," NRSV xi.

12:12 and a "person" in Matt 12:43. The alleged sexually biased "men" (RSV) in Matt 12:31 has turned into "people" (NRSV).

The above inclusivist revisions are indicated as such by footnotes which indicate that the Greek text supports the RSV rendering, but one where no such note occurs is Matt 15:18: "a man" (RSV) is omitted from the NRSV without explanation. Also without notation is "mortals" (NRSV) substituted for "men" (RSV) in Matt 19:26.

A case could be lodged that the illustrations given so far offer no great cause for concern, but a further device for accomplishing inclusiveness encounters a distinct practical disadvantage.   This involves changing a singular to a plural in order to cover up gender differences.   Instances of this are numerous and may be illustrated from Christ's series of teachings calling to discipleship: "Those who lose their life for my sake will find it" (Matt 10:39), and "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me" (Matt 16:24; see also Luke 17:33; John 12:25, NRSV). In each case, his appeal in the original text is to the individual, not a group. To render plurals as the NRSV does inevitably makes his invitation less personal and compelling. The individual focus of his invitation disappears through a different means in Rev 3:20, that of changing from third person to second: "If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me." In the context of Revelation 3, this is easily construed as a group invitation to the whole Laodicean church rather than to individuals within the church.

The pluralizing device has also obscured the Messianic implications of at least one OT passage, Ps 8:4-6 (cf. Heb 2:6-9).

In 1 Tim 3:2 inclusivist language has forced a return to an earlier rendering, discarded in the 1971 revision because it was too interpretive.[3] From "married only once" in 1952, the version changed to the more literal "the husband of one wife" in 1971. The NRSV reverts to "married only once" and limits the phrase's meaning to one of several possible interpretations of the Greek text.

Some aspects of the translation were exempt from inclusivist language, however. Masculine terms for God, such as "Father," "Lord," and "King" have been retained. It was decided that these were

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[3]See Robert L. Thomas, "Bible Translations: The Link between Exegesis and Expository Preaching" *The Master's Seminary Journal* (Spring 1990) 70.

inherent in the biblical text. Also the psalmist in Psalm 109 was left as a male because the committee could find no satisfactory way to make the language inclusive. Possibly to compensate, a way was found to render Psalm 131 as though it were composed by a woman. The masculine flavor of legal language of the Bible in passages such as Exodus 21-23 and Joshua 20 was thought by the committee to have been necessarily retained as well,[4] but this judgment was apparently overruled by a later review body. To illustrate, the committee approved the use of "his" in Exod 21:15, but the NRSV in its final form omits the pronoun in that verse.

(3) In addition to revisions motivated by desires to comply with social change, the committee sought to incorporate recent discoveries from fields of biblical scholarship. Under this heading of endeavors, the committee felt less constrained by tradition than the original RSV committee and altered some more familiar KJV phrases to bring them into closer alignment with recent scholarly opinion.

For example, "paths of righteousness" in Ps 23:3 has become "right paths" in the NRSV, "the valley of the shadow of death" in Ps 23:4 is now "the darkest valley," and "forever" in Ps 23:6 is changed to "my whole life long."

In surveying the NRSV more broadly, this reviewer must express two disappointments, one theological and the other linguistic. The major obstacle to its use by evangelicals remains: theological bias toward looser views of traditional orthodox doctrine that characterized the RSV[5] also characterizes the NRSV. Acts 20:28 is still not rendered as an explicit statement of the deity of Christ, as a natural rendering of the Greek requires, though the manner of avoiding the obvious is different from the original RSV.[6] Another explicit statement of Christ's deity is obscured through the NRSV punctuation of Rom

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[4]Harrelson, "Inclusive Language" 225.

[5]See Robert L. Thomas, *An Introductory Guide for Choosing English Bible Translations* (Sun Valley, CA: author, 1988) 63, 66.

