

“UR OF THE CHALDEANS” (GEN 11:28-31): A MODEL FOR DEALING WITH DIFFICULT TEXTS

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Scholars are still puzzled over the appearance of “Ur of the Chaldeans” in Gen 11:28 and 31. Proposed solutions to the problem have either called it an anachronism or an example of post-Mosaic textual updating, or else they hold that Moses wrote the text just as it stands because he knew about the Chaldeans in his day. This article offers linguistic, genealogical, and historical evidence in supporting the last of these options. Linguistically, “Chaldeans” could be a later spelling of the term Kašdīm in Gen 11:28, 31, according to this option. This solution is consistent with Moses’ knowing the Aramean origins of Abraham and his family as reflected in Gen 10:22; 31:47; and Deut 26:5, but such origins have been issues that have been open to debate. Genealogically, certain connections raise the possibility that the Chaldeans were relatives of Abraham. Historically, the problem is that extrabiblical references to the Chaldeans do not occur until the times of Ashurnasirpal II or III (883-859 B.C.). Yet such is a problem only if one subjugates the early biblical (i.e., Mosaic) references to later secular texts. Secular sources need not have greater authority than the Bible. Extrabiblical evidence itself has some hints that the Chaldeans’ rise to power may have preceded the time of Moses. Though it is impossible at this point to resolve the problem fully, the option supported by linguistic, genealogical, and historical evidence best accords with one’s adherence to the doctrine of biblical inerrancy.

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Introduction

In 1973 James Kelso observed that a few puzzles still remain in the archaeological examination of the history of Abraham.¹ One of those puzzles is the

¹James L. Kelso, “Abraham as Archaeology Knows Him: Part II—Abraham the Spiritual Genius,” *Bible and Spade* 2/2 (Spring 1973):40. Kelso taught archaeology at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, an institution at which the Bible Lands Museum is named for him.

reference to “Ur of the Chaldeans” in Gen 11:28 and 31, whose solution is still elusive in 2009. Suggesting how the solution might play out, Kelso asked, “Is Chaldeans a later editorial supplement, or will the term actually turn up in a cuneiform document?”² Some scholars have already opted for the former. This essay will champion the latter solution.

The Problem

The Hebrew text in Gen 11:28 and 31 contains the phrase אֹר כַּשְׁדִּי (“Ur of the Chaldeans”).³ Some scholars treat “Chaldeans” as either an anachronism or an example of post-Mosaic textual updating. Gordon Wenham argues for the former, but allows for the latter, when he writes that the “epithet ‘of the Chaldaeans’ is probably anachronistic in Abram’s day, since the Chaldaeans (Assyrian *Kaldu*) did not penetrate Babylonia till about 1000 B.C. It therefore most likely represents a gloss on the old tradition.”⁴ C. J. Gadd also concluded that the term is an anachronism.⁵

The second approach, post-Mosaic textual updating, takes two forms. In one, Arnold chooses to explain “Ur of the Chaldeans” as a case in which

A later editor or scribe was aware of more than one city called “Ur” in the ancient Near East. Since the Chaldeans did not exist in the ancient world until nearly a thousand years after Abram’s day, the designation “of the Chaldeans” was without question added by a later scribe in order to distinguish *which* Ur was meant.⁶

Holding essentially to this explanation for textual updating, Grisanti offered an approach he describes as “inspired textual updating.”⁷ His approach is not new. In fact, Augustine of Hippo (fl. A.D. 387–430) beat him to it by proposing prophetic updating under the Holy Spirit’s superintendence in the later history of the biblical text.

²Ibid., 40.

³These are not the only biblical texts providing this designation. Cf. Gen 15:7 and Neh 9:7.

⁴Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, WBC (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1987) 272. See also Jack Finegan, *Light from the Ancient Past* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University, 1946) 57 n. 28. Norman K. Gottwald explains the usual reasoning: “The fact that Ur is explained as a city of the Chaldeans would not have been a way of identifying that ancient Sumerian city until at least the tenth century and more likely in the eighth century when a strong Chaldean = Neo-Babylonian dynasty arose there” (*The Hebrew Bible: A Socio-Literary Introduction* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985] 168).

⁵C. J. Gadd, “Ur,” in *Archaeology and Old Testament Study*, ed. D. Winton Thomas (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967) 94.

⁶Bill T. Arnold, *Encountering the Book of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998) 78. See also Merrill F. Unger, “The Patriarchs and Contemporary History: Part 1,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 110/438 (April 1953):125: “[I]t was, of course, quite natural for the Hebrew scribe to define the then incomprehensible foreign name by an appellation customary in his own day.”

⁷Michael A. Grisanti, “Inspiration, Inerrancy, and the OT Canon: The Place of Textual Updating in an Inerrant View of Scripture,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 44/4 (Dec 2001):577-98 (esp. 584-85, regarding Gen 11:28, 31).

In regard to the problem of chronology presented in the Septuagint version of Genesis 5 (viz., Methuselah living until 14 years after the Flood), Augustine wrote,

Moreover, the difference in numbers that we find between the Hebrew text and our own⁸ constitutes no disagreement about this longevity of the ancients; and if any discrepancy is such that the two versions cannot both be true, we must seek the authentic account of events in that language from which our text was translated.⁹

Thus far, Augustine chooses to focus upon a greater problem, the longevity of the antediluvians. Having deployed a slight misdirection, he returns to the problem of the text that must be resolved by appealing directly to the Hebrew original behind the old Greek translation. Then comes the part of his argument that sounds much like “inspired textual updating”:

Though this opportunity is universally available to those who wish to take it, yet, significantly enough, no one has ventured to correct the Septuagint version from the Hebrew text in the very many places where it seems to offer something different. The reason is that those differences were not considered falsifications,¹⁰ nor do I think that they should be in any way. Rather, where no scribal error¹¹ is involved, and where the sense would be harmonious with the truth and would proclaim the truth, *we should believe that they were moved by the divine Spirit*¹² to say something differently, not as part of the service that they did as translators, but exercising the freedom that they enjoyed as prophets.¹³

In another form of textual updating, Sailhamer argues that the editor desired to make “Abraham prefigure all those future exiles who, in faith, wait for the return to the Promised Land.”¹⁴ The alleged post-exilic editor, therefore, was harmonizing the text of Genesis with the texts of later prophets to make the association with Babylon. Such an approach to textual updating is more than just a minor addition to

⁸Viz., the Septuagint.

⁹Philip Levine, trans., *Saint Augustine: The City of God Against the Pagans: Books XII-XV*, Loeb Classical Library 414 (1966; reprint, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1988) 491 (xv.14).

¹⁰Or, “corruption of the text” as represented by a more recent translation in Henry Bettenson, trans., *Augustine: Concerning the City of God against the Pagans* (1972; reprint, Hammondsworth, Middlesex, UK: Penguin, 1976) 620. The Latin is *mendositas* for “errors, inaccuracies, mistakes.”

¹¹Latin, *error* for “error, mistake, deception.” Whereas *mendositas* is related to *mendum* (“bodily defect or blemish”), *error* is related to *erro* (“to wander, stray, or rove”). The two words are virtual synonyms. Augustine does not appear to be making a technical distinction in this context.

¹²Latin, *divino spiritu*. It is translated “Holy Spirit” in Andrew Louth, ed., *Genesis 1–11*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Old Testament 1, ed. Thomas C. Oden (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2001) 122.

¹³Levine, *The City of God* 491 [emphasis added].

¹⁴John H. Sailhamer, “Genesis,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 12 vols., ed. Frank E. Gaebel (Grand Rapids: Regency Reference Library/Zondervan, 1990) 2:110.

clarify Ur's identity for later readers.

Appealing to the Assyrian historical records as the determining factor for one's view of the reference to Chaldeans in Genesis is more than just a theological issue (viz., elevating extrabiblical literature to a higher position of authority than Scripture). It is also a matter of properly interpreting the available history. Kenneth Kitchen cautions against over-dependence on the Assyrian materials with the following reminder: "If Assyrian mentions are the *sine qua non* (the absolute criterion) for a king's existence, then Egypt and her kings could not have existed before the specific naming of (U)shilkanni, Shapataka, and Ta(ha)rqa in 716-679!"¹⁵ Dependence upon the Assyrian records tends to ignore the partial and prejudiced contents of those records. Grayson likewise warns against too much trust in the Assyrian historical records: "One must always be skeptical of Assyrian claims."¹⁶ A prime example involves Assyrian claims of victory at the battle of Qarqar (853 B.C.).

On the other hand, Scripture consistently mentions the Chaldeans in a patriarchal setting. For evangelicals with a high view of Scripture, inner biblical materials always out-trump incomplete extrabiblical evidence. Archer cites Albright and Pope in support of viewing the prologue to Job as an authentic patriarchal narrative—even in the mention of the Chaldeans. His reasoning for the authentic and original patriarchal mention of the Chaldeans is due to the text representing them "as nomadic raiders with no hint of their later political or economic importance (Job 1:15, 17)."¹⁷

A Potential Solution

Is there any viable option other than anachronism or textual updating? Does evidence exist that might indicate that Moses himself could have written the text as it is? In other words, could Moses have known of the existence of Chaldeans and could he be accurate in identifying Chaldeans with ancient Ur prior to or contemporary with Abraham? Three different types of evidence are available that support the authenticity of "Chaldeans" as an original Mosaic reading in Genesis: linguistic, genealogical, and historical.

Linguistic Evidence. "Chaldeans" (note the *l*) is a later spelling than the Genesis *Kašdīm* (note the *ś*). Akkadian scholars have long recognized a peculiarity of the Akkadian language: the phenomenon of a phonetic shift of the sibilant (Ψ/\acute{s}) to a *lamed* when the sibilant is followed by a dental (Γ/d). The shift (*s* to *l*) appeared in the second millennium B.C. and continued until the Neo-Babylonian era (ca. 600-

¹⁵K. A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003) 12.

¹⁶A. K. Grayson, "Assyria, Assyrians," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Historical Books*, ed. Bill T. Arnold and H. G. M. Williamson (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2005) 100.

¹⁷Gleason L. Archer, Jr., "Old Testament History and Recent Archaeology from Solomon to Zedekiah," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 127/507 (July 1970):196.

550 B.C.).¹⁸ This places the phenomenon at least as early as Middle Babylonian (1500-1000 B.C.).¹⁹ That means that the form in a Moses-authored Genesis (ca. 1400 B.C.) falls within the range of time that *Kašdim* occurs. Therefore, the linguistic shift cannot be employed to deny Mosaic authorship and argue for some form of textual updating.

2000-1500 B.C.	1500-1000 B.C.	1000-600 B.C.	600-550 B.C.
Old Babylonian	Middle Babylonian	Late Babylonian	Late Babylonian
GAL.DU, <i>Kaldu</i>	Kas.du, <i>Kašdim</i>		<i>Kaldu, Kaldim</i>

The name “Chaldean” appears to have its origin in the “Sumerian title, GAL.DU (‘master builder’), which later became altered to the pronunciation Kas.du (the singular of *Kasdim*) through a sound-shift well known in the development of the Babylonian language.”²⁰ In a footnote Archer explains this phenomenon more fully:

W. von Soden points out that in the later stages of the Babylonian dialect of Akkadian, the sibilants *s*, *š*, and *ś* often shifted to *l* before dental consonants like *t* and *d*. For example, the earlier *aštur* (“I wrote”) became *altur*; the preposition *ištu* (“out of”) became *ultu*. On this analogy, the original ethnic designation *Kasdu* or *Kasdim* later became *Kaldu* or *Kaldim*. At that stage, then, *Kasdim* (“Chaldeans”) became a homonym of *Kasdim* (plural of the *Kaldu* derived from the Sumerian GAL.DU) (*Grundriss der Akkadischen Grammatik* [Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1969] 31). The latest stage of the Babylonian language, that of the Neo-babylonian, contemporary with Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, then adopted a policy of archaizing, in an effort to revive the older, classical dialect. Thus it came about that both *Kaldu*’s became *Kasdu* and the homonym resemblance continued. (The name *Chaldean* is derived from the Greek form, *Caldai/oi* which in turn came from *Kaldim*. The Greeks apparently came to know the Chaldeans before the elimination of the secondary *l* in favor of *s* or *š* before dentals had taken place.)²¹

¹⁸Anson Rainey, “Chaldea, Chaldeans,” in *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1971) 5:330. Ungnad notes this phonetic phenomenon, dating the shift of all four sibilants (*z*, *s*, *ś*, and *š*) from the Middle Assyrian period onward (Arthur Ungnad, *Akkadian Grammar*, 5th ed., rev. by Lubor Matouš, trans. Harry A. Hoffner, Jr., SBL Resources for Biblical Study 30 [Atlanta: Scholars, 1992] 25; *JJS* 21/1-2 (1976):1-14; *JNSL* 1 [1971]:32-38; *EQ* 49 [1977]:67-73). “This form remained frozen in Biblical literature in its archaic form and did not develop into *kaldu*, *kaldim*, *kaldaya* because it was no longer in its proper linguistic setting, i.e., the Akkadian language” (Jonathan D. Safren, Jan 5, 2000, “SV: Re[2]: Ur *Kasdim* II” Biblical Hebrew Forum, <http://lists.ibiblio.org/pipermail/b-hebrew/2000-January/005929.html> [accessed Jan 2008]).

¹⁹John Huehnergard, *A Grammar of Akkadian*, 2nd ed., Harvard Semitic Studies (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2005) xxiii.

²⁰Gleason L. Archer, Jr., “Modern Rationalism and the Book of Daniel,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 136/542 (April 1979):137.

²¹*Ibid.*, n. 19.

Rainey offers the suggestion that the “Aramaic dialect of the Chaldeans no doubt preserved the original sibilant, and the biblical form evidently came from an Aramaic source, probably by direct contact with the Chaldeans.”²² This suggestion is consistent with Moses’ familiarity with the Aramean origins of Abraham and his family (unless, of course, one were to deny him authorship of Gen 10:22; 31:47; and Deut 26:5).

A problem arises here regarding Aramaic connections. Merrill’s proposal for an Aramean origin of the Chaldeans²³ draws fire from Sprinkle, who argues that “the two seem clearly distinguished in the cuneiform literature.”²⁴ Oppenheim associates the Chaldeans with an Aramaic dialect, but recognizes that, “For reasons not yet clear, the Chaldeans are in the texts always differentiated from the Aramean tribes settled in the higher terrain upstream along the Euphrates and especially along the Tigris.”²⁵ Could Sprinkle’s and Oppenheim’s objections arise from a failure to recognize two different groups of Arameans (northern and southern) and the tendency of the cuneiform texts (at least thus far) to speak only of the northern group as such? According to Arnold, “differences in tribal organization, the dates of their respective appearances in history, and contrasting levels of Babylonization”²⁶ also indicate the distinction between Arameans and Chaldeans. However, the date for the appearance of the Chaldeans in history is mainly an argument from silence²⁷ in the archaeological record and a corresponding rejection of the originality of the references in the patriarchal narratives.

Others like Pitard deem the biblical material concerning the origins of the

²²Rainey, “Chaldea, Chaldeans” 5:330.

²³Eugene A. Merrill, *The Kingdom of Priests: A History of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987) 393. Merrill bases his conclusion on the thorough documentation of J. A. Brinkman, *A Political History of Post-Kassite Babylonia, 1158-722 B.C.*, *Analecta Orientalia* 43 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1968).