[6]The 1952 RSV rendered "church of the Lord which he obtained with his own blood." The 1971 RSV and the NRSV have "church of God which [`that' in NRSV] he obtained with the blood of his own Son." The normal Greek rendering is "church of God which he obtained through his own blood," the last part referring to the blood of God the Son, not the blood of God's Son.

9:5, not the same as in the RSV but with the same resultant meaning. The theological concept of "propitiation" and its implication regarding God's wrath is still studiously avoided (cf. Rom 3:25; Heb 2:17; 1 John 2:2; 4:10). Some theological improvement over the RSV is evident, but the liberal bias remains.

Committee Chairman Metzger alludes to the linguistic issue in the NRSV's "To the Reader" (p. xi) when he hints at the tension that developed between the committee's maxim, "As literal as possible, as free as necessary," and its mandate to incorporate inclusive language. Inclusive language has made the NRSV a less literal translation than the RSV. Metzger says the new work is essentially literal, but this is a matter of questionable judgment. RSV was already close to the upper limit of literal translations.[7] The added freedom necessitated by efforts to avoid "sexually biased" language may raise the NRSV into the range of what should be called a free translation. In any event, this feature reduces its usefulness as a study tool. This is a shame because the premise regarding "sex-biased" language that generated most of the changes is so weak.

Because of the continuing theological problem and the new linguistic problem, the NRSV will find very limited usefulness among evangelicals.

Robert P. Lightner. *The Last Days Handbook*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990. 223 pp. $9.95 (paper). Reviewed by George J. Zemek, Professor of Theology.

This book will be of considerable value to a wide variety of readers because of Lightner's writing style and his commitment to provide a basic introduction to various approaches to unfulfilled prophecy. For the evangelical pastor, it is an objective review of major positions on the millennium and rapture with basic observations about the hermeneutics of each. For the Bible college student, it can be a very good eschatological primer, while for the discerning layman, it is an excellent introduction to the study of end times. Furthermore, its uncluttered charts (cf. pp. 31, 63, 65, 67, 69, 71, 76, 77, 78, 85, 114, 119),

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[7]Thomas, "Bible Translations" 62, 65.

sections entitled "For Further Thought" and "Digging Deeper" at the ends of most chapters, and concluding annotated bibliography (pp. 202-11) and glossary (pp. 212-16), raise its potential for use as a Sunday school quarterly or something of this nature.

The volume's brevity leads to some potentially misleading generalizations about various positions and prohibits studies of a more inductive nature (e.g. concerning OT backgrounds of "covenant" and "kingdom"), but its strengths outweigh its inadequacies. Among the strengths are Lightner's emphases on the eschatological essentials held in common by all evangelicals (e.g. Chap. 2), his insistence that "there has always been only one way of salvation . . . by grace through faith . . . " (p. 60), his mentioning and outlining of *some* of the new trends (e.g. the prewrath rapture view, pp. 67-69; "the new postmillennialism-theonomy package," pp. 86-87; new dispensationalism, pp. 111-12; etc.), and his stress on the primacy of the Abrahamic Covenant (p. 133).

However, this work's greatest strength is unquestionably Lightner's godly attitude exemplified in his development of the handbook (e.g. pp. xii, 30-47, 92, 95-109, 168-69, 176-77, 179-86). He is faithful to his own historical challenge to his readership in applying eschatological viewpoints (p. 186):

In essentials unity.
In uncertainties freedom,
In all things love.

Obviously, the impetus for such an attitude is *not* theological ambivalence but his exegetical-theological integrity:

God in His wisdom has not seen fit to present all truth in the same way and to the same extent. He has chosen to give us some things in broad outline, with less emphasis upon the specific details. We need to respect the silence of God as much as we do His spoken word. ... All the positions that evangelicals hold on unfulfilled prophecy have strengths and weaknesses. No one view is all right and all the others all wrong. As we allow the Holy Spirit to teach us through the Word, we must embrace the view that we feel is taught in Scripture and has the fewest and least bothersome problems (pp. 167, 184).