²⁴J. M. Sprinkle, “Review of *The Kingdom of Priests: A History of the Old Testament*, by Eugene A. Merrill,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 33/2 (June 1990):236.

²⁵A. Leo Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1977) 160.

²⁶Bill T. Arnold, “Babylonians,” in *Peoples of the Old Testament World*, ed. Alfred J. Hoerth, Gerald L. Mattingly, and Edwin M. Yamauchi (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994) 57 n. 45.

²⁷Cf. J. A. Brinkman, *A Political History of Post-Kassite Babylonia 1158-722 B.C.*, *Analecta Orientalia* 43 (Roma: Pontificum Institutum Biblicum, 1968) 284-85: “These three theories regarding the origins of the eastern Arameans all revolve around a single point, the silence of the documents, and how that silence is to be interpreted. Depending on whether the silence is seen as indicating the presence, absence, or movement of the Arameans, one may opt for any of the three theories or some modification of them. My purpose here has been simply to emphasize that we do not have sufficient evidence now to do more than speculate vaguely on the origins of the Arameans in eastern Babylonia. With further discoveries, we may some day have better materials with which to work and be able to reach more definite conclusions.” Interestingly, Brinkman does not mention Deut 26:5 in his treatment of biblical references. Robert North published an insightful review of Brinkman’s volume in *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 31/3 (July 1969):403-4.

Arameans (or any other peoples) to be nothing more than legends that “provide little historical insight into the origins of the various ethnic groups of Syria-Palestine.”²⁸ Of greater interest, though, is his summary statement regarding the nature of the cuneiform evidence: “The preserved documentary evidence is simply too ambiguous at this point to draw conclusions about the origins of the Arameans in Babylonia.”²⁹ Schniedewind affirms this state of affairs in the following words: “The rise of the Aramean states is shrouded in darkness. The deafening silence in our sources continues to make it difficult to penetrate this darkness.”³⁰ Indeed, if one applied the same arguments concerning the Chaldeans to the Arameans, the mention of Arameans in the Pentateuch³¹ could also be identified as either anachronistic³² or an example of textual updating. The earliest clear reference to the Arameans in extrabiblical sources is in the cuneiform annals of Tiglath-pileser I (1116-1076 B.C.).³³ Perhaps the matter of the origins and dates of both Arameans and Chaldeans should be left in the darkness and the silence, rather than wielding the absence of evidence as support for a theory of textual updating. The old maxim still holds: absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.

Sumerologist Samuel Noah Kramer writes that the biblical record “does have an important kernel of truth, including Abraham’s birth in Ur of the Chaldees.”³⁴ Interestingly, in his observation that much of the biblical saga of Abraham is “legendary and fanciful,”³⁵ he sets this biblical identification above the realm of fiction. He could have taken the opportunity to impugn the accuracy of Scripture at this point as well—but he did not. In addition, he argues strongly and convincingly for an association of Shem with Sumer.³⁶ More recently, Bodine classifies Kramer’s

²⁸Wayne T. Pitard, “Arameans,” in *Peoples of the Old Testament World* 208.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 210. See also P.-A. Beaulieu, “Babylonia, Babylonians,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Historical Books*, ed. Bill T. Arnold and H. G. M. Williamson (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2005) 110, “[D]ocumentation is so sparse between around 1100 and 750 BCE that almost nothing is known of the early history of their [Aramean and Chaldean] settlement.”

³⁰William M. Schniedewind, “The Rise of the Aramean States,” in *Mesopotamia and the Bible: Comparative Explorations*, ed. Mark W. Chavalas and K. Lawson Younger, Jr. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002) 276. Nonetheless, Schniedewind pursues “an exercise in groping in through the darkness, trying to find a few touch points to guide by, while trying to move carefully so as not to stumble and fall completely” (*ibid.*). This present writer identifies with that procedure in this current study of the Chaldeans.

³¹Gen 24:10, אַרַם וְהָרָם אֲרָם; 25:20, הָאֲרָמִי מִפְּדֵן אֲרָם; 28:5, פְּדֹנָה אֲרָם; 31:20, הָאֲרָמִי, 24, הָאֲרָמִי, 47, Laban’s use of Aramaic; Num 23:7, מֶרְאָרָם; Deut 26:5, אֲרָמִי.

³²Thus Abraham Malamat, “Aram, Arameans,” *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1971) 3:253.

³³*Ibid.*, 3:254; Pitard, “Arameans” 210.

³⁴Samuel Noah Kramer, *The Sumerians: Their History, Culture, and Character* (1963; reprint, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1972) 292.

³⁵*Ibid.*

³⁶*Ibid.*, 298.

conclusion on this matter as “doubtful.”³⁷ Averbeck, on the other hand, urges caution lest we too quickly throw out Kramer’s suggestion.³⁸

Genealogical Evidence. Adolfo Roitman concludes that the Chaldeans “were seen as the offspring of Chesed (כשד), son of Nahor, Abraham’s brother (Gen 22:22),”³⁹ making the Chaldeans relatives of Abraham. Even Anson Rainey accepts the possibility that Abraham’s nephew Kesed was the ancestor of the Chaldeans.⁴⁰ There is adequate time for the descendants of Kesed to have returned to their family’s ancestral home in Ur and to have established their own reputation long before the time of Moses. Moses’s reference to the Chaldeans in Gen 11:28 and 31 could be nothing more than identifying Ur as the home or sphere of influence for the descendants of Kesed.

It is also possible that the Chaldeans (*Kasdim*) antedate Kesed. Some scholars propose that Arpachshad (Gen 10:22, son of Shem, ancestor of Abraham) was the ancestor of the Chaldeans—the last three letters of Arpachshad are the same as for Kesed and the *Kasdim*.⁴¹ Josephus was among the earliest to make this

³⁷Walter R. Bodine, “Sumerians,” in *Peoples of the Old Testament World* 19 n. 1.

³⁸Richard E. Averbeck, “Sumer, the Bible, and Comparative Method: Historiography and Temple Building,” in *Mesopotamia and the Bible: Comparative Explorations*, ed. Mark W. Chavalas and K. Lawson Younger, Jr. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002) 88, 93-94.

³⁹Adolfo D. Roitman, “‘This People Are Descendants of Chaldeans’ (Judith 5:6): Its Literary Form and Historical Setting,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 113/2 (Summer 1994):246. Arpachshad = Arpachshad; English transliteration of כ (k) varies between *k* and *ch* in various biblical names from one translation to another. A similar confusion accompanies the transliteration of ח (h) as either *h* or *ch*.

⁴⁰Rainey, “Chaldea, Chaldeans” 5:330.

⁴¹“[T]he first part of the name could reflect Hurrian *Arip-*, which is a common element in personal names; but the rest would not be a demonstrably Hurrian component. The best that one can say today is that Arpachshad, if correctly transmitted, has to be regarded as non-Semitic. This would fit well enough with what we know today about the composite ethnic background of the Hebrews” (E. A. Speiser, *Genesis: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, Anchor Bible [Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1964] 70). Cf. also J. Simons, “The ‘Table of Nations’ (Genesis 10): Its General Structure and Meaning,” in *I Studied Inscriptions from before the Flood: Ancient Near Eastern, Literary, and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1–11*, ed. Richard S. Hess and David Toshio Tsumura (Winona Lake, Ind.: 1994) 246 (reprinted from *Oudtestamentische Studiën* 10 (1954):155-84; and Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1–11: A Commentary*, trans. John J. Scullion (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984) 512, who writes, “H. Gunkel and others had already assumed that the name must stand for Babylon, and J. Skinner supported this very strongly. Babylon, he says, cannot be missing from the list. He also alleges in its favor that the three last consonants correspond to the Bab. *kashdu*, the Hebr. *Kasdim* (= Chaldeans). This is but a conjecture and does not explain the name fully. However, it is certainly correct that Arpachshad stands for Babylon here.” See also Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman, 1996) 461. Allen P. Ross, “Studies in the Book of Genesis, Part 3: The Table of Nations in Genesis 10—Its Content,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 138/549 (Jan 1981):29 n.50, concludes that “Arpachshad’s meaning and location have caused considerable speculation, but he can only be generally listed as residing northeast of Nineveh.”

identification of Arpachshad with Chaldea.⁴² Skinner discusses the various options for the identification of Arpachshad and concludes that association with the Chaldeans is difficult.⁴³ The identity of Arpachshad has yet to be resolved by the experts.