J. David Pawson. *Leadership is Male: Truth Must Not Be Based On*

Cultural Consensus but on the Revealed Mind of God.   Nashville: Oliver Nelson, 1990. 128 pp. $11.95 (cloth). Reviewed by Richard L. Mayhue, Professor of Pastoral Ministries.

This brief volume will provoke a definite response since it deals with a hotly debated issue. J. David Pawson, a Cambridge-trained, charismatic, Baptist pastor, courageously offers this primer to stimulate biblical thinking about leadership among God's redeemed people.

The title reflects the book's position immediately. The foreword, written by Elisabeth Elliot, is an appeal to conservatives. Its sensitive tone toward women makes it easy to read objectively.

Those who want thorough coverage of the subject and detailed exegesis will be disappointed (see H. Wayne House, *The Role of Women in Ministry Today* [Nashville: Oliver Nelson, 1990] for such a treatment). But those desiring a survey of the significant biblical texts, the basic issues, and crucial questions involved will be delighted with Pawson's clear thinking and crisp style.

The author has a high view of Scripture (pp. 21-22, 111-12, 114-16) and takes the Bible in its normal sense rather than retranslating or reinterpreting it. He does not follow a contexualizing or culturalizing hermeneutic that would "update" Scripture for our times.

The conviction of Pawson is that equality of status does not mean interchangeability of function (pp. 21, 25). He concludes "that the paradox of gender in creation (the vertical equality and horizontal inequality) remains a feature in this present world and is consistently maintained throughout the Old and New Testaments" (p. 99).

Notable contributions include:

<Discussing society's drift towards "goddess spirituality" and gender confusion in the Godhead (pp. 17, 28-30, 116-19).
<Differentiating between male and female in Genesis 1-2 (pp. 25-27).
<Surveying OT leadership patterns (pp. 37-42).
<Outlining Jesus's response to women and leadership selection (pp. 45-53).
<Thinking through Gal 3:28 (pp. 67-71, 109).
<Interpreting 1 Tim 2:11-15 (pp. 82-90).
<An overview of leadership in the New Jerusalem (pp. 93-94).

Pawson concludes that the church needs to do three things (pp.

100-1). First, it must stop putting women in positions of leadership over men. On the positive side, it needs to find more ministry opportunities for women. Third, it must train men more effectively.

This reviewer agrees wholeheartedly with the author's conclusions. However, readers need to watch for some not-so-minor flaws. Notable, but probably not intentionally, is a "leaking" of Pawson's Pentecostal/charismatic convictions, though they contribute nothing to the resolution of the issue at hand (pp. 21, 57-58, 60, 95, 102). Also, a brief discussion of "image" seems essential, but Pawson has written, "There is not need to discuss the meaning of `image'" (p. 23). He incorrectly states that "`male and female' is never used of fish, animals or birds`only of man" (p. 24; cf. Gen. 6:19, 7:2-3).

Pawson's brief discussions of Genesis 6, Jude 6 (pp. 93-94), and 1 Tim 2:15 (p. 89) lack the balance of most of his expositions. His position on the ordination of women is unclear in his short treatment (p. 97). The book's credibility could be significantly strengthened by correcting these deficiencies.

The author begins his work with a penetrating question: "Is [woman in spiritual leadership over man] a biblical idea whose time is come, like the abolition of slavery? or is it yet another case of Christians being conformed to the world?" (p. 15). He correctly concludes for the latter. This is the major reason the book needed to be written. It will help stop the unscriptural tide of so-called "evangelical" feminism from washing ashore on the church of Jesus Christ.

John Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990). 119 pp. $6.95 (paper). Reviewed by David C. Deuel, Associate Professor of Old Testament.

John Piper, senior pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis, and author of *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist*, writes to remind preachers that "People are starving for the greatness of God" (p. 9) and need to hear "God-entranced preaching" (p. 11).

The author reasons that the church's view of inspiration will affect its view of preaching: "Where the Bible is esteemed as the

inspired and inerrant Word of God, preaching can flourish. But where the Bible is treated merely as a record of valuable religious insight, preaching dies" (p. 40).