Historical Evidence. The primary problem is that the earliest extrabiblical reference to the Chaldeans does not occur until Ashurnasirpal II or III (883-859 B.C.) mentions them.⁴⁴ A subtle implication involved in questioning the integrity of early biblical (viz., Mosaic) references to “the Chaldeans” is that the older biblical text is thereby subjugated to later secular texts. In other words, some scholars tend to grant greater authority and authenticity to the testimony of the secular texts than to the biblical text. This contradicts the principle of *prima facie* evidence as well as traditional Christian theology that has refused to consider extrabiblical evidences or proofs as having the greater authority. The priority of biblical text over extrabiblical texts is a principle that Averbeck emphasizes in his study of Sumer and the Bible.⁴⁵

It is fascinating that Oppenheim felt compelled to note the correspondence between the rise of the Chaldeans to power in the 9th century B.C. and the earlier rise of the dynasty of Hammurapi—“one can hardly close one’s eyes to the similarities in events and personalities.”⁴⁶ The reign of Hammurapi (1792-1750 B.C.) preceded Moses by over 300 years. Could it be that earlier members of the *Kasdim* were involved in the rise of Babylon as well as having a sphere of influence in the vicinity of Ur? It is entirely possible—especially if there is evidence of Amorite⁴⁷ or Aramean connections in these two situations separated by approximately 900 years.

Extrabiblical evidence does point to the antiquity of the Chaldeans far earlier than the 9th century B.C. In his detailed examination of whether “Chaldeans” was a title employed of Babylonian priests as early as the 6th century B.C., Robert Dick Wilson found that a number of dependable classical historians referred to the existence of Chaldeans all the way back to the great deluge (a likely reference to the Noahic flood⁴⁸). For example, “Alexander Polyhistor, who lived in the second century B.C. ... states, also, that after the deluge, Evixius held possession of the country of

⁴²“Arphaxad named the Arphaxadites, who are now called Chaldeans” (William Whiston, trans., *The New Complete Works of Josephus*, rev. and expanded ed., commentary by Paul L. Maier [Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999]58 [Antiq. i.144]).

⁴³John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis*, 2nd ed., ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1930) 205.

⁴⁴Rainey, “Chaldea, Chaldeans” 5:330.

⁴⁵Averbeck, “Sumer, the Bible, and Comparative Method” 95.

⁴⁶Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia* 163.

⁴⁷See Keith N. Schoville, “Canaanites and Amorites,” in *Peoples of the Old Testament World* 165.

⁴⁸Even if this Babylonian flood is not identical to the biblical flood, scholars generally recognize that it occurred in great antiquity, perhaps several millennia prior to the 9th century B.C. (see H. W. F. Saggs, *The Greatness That Was Babylon* [New York: New American Library, 1962] 54-55).

the Chaldeans.”⁴⁹ Berossus⁵⁰ (ca. 300 B.C.) speaks of a certain Chaldean who lived “in the tenth generation after the deluge who was renowned for his justice and great exploits and for his skill in the celestial sciences.”⁵¹ How dependable is Berossus? Gadd recalls that the discovery of a Sumerian king-list confirmed that the “well-known names of these legendary kings, preserved by Berossus, were restored and confirmed as authentic by the recovery of their original forms.”⁵² Another historian, Diodorus Siculus, “who lived in the time of Cæsar and Augustus,”⁵³ wrote that the Chaldeans were “the most ancient Babylonians.”⁵⁴

According to Roy Zuck, “The Sabeans and Chaldeans (Job 1:15, 17) were nomads in Abraham’s time, but in later years they were not nomadic.”⁵⁵ He does not deny their existence in the patriarchal period, only a city of their own. On the basis of evidence from Ebla, some have suggested that Ur of the Chaldeans should actually be located in the north, in the vicinity of Haran.⁵⁶ Before the Ebla finds, Acomb suggested that locating Ur in the north from which the Chaldeans originated “before migrating to Southern Babylon at a date preceding Neo-Babylonian times, . . . would make unnecessary the anachronism” often attributed to Gen 11:28.⁵⁷ Alden, who adheres to a southern Ur, has a slightly different take: “While Chaldeans are best known from later OT history as the core of the neo-Babylonian Empire, in the early period they were nomads whose base was in southern Mesopotamia.”⁵⁸ André Parrot also holds to a southern Ur for Abraham’s birthplace.⁵⁹ As Beaulieu explains, evidence appears to locate the Chaldeans “from Babylon to the Persian Gulf.”⁶⁰

According to Hess, the Chaldeans “are already well established when they

⁴⁹Robert Dick Wilson, *Studies in the Book of Daniel*, 2 volumes in 1 (1917-18; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1972) 1:329.

⁵⁰Saggs questions the reliability of Berossus (*The Greatness That Was Babylon* 54), but still cites him as confirmation for certain details concerning the Chaldean Nabopolassar (*ibid.*, 142).

⁵¹Wilson, *Studies in the Book of Daniel* 1:333-34.

⁵²Gadd, “Ur” 91.

⁵³Wilson, *Studies in the Book of Daniel* 1:334.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 1:335.

⁵⁵Roy B. Zuck, “Job,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck, and Dallas Theological Seminary faculty (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor, 1985) 1:717.

⁵⁶Harold G. Stigers, “Review of *Harper’s Introduction to the Bible*, by Gerald Hughes and Stephen Travis,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 25/1 (March 1982):122.

⁵⁷Dwight E. Acomb, “Review of *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation*, by John F. Walvoord,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 15/1 (Winter 1972):55.

⁵⁸Robert L. Alden, *Job*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1993) 60.

⁵⁹André Parrot, “Mari,” in *Archaeology and Old Testament Study*, ed. D. Winton Thomas (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967) 140.

⁶⁰Beaulieu, “Babylonia, Babylonians” 110.

appear . . . , their earlier origins are uncertain.”⁶¹ The most ancient of available references to the Chaldeans seem to identify them with “a wandering desert tribe of robbers.”⁶² Roitman associates this nomadic group with “Chesed, the son of Nahor and father of the Chaldeans according to biblical ethnography.”⁶³ Thus, we come to the conclusion that the Chaldeans are more ancient than the Assyrian records. A more reasonable approach to the mention of Chaldeans in the patriarchal narratives would be to accept the biblical references as original, since the available cuneiform records are admittedly fragmentary and incomplete.

Conclusion

Although the problem has not been fully resolved to date, a better option exists than either the anachronistic view or the textual updating view. Available evidence makes it possible that Moses himself specified that Abraham was from “Ur of the Chaldeans.” First, a Mosaic use of $\text{𐤎} \text{𐤓} \text{𐤕}$ is consistent with the chronology of the phonetic shift.

Second, there is more than adequate time for the descendants of either Kesed or Arpachshad to establish themselves in the region of Ur prior to the time of Moses. Indeed, there is time for the descendants of the latter to be thus established prior even to the time of Abraham.