Once the authority of Scripture is established, the place the church gives preaching is a critical issue.

> Gravity in preaching is appropriate because preaching is God's appointed means for the conversion of sinners, the awakening of the church, and the preservation of the saints. If preaching fails in its task, the consequences are infinitely terrible (p. 54).

With the inspiration of Scripture and the relevance of preaching in place, the preacher's commitment to both will be borne out in his preparation. Stressing the importance of personal Bible study, Piper says:

> When the pastor is out of seminary and in the church ministry there are no courses, no assignments, no teachers and the vast majority of preachers fall far short of the resolution that Jonathan Edwards made when he was in his twenties`"to study the Scriptures so steadily, constantly, and frequently, as that I may find, and plainly perceive myself to grow in the knowledge of the same" (p. 43, from *Jonathan Edwards Memoirs* in S. Dwight, ed., *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*).

Regarding sermon delivery, the author addresses comments on the preacher's demeanor as he preaches: speaking of inappropriate humor in the pulpit, he says, "I have been literally amazed at conferences where preachers mention the need for revival and then proceed to cultivate an atmosphere in which it could never come" (p. 56). With reference to the pastor's tendency to project a different personality when he preaches, he writes, "Don't strive to be a kind of preacher. Strive to be a kind of person" (p. 60).

Challenged early on in his seminary experience to find one great evangelical theologian to immerse himself in (p. 61), Piper selected Jonathan Edwards. Part two of this volume contains some of his gleanings from Edward's writings and biographies about Edwards. After a biography of Edward's life and a brief summary of his theology, comes the book's capstone, the basis of its title: "Make God Supreme: The Preaching of Jonathan Edwards."

Piper's newest book will be an encouragement to those who

preach the Bible faithfully and a challenge to preachers who settle for less than the Bible as their resource. One editorial oversight in a Scripture quotation needs attention: "Far be it from me to glory except *in human cross* Lord Jesus Christ . . ." (Gal 6:14) (p. 33).

O. Palmer Robertson. *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah.* Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1990. 357 pp. $28.95 (cloth). Reviewed by David C. Deuel, Associate Professor of Old Testament.

Many readers may recognize the author's name from his earlier work, *The Christ of the Covenants.* O. Palmer Robertson brings a unique blend of ministry experience to his writing. He not only taught for twenty years at Reformed, Westminster, and Covenant Theological Seminaries, but also currently pastors Wallace Memorial Presbyterian Church in Hyattsville, Maryland.

In his discussion of the Redemptive-Historical framework of the prophets Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah, he traces Judah's decline from Hezekiah to Jehoiachin, detailing the period's spiritual high and low points. This background is central to the three prophets' messages.

"Because Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah all ministered essentially to the same constituency and labored within thirty years of one another" (p. 17), Robertson selects theological issues relating to them as a group. Curiously absent from all three books is any trace of Messianism (p. 17), a hiatus perhaps best explained by a common "delusion with the historical experience of kingship in Israel" (p. 17). Kingship had ironically failed because it was built on a false assumption, that according to the land and dynastic promises to Abraham and David, respectively, both Jerusalem and her kings were indestructible. History would correct their misgivings, but rising against a tide of opposition, all three prophets challenged both king and subjects with the impending threat of God's wrath, but not without "full confidence that the redemptive purposes of God would be realized (cf. Nah. 1:14; Hab. 2:4; 3:18-19; Zeph. 3:9-20)" (p. 18).

The centrality of God, a second and broader theological rubric discussed by the author, is the focus in discussions of the doctrines of the Justice, Judgment, Covenant, and Salvation of God. Because

Judah's error was rooted in its wrong thinking about God and the nature of His promises, all three prophets needed to address major doctrinal misconceptions.

In his discussion "Shape of the Prophecies," Robertson underscores the importance of historical referents. Biblical history not only provides the context for appropriate interpretation of prophecy, but also occasionally functions as the prophecy itself, in a manner of speaking. Robinson argues, "But if the genuineness of Yahweh's intentions in history rests on the historical fulfillments of the prophet's word, then of course it matters whether the prophet spoke before or after the event being prophesied" (p. 335). In short, any attempt to do away with a historical frame of reference also tampers with the apologetic credibility of historical space-time fulfillment.

In his comments on the individual books, the author frequently refers to related NT passages as well as timeless theological inferences and current applications to twentieth-century situations.

While maintaining a strong rhetorical/homiletical emphasis, he neglects neither literary aspects of Scripture such as style, structure, and poetic parallelism, nor critical introductory matters such as date and authorship, unity, authenticity, and text. A select bibliography and analysis of contents for each of the three books precedes the author's verse-by-verse commentary. All is nicely indexed by subject, author, Scripture, and Hebrew word.

The Bible student will find in this fine contribution to the *NICOT* series a readable and useful discussion of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah. The author is to be commended especially for his sensitivity to those preparing sermons and Bible studies.

Darius Salter. *What Really Matters in Ministry*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990. 205 pp. $9.95 (paper). Reviewed by Richard L. Mayhue, Professor of Pastoral Ministries.

Pastoral success is much sought after, frequently claimed, rarely achieved, and vaguely understood. Darius Salter does the pastoral community a grand favor by bringing "success" into biblical focus without ignoring its implications in real life. Salter exposes the "nickels and noses" philosophy of pastoral success as unreasonable,

not to mention, unbiblical.

What Really Matter's in Ministry is two books for the price of one. Chapters one through five trace success in the American church, and chapters six and seven examine the subject in the ministry/writings of Jesus and Paul. It combines the best of both theology and reality.

Salter broadly defines a successful pastor as one who under the call of God gives himself wholeheartedly, according to God-given wisdom but limited perception, by the power of the Holy Spirit to the spiritual nurture of people (p. 194). He reflects on the biblical balance of utmost personal effort and total reliance on God for the results.

For those who wonder how other pastors fare in the ministry, prioritize their efforts, and yield fruit from their labor, Salter provides a current profile from his recent survey of "successful" pastors. One hundred eighty forms were circulated to pastors of nineteen denomina-tions. These were chosen because they pastored rapidly growing churches with over 500 in attendance on Sunday mornings. One hundred responded to the survey. A sample of the "Successful Pastors Inventory" can be found on pp 39-41.

According to the survey, prayer and preaching highlighted pastoral priorities (pp. 43-53). Those responding averaged 52 minutes a day in prayer (p. 44) and directly linked their "success" (fruit) in preaching to the accompanying prayer (p. 57).

Chapter three highlights the personal qualities of the men with growing ministries. They include a sense of pastoral accountability to God, personal dynamic, being a self-starter, long-term commitment to present ministry, vision, being people-oriented, effective preaching, and energetic optimism. Salter balances this chapter by commenting that these observations "only tacitly concern the spiritual and theological qualifications of ministry." However, they do provide a practical side of ministry that cannot be ignored, but must be framed by the biblical mandates.

For those who struggle with rejection by their flock, the account of Jonathan Edward's struggles brings perspective (pp. 145-48). The author's comments on Christ's lack of preoccupation with plaques and other public symbols of recognition will bring encouragement (p. 156). His exegetical discussion of "prosperity" gives clarity to those who are confused (pp. 149-56). Paul's view of success provides both a standard by which it should be measured and a humility which it should bring

(pp. 169-91).

In the Foreword, Robert Coleman notes, "In the effort to be effective, however, let us not confuse measurable statistics with the values of heaven."   Salter has sought, and in large measure "succeeded," in keeping kingdom values preeminent while discussing twentieth-century ministries that exhibit the same kind of personal (2 Pet 3:18) and corporate growth (Acts) that Scripture enjoins all shepherds to pursue.

He reflects upon the ultimate of pastoral fruit in this manner: "To whatever extent Christ-likeness is being formed in their flock, they are successful" (p. 193).   This work will stimulate and challenge the earnest pastor to a new level of spiritual effort.