Third, silence in the realm of archaeology and secular history proves to be a notoriously weak argument. The fraction of surviving material evidence that has been located, excavated, identified, and published is so infinitesimally small⁶⁴ that it is not a sound practice to leap to the conclusion that extrabiblical evidence is sufficient to overturn a direct declaration of the biblical text or to put Mosaic authorship in question. The Hittites were unknown outside the OT until the late 1800s and the ultimate extrabiblical proofs were not unearthed until after 1906. Consider also the silence concerning the existence of King David until the discovery of the Tel Dan Stela in 1993.

Ultimately, this particular problem (and all others like it) boils down to the interpreter’s choice:

- (a) Seek to harmonize the *apparent* contradiction between the biblical text and the present state of obviously limited extrabiblical knowledge—if need be, by providing yet another hypothetical that lacks proof and may even go contrary to established evangelical doctrine; **or**,
- (b) accept the text as it stands, choosing to look for options that allow it to stand

⁶¹Richard S. Hess, “Chaldea,” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6 vols., ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992) 1:886.

⁶²Roitman, “This People Are Descendants of Chaldeans” 254.

⁶³*Ibid.*, 254 n. 37, relating the Chaldeans to Gen 22:22.

⁶⁴Edwin M. Yamauchi, *The Stones and the Scriptures* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1972) 146-57 (esp. 156).

without modification of either the declaration or the authorship—admitting that the real problem is the absence of extrabiblical confirmation and our ignorance rather than a need to reconsider established evangelical doctrine.

In seeking a resolution to the problem presented by the mention of the Chaldeans in the patriarchal narratives, we must realize that “commitment to inerrancy, even in its broader terms, doubtless requires faith in the *future* resolution of a number of problems in Scripture, through a deeper penetration of the text itself and of the realities to which it refers.”⁶⁵ Therefore, I prefer the stance of Kelso, with which this paper began. I prefer to wait for the Chaldeans to actually turn up in some cuneiform document that is either contemporary with the biblical patriarchs or at least pre-Mosaic. Until that time, I prefer to accept the Scriptural account as original and accurate, without resorting to anachronism or textual updating.

⁶⁵Douglas Farrow, *The Word of Truth and Disputes About Words* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Carpenter, 1987) 207.

DISPENSATIONALISM'S ROLE IN THE PUBLIC SQUARE

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After being criticized for years because of its “do-nothing passivity,” Dispensationalism has most recently received criticism for its undue influence on foreign policies of the United States and England. Timothy P. Weber’s case against Dispensationalism relates mostly to the United States, and Stephen Sizer faults the system’s impact on both Great Britain and the USA. The land-promise aspect of God’s promise to Abraham, a promise repeated frequently throughout the OT, is the crux of the issue for both critics: to whom does the land of Israel belong? Covenant theologians, in line with their view that the church has replaced Israel in the ongoing program of God, deny that the land-promise to Israel is still valid. The approach of New Covenant Theology takes the physical land promise as being fulfilled in the spiritual salvation of God’s people. Kingdom Theology takes an “already/not yet” approach to NT teaching about the kingdom, which essentially denies Israel a central role in the future kingdom. Though Progressive Dispensationalism is more “Israelitish” than Kingdom Theology regarding the future kingdom, that system is quite ambivalent on how it sees a fulfillment of the land promise to Israel. Dispensationalism is the only system that takes the land promise in the way that Abraham understood God when He made the promise. It is no wonder then that the USA and Great Britain have been politically favorable to Israel in light of Dispensationalism’s indirect influence on their foreign policies. Dispensationalism has also evidenced a largely overlooked social impact in the public square.

* * * * *

Dispensational theology has often received criticism for its “long heritage of fundamentalistic application of dispensational eschatology to the prospects of activism within the social order.”¹ As Weber has observed, “Critics charged that dispensationalism inoculated its advocates with a kind of do-nothing passivity,

¹Russell D. Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ: The New Evangelical Perspective* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2004) 67.

mainly because of its pessimistic and fatalistic worldview: Human civilization is doomed to decline, the forces of evil will inevitably overwhelm the forces of good, and there is nothing that anyone can do about it.”² According to Russell D. Moore, “Evangelical theology . . . faces the (often valid) criticisms of both liberation theologians on the left and theonomic theologians on the right that evangelical theology has been hijacked by an eschatology that ignores sociopolitical issues in an apocalyptic flight from the world.”³ In Moore’s estimation, a large share of the blame for fundamentalistic isolationism in the sociopolitical realm lies with Dispensationalism.

On the other side of the ledger, two recent works by non-dispensationalists have called attention to the strong influence on United States foreign policy that Dispensationalism has wielded since the nineteenth century. The two works, authored by Timothy P. Weber and Stephen Sizer, are worthy of brief summaries.

Timothy P. Weber

Church historian Timothy P. Weber has much to say about the effect of Dispensationalism on U. S. policy in dealing with Israel as the subtitle of his book indicates: *How Evangelicals Became Israel's Best Friend*.⁴ Early in the work, he writes,

Dispensationalists interpret Bible prophecy more or less literally and put prophetic texts together in complex ways. They make up about one-third of America’s forty or fifty million evangelical Christians and believe firmly that the nation of Israel will play a central role in the unfolding of end-times events. This book tells the story of how dispensationalist evangelicals became Israel’s best friends in the last part of the twentieth century and what difference that friendship has made in recent times (9).

Weber continues,

For over one hundred years, their insistence on the restoration of the Jewish state in the Holy Land seemed far-fetched and extremely unlikely. But in the middle of the twentieth century, history seemed to follow their prophetic script. After the founding of Israel in 1948 and its expansion after the Six-Day War, dispensationalists aggressively promoted their ideas with the confidence that Bible prophecy was being fulfilled for all to see. Starting in the 1970s, dispensationalists broke into the popular culture with runaway best-sellers, plenty of media visibility, and a well-networked political campaign to promote and protect the interests of Israel. Since the mid-1990s, tens of millions of people who have never seen a prophetic chart or listened to a sermon on the second coming have read one or more novels in the Left Behind series, which has become the most effective

²Timothy P. Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon: How Evangelicals Became Israel's Best Friend* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004) 45.

³Ibid., 69.

⁴Ibid., in the discussion to follow, page numbers from this work will be cited in the text at the conclusion of each quote.

disseminator of dispensationalist ideas ever. How did all this happen? This book seeks to answer that question (15).

Weber recounts how dispensationalists were willing to sit in the bleachers and watch world events while continuing to propound their doctrines of Israel's restoration, but beginning in 1948 they left the bleachers, went onto the playing field, and became active shapers of events (15). Viewed by non-dispensationalists as pessimistic and fatalist in their prophetic views, dispensationalists developed a perspective of passivity in the face of civilization's inevitable decline and yet worked hard to make things better in the time that remained (16, 45-46; cf. 86, 93, 93-94, 95, 96, 106, 110, 112, 128, 130, 153, 157, 160, 168, 171, 186, 187, 198, 200, 201, 202-3).

To explain the growing influence of Dispensationalism, Weber reasons,

The educational and ecclesiastical elite tended to reject dispensationalism as a doctrine, but the conservatives among them usually found a way to welcome dispensationalists into their mounting opposition to theological liberalism and higher criticism. Among the first adopters of the new premillennialism was an impressive group of evangelical movers and shakers, mostly "second-tier" pastors, Bible teachers, and revivalists with large constituencies. This group contained evangelical entrepreneurs who knew how to promote dispensationalism, establish strong supporting institutions, and popularize it among evangelicals in the pew. In this way, dispensationalism often flew under the radar of scholars and church leaders who were out of touch with rank-and-file believers. By the time the elites noticed, dispensationalism was already well established among conservative evangelicals, with vibrant networks of its own. What was the key to their success? During a time of mounting crisis over the Bible's reliability and accessibility to laypeople, dispensationalists were able to "out-Bible" everybody else in sight (26).

Weber's conclusion after amassing a huge amount of detail is that by the 1980s Dispensationalism was a mighty force in U. S. foreign policy.

As the 1984 presidential election approached, political reporters hotly pursued the connection between premillennialism and right-wing politics, especially after Reagan's own dispensationalist beliefs began to surface. . . . Then 175 public radio stations carried a documentary titled "Ronald Reagan and the Politics of Armageddon," which explored similar themes. In October, the Christic Institute of Washington, D.C., presented evidence in a news conference that American foreign policy was being unduly influenced by dispensationalists (201).

Whether the growing influence was caused by "evangelical entrepreneurs who knew how to promote dispensationalism, establish strong supporting institutions, and popularize it among evangelicals in the pew" (26) or by dispensationalists ability to "'out-Bible' everybody else in sight" (26) is a matter of opinion, however. Evidence favors the latter and concurs with Boyer that the influence was more "subterranean

and indirect”⁵ than attributable to the visibility and charisma of certain dispensational spokesmen. Without a long history of dispensational, biblical teaching in local churches, educational institutions, and other outlets, the gifted leaders whose names are well-known would never have gained a hearing.

Stephen Sizer

Stephen Sizer⁶ has undertaken a study of Dispensationalism similar to that of Weber, but from a perspective much more antagonistic toward Dispensationalism. He entitles his work *Christian Zionism: Road-map to Armageddon?*⁷ Sizer traces the origin of Christian Zionism back to the Protestant Reformation and the emergence of literal interpretation among the laity.⁸ Differing with Calvin and Luther, Theodore Beza and Martin Bucer took the name Israel in Rom 11:25 to refer to unbelieving Jews and Judaism.⁹ Editions of the Geneva Bible in 1557 and 1560 adopted that view as did Puritans William Perkins and Hugh Broughton.¹⁰ The view was that the Jewish people would be converted and, before the second coming, would return to Palestine to enjoy a national existence alongside other nations.¹¹ After the demise of postmillennialism, two forms of premillennialism arose: historic or covenant premillennialism and dispensational premillennialism.¹² The former held that “Jewish people would be incorporated within the church and return to Palestine a converted nation alongside other Christian nations,” and the latter that “the Jewish people would return to the land before or after their conversion but would remain distinctly separate from the church.”¹³ In Sizer’s opinion, “The former view became the driving force behind the restorationist movement and British Christian Zionism, while the latter view came to dominate in the United States.”¹⁴

Sizer opines,

Zionism would have remained simply a religious ideal were it not for the intervention of a handful of influential aristocratic politicians who came to share the theological convictions of Way, Irving and Darby and translated them in to political reality. One in

⁵Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992) 146.

⁶Stephen Sizer is vicar of Christ Church, Virginia Water, Surrey, and has been Chairman of the International Bible Society (UK).

⁷Leicester Lei 7GP, England: Inter-Varsity, 2004.

⁸Sizer, *Christian Zionism* 27.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid., 27-28.

¹¹Ibid., 30.

¹²Ibid., 34.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

particular, Lord Shaftesbury (1801-1885), became convinced that the restoration of the Jews to Palestine was not only predicted in the Bible, but coincided with the strategic interests of British foreign policy.¹⁵

Sizer mentions a number of prominent political figures in Great Britain and the United States whose evangelical upbringing with a dispensational emphasis played a major role in their country's friendly policy toward Israel. Among them are Arthur James Balfour (1848-1930) in England and Ronald Reagan in the United States.¹⁶ He is particularly pointed in his description of Reagan's impact on the U.S. pro-Israel stance, a stance that has been maintained by the three U.S. presidents after him.¹⁷

Sizer acknowledges the claims of Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell that one hundred million Americans—i.e., Christian Zionists—communicate with and support them weekly. He also acknowledges Halsell's estimate of between twenty-five and thirty million Zionist Christians in America.¹⁸ Whatever figure is correct, operating mostly outside denominational hierarchy and academia, Zionist Christianity (i.e., Dispensationalism) is a powerful force in this country.

Land Promises to Israel as Motivation for U. S. Policy

With a general awareness and widespread agreement that Dispensationalism has impacted U. S. foreign policy in this country's dealings with Israel, one might ask the question, What about Dispensationalism has produced such an effect? And, What has been the impact of other theological systems on U. S. foreign policy? An obvious answer to both questions lies in reflecting on one particular aspect of the Abrahamic covenant.

Without question, God promised Abraham a specific plot of land on the earth as it is currently known, a land that was populated by numerous groups of people:¹⁹ "Now the Canaanite was then in the land. The LORD appeared to Abram and said, 'To your descendants I will give this land'" (Gen 12:6b-7a; cf. references to the land's Canaanite, Hittite, Amorite, Perizzite, Hivite, and Jebusite inhabitants in Exod 3:8). One passage among others in which God's promise to Abraham was confirmed is Gen 15:18-21: "On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, 'To your descendants I have given this land, From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates: the Kenite and the Kenizzite and the Kadmonite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Rephaim and the Amorite and the

¹⁵Ibid., 55.

¹⁶Ibid., 63, 86.

¹⁷Ibid., 86-89.

¹⁸Ibid., 23.

¹⁹Ronald B. Allen, "The Land of Israel," in *Israel the Land and the People: An Evangelical Affirmation of God's Promises*, ed. H. Wayne House (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998) 21.

Canaanite and the Girgashite and the Jebusite.” The territory thus described has an estimated size of “300,000 square miles or twelve and one-half times the size of Great Britain and Ireland.”²⁰

Through that unilateral covenant God obligated Himself, no one else, to give the land to Abraham, later confirming it as a perpetual inheritance through circumcision in Gen 17:7-11.²¹ God repeated the same basic promise to Abraham’s son Isaac (Gen 26:3) and to his grandson Jacob (Gen 28:4;28:24), whose son Joseph still later alluded to the promise (Gen 50:24).²² Since God swore to Abraham that He would fulfil His promise and then swore by Himself (Heb 6:13, 17-18)—His word in Gen 12:7 and His oath in Gen 22:16-17—God’s gifts to and callings of Israel are irrevocable (Rom 11:29).²³

Various theological systems have explained those land promises differently, but one has impacted public opinion more profoundly than the others in creating sympathy in America and elsewhere for Israel and her right to have sovereign control over the land or a portion thereof promised to Abraham. The following discussion will sample five different systems to see how they interpret the land promises: Covenant Theology, New Covenant Theology, Kingdom Theology, Progressive Dispensationalism, and Dispensationalism.

Covenant Theology

In initiating his case for replacement theology, covenant theologian Sizer writes,

While Christian Zionists generally afford Israel a special status above the church, dispensationalists also believe Israel will succeed the church. So it is ironic that they accuse covenantalists of perpetrating a ‘replacement theology’ for suggesting the church has replaced Israel.²⁴

He then proceeds to note, “There is, however, no indication in the text of Genesis 12 that this promise of blessing and warning and cursing was ever intended to extend beyond Abraham.”²⁵

Sizer and covenantalists like him usually point out, “[T]he idea that the Jewish people continue to enjoy a special status by virtue of the covenants made with

²⁰Charles L. Feinberg, *Israel: At the Center of History & Revelation*, 3d. ed. (Portland, Ore: Multnomah, 1980) 168.

²¹Walter C. Kaiser Jr., “The Land of Israel and the Future Return (Zechariah 10:6-12),” *Israel the Land and the People: An Evangelical Affirmation of God’s Promises* 211.

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Sizer, *Christian Zionism* 146.

²⁵Ibid., 148.

the Patriarchs is in conflict with the clear and unambiguous statements of the New Testament.”²⁶ To support such a statement, he cites Acts 3:23, “Anyone who does not listen to him [Christ] will be completely cut off from among his people” (NIV), and concludes that if Peter’s Jewish listeners “persisted in refusing to recognize Jesus as their Messiah, they would cease to be the people of God.”²⁷

Sizer also cites Peter’s encounter in the house of Cornelius and Peter’s words, “I now realise how true it is that God does not show favouritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right” (Acts 10:34-35), using them to prove that “it cannot logically be presumed that Jews continue to enjoy a favoured or exclusive status.”²⁸ He even goes so far as to agree with Bass’ view that Dispensationalism’s distinction between Israel and the church may be seen as heresy.²⁹

Sizer cites James’ use of Amos 9:11-12 in Acts 15:16-18 to demonstrate that James is “spiritualizing” the OT text to vindicate “the universality of the gospel and the results of the first-century mission.”³⁰ In doing so, he denies that James has any reference to a predetermined and futuristic plan for national Israel, separate from the church.³¹ He refers to other Scriptures such as Matt 8:10-12 and Luke 14:14-24 to show that believing Gentiles will replace unbelieving Jews in the future kingdom.³² In these passages, Sizer’s use of proof-texts leaves much to be desired.

In advocating that Israel ceased to be the people of God because of her rejection of Jesus as the promised Messiah, what Sizer misses is a point that Beecher made over a hundred years ago:

So far forth as its benefits accrue to any particular person or generation in Israel, it is conditioned on their obedience. But in its character as expressing God’s purpose of blessing for the human race, we should not expect it to depend on the obedience or disobedience of a few.³³

In Kaiser’s words, “The conditionality was not attached to the promise but only to the

²⁶Ibid., 149.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid., 150.

²⁹Ibid.. See Clarence Bass, *Backgrounds to Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960) 27-29, who says that Dispensationalism is a departure from historic Christianity.

³⁰Sizer, *Christian Zionism* 157.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid., 158-59. Among the Scriptures used by Robert L. Reymond to demonstrate that ethnic Israel has no claim on the land promises made to Abraham are the following: Matt 21:33-45 = Mark 12:1-12 = Luke 20:9-19; 1 Thess 2:15-16; Rom 9:27-29 (“Who Really Owns the ‘Holy Land’? Part 2,” *The Trinity Review* 257 [July 2006]:1-2).

³³Willis J. Beecher, *The Prophets and the Promise* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1905; reprint, Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock, 2002) 220.

participants who would benefit from these abiding promises.”³⁴ By this Kaiser meant that participation in the blessings depended on an individual’s spiritual condition.³⁵ A future generation will arise who will obey and be spiritually prepared to inherit precisely the land that God promised to Abraham. The validity of God’s promise does not depend on Israel’s obedience. It depends on God’s faithfulness to His covenant.

One wonders whether those who think the land promises to Abraham will go unfulfilled because of Israel’s faithlessness would say the same thing about God’s promise of making Abraham a blessing to all nations. Genesis 12:3c records, “And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.” Would they say that this promise has also been abrogated by Israel’s lack of faithfulness? This promise of spiritual blessing to Abraham of being a spiritual blessing to all nations is still in effect and will be fulfilled to the letter just like another aspect of the Abrahamic covenant, the land promise. Thus, Sizer is quite mistaken when he writes, “Subsequent to Pentecost, under the illumination of the Holy Spirit, the apostles begin to use old covenant language concerning the land in new ways.”³⁶

New Covenant Theology

New Covenant Theology handles the land promises to Abraham differently. That position starts by affirming that the promises were fulfilled when Israel under Joshua’s leadership conquered Canaan. Michael W. Adams quotes the OT book of Joshua on this point:

So the LORD gave Israel all the land he had sworn to give their forefathers, and they took possession of it and settled there. The LORD gave them rest on every side, just as he had sworn to their forefathers. Not one of their enemies withstood them; the LORD handed all their enemies over to them. *Not one of the LORD’S good promises to the house of Israel failed; every one was fulfilled. Joshua 21:43-45, Emphasis Added.*³⁷

From this passage he surmises, “It seems quite clear from Joshua 21 that under Joshua’s leadership, the nation of Israel experienced rest from oppression on every one of their borders. We do not know how long this rest lasted, but the Joshua passage makes it very evident to us that they *did* rest.”³⁸

Adams acknowledges that the rest did not last and then cites Heb 4:8-9: “For if Joshua *had given them rest*, God would not have spoken later about another day.

³⁴Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978) 94.

³⁵Kaiser, “Land of Israel” 212-13.

³⁶Sizer, *Christian Zionism* 169.

³⁷Michael W. Adams, “In Defense of the New Covenant: A Theological Response to Richard Barcellos’ Book, In Defense of the Decalogue: A Critique of New Covenant Theology” (<http://www.ncbf.net/PDF/Defense.pdf>, 8, accessed 8/7/06). [emphasis in the original]

³⁸*Ibid.*, 9. [emphasis in the original]

There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God.”³⁹ He points out that the only way to avoid a contradiction between the two passages is to see the author of Hebrews as viewing the physical picture of Israel in the land as finding “its true fulfillment in salvation, resulting in heaven for every believer.”⁴⁰ In other words, the land promises to Abraham are a physical picture of a spiritual truth that would never have been known from the OT alone. The NT gives completely new information on the subject.

John G. Reisinger follows a similar line of argument in pointing to Luke 1:68-79 to prove that the promise to Abraham remained unfulfilled throughout the OT. When Christ came, its fulfillment came and was spiritual in nature.⁴¹ He acknowledges the correctness of dispensational teaching that throughout the OT the land promise had to do with physical land, but says that Luke totally spiritualizes that promise. In speaking of dispensationalists, he states, “Their adamant ‘naturalizing’ of specific things that NT Apostles spiritualize make those NT passages impossible to understand.”⁴²

He summarizes,

The NT Scriptures never once interpret the covenant with Abraham to deal with the land of Palestine, let alone make the land the primary part of the promise. The exact opposite is true in the OT Scriptures. The land is the heart of the covenant promise to Abraham from Genesis 15 to the end of the OT Scriptures but stops at Malachi. The ‘land promise’ is never repeated in the NT Scriptures.⁴³

He continues his criticism of Dispensationalism’s view of physical land promises:

They must also *naturalize* the blessing promised to Abraham that Peter clearly *spiritualizes*. . . . It has always amazed me that the people that insist on a literal interpretation of the *words of Scripture* will not do that very thing when a New Testament Apostle literally *spiritualizes* an Old Testament prophecy.⁴⁴

Reisinger basically agrees with Dispensationalism regarding OT interpretation but feels that the NT alters that interpretation:

I personally believe the NT Scriptures make the physical land to be a type of spiritual rest and the Israelite to be a type of a true believer. However, we could not come to that conclusion from anything in the OT Scriptures. If all we had was the OT Scriptures, it would be very easy to hold the same view of Israel and the Land of Israel as that held by

³⁹Ibid. [emphasis in the original]

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹John G. Reisinger, *Abraham's Four Seeds* (Frederick, Md.: New Covenant Media, 1998) 89-91.

⁴²Ibid., 28.

⁴³Ibid., 39-40.

⁴⁴Ibid., 41. [emphasis in the original]

Dispensationalism.⁴⁵

His position is, "I believe the Dispensationalist is wrong in not seeing that the NT Scriptures spiritualize the land promise, but the answer is not to deny what the Old Testament Scriptures clearly say."⁴⁶

All this brings Reisinger to conclude, "[W]e must realize that there is not a single repetition, or mention, of the land promise in any passage in the NT Scriptures including Romans 11 and the entire book of Revelation."⁴⁷

His interesting proposal raises questions, however. To what land was Jesus referring when he spoke of the future repentance of the city of Jerusalem (Matt 23:37-39)? Is it not the city that most prominently represents the land promised to Abraham? Zion is a name often assigned to Jerusalem. The NT is not void of references to geographical Zion, is it (cf. Rom 9:33; 11:26)? The book of Revelation has frequent references to Jerusalem and therefore to the land of Israel. Revelation 11:1-13 tells of the measuring of the temple and two witnesses active in Jerusalem, and a revival that will take place in that city following a great earthquake. Beale in his commentary on Revelation follows an eclectic philosophy of hermeneutics.⁴⁸ In his commentary, Osborne does the same except when he combines not just idealism and futurism. He also mixes in a bit of preterism.⁴⁹ Through their combining of idealist, futurist, and even preterist interpretations, both men shy away from understanding "Jerusalem" in a geographical sense. Yet the language could hardly be clearer. John has in mind the earthly city as he records the vision given him. Aune agrees with Osborne that the temple refers to the heavenly temple, not the earthly one, but he does so under the assumption that the earthly temple will not be rebuilt.⁵⁰ Yet he later acknowledges that the temple described in 11:1-2 is most definitely the earthly temple in Jerusalem.⁵¹ He also believes that "the holy city" is a clear reference to the earthly city Jerusalem that is referred to again in 11:8. Through a combination of source and form critical explanations of the passage, Aune is able to combine literal-futuristic interpretations of the passage with allegorical-idealistic explanations.

Other references in Revelation to the land promised to Abraham include Rev

⁴⁵Ibid., 84.

⁴⁶Ibid., 91.

⁴⁷Ibid., 92.

⁴⁸G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The International Greek Testament Commentary, eds. I. Howard Marshall and Donald A. Hagner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999) 48-49.

⁴⁹Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002) 21-22.

⁵⁰David E Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, vol. 52b of *Word Biblical Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998) 596-97.

⁵¹Ibid., 605.

16:16 and 20:9. The former refers to a place called Harmagedon where a future battle will be fought. The “Har” prefix probably refers to the hill country around a town called Megiddo. Megiddo was a city on the Great Road linking Gaza and Damascus, connecting the coastal plain and the Plain of Esdraelon or Megiddo. The reference in 20:9 speaks of “the camp of the saints and the beloved city,” most clearly a reference to the city of Jerusalem. Regarding “the beloved city” Aune comments, “Since the heavenly Jerusalem does not make its appearance until 21:10 (aside from 3:12), ‘the beloved city’ cannot be the New Jerusalem but must be the earthly Jerusalem.”⁵² Yet one should not conclude that Aune interprets Revelation futuristically. Because of his source and redaction critical assumptions he simply assumes that the final editor of the Apocalypse incorporated earlier traditions and/or myths into the passage. In addition, Rev 16:12 mentions the Euphrates River which was one of the boundaries of the land promised to Abraham (cf. Gen 15:18). That is the river the kings from the east must cross to get to Harmagedon.

Reisinger’s claim that no land promise occurs in the NT falls short by not recognizing that the land promise is assumed in the NT. It is a holdover from the OT, never having been abrogated. Interestingly, this same gentleman allows for an ongoing distinctiveness of Israel as a people, however: “I personally believe that Israel, as a people, is still a unique people in God’s purposes. However, as a nation, they do not have any spiritual or eternal purposes independent of the church. . . . It is one thing to think of Israel as a physical nation with national and earthly distinctions and another to think of Israel as a people with God’s peculiar mark upon them.”⁵³ His is a strange position, admitting that Israel is a unique people in God’s purposes and yet denying them the role of a chosen nation, strange indeed in light of Paul’s words “who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh” (Rom 9:4-5a). Paul unequivocally speaks of Israel as a people unique in their relation to God.

New Covenant Theology forfeits its credibility by failing to do justice to God’s follow-up to His promise of giving Abraham the land “[f]rom the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates” (Gen 15:18).

Kingdom Theology

Kingdom Theology lays heavy emphasis on the centrality of the Kingdom in the Bible. Russell D. Moore represents the cause of Kingdom Theology [hereafter KT] and places the blame for the failure of evangelicals in the sociopolitical arena on an inadequate evangelical theology of the Kingdom: “[T]he failure of evangelical politics points us to something far more important that underlies it—the failure of

⁵²David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52c of *Word Biblical Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas, 1998) 1098-99.

⁵³Reisinger, *Abraham’s Four Seeds* 44.

evangelical theology.”⁵⁴ The position places heavy emphasis on the work of Carl F. H. Henry, particularly in his *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*.⁵⁵ As seen by Russell D. Moore, Henry was a leader in the new evangelical movement right after World War II that sought to cure evangelicalism of its fundamentalistic isolation from the activity of contemporary society and politics:

Henry's *Uneasy Conscience*, after all, was not first of all a sociopolitical tract. Instead, it served in many ways to define theologically much of what it means to be a “new evangelical,” in contrast to the older fundamentalism. Along with Ramm, Carnell, and others, Henry pressed the theological case for evangelicalism in terms of a vigorous engagement with nonevangelical thought. As articulated by Henry and the early constellations of evangelical theology, such as Fuller Theological Seminary and the National Association of Evangelicals, evangelicalism would not differ with fundamentalism in the “fundamentals” of doctrinal conviction, but in the application of Christian truth claims onto all areas of human endeavor. Henry's *Uneasy Conscience*, which set the stage for evangelical differentiation from isolationist American fundamentalism, sought to be what Harold J. Ockenga called in his foreword to the monograph “a healthy antidote to fundamentalist aloofness in a distraught world.” Thus, the call to sociopolitical engagement was not incidental to evangelical theological identity, but was at the forefront of it. Henry's *Uneasy Conscience*, and the movement it defined, sought to distinguish the postwar evangelical effort so that evangelical theologians, as one observer notes, “found themselves straddling the fence between two well-established positions: fundamentalist social detachment and the liberal Social Gospel.”⁵⁶

“In addition,” Moore continues, “evangelicalism was divided into two camps, the covenantalists and the dispensationalists with their differing view of the Kingdom, a division that hindered evangelicalism from having a united impact on the secular world.”⁵⁷ Henry considered the debates between premillennialists and amillennialists that divided evangelicalism as secondary issues. As Moore puts it,

Henry's *Uneasy Conscience* waded into the Kingdom debate as an incipient call for a new consensus, one that was a break from the Kingdom concept of classical dispensationalism and also from the spiritual understanding of many covenant theologians. Henry was joined in this by the exegetical and biblical theological syntheses of George Eldon Ladd, who went even further in calling for a new evangelical vision of the Kingdom, usually riling both dispensational premillennialists and covenant amillennialists in the process.⁵⁸

In Moore's estimation, the consensus for which Henry pled has begun to emerge:

⁵⁴Moore, *Kingdom of Christ* 11.

⁵⁵Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1947.

⁵⁶Moore, *Kingdom of Christ* 19.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 21.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 22.

Remarkably, the move toward a consensus Kingdom theology has come most markedly not from the broad center of the evangelical coalition, as represented by Henry or Ladd, but from the rival streams of dispensationalism and covenant theology themselves. Progressive dispensationalists, led by theologians such as Craig Blaising, Darrell Bock, and Robert Saucy, have set forth a counterproposal to almost the entire spectrum of traditional dispensational thought. With much less fanfare, but with equal significance, a group of covenant theologians, led by scholars such as Anthony Hoekema, Vern Poythress, Edmund Clowney, and Richard Gaffin, has also proposed significant doctrinal development within their tradition.⁵⁹

In the absence of an adequate theology of the Kingdom, Moore sees promising signs of an emerging consensus that would place KT as the central focus of evangelicalism. He promotes inaugurated eschatology along with an anticipation of a future Kingdom as the means to bring evangelicals together, i.e., the “‘already/not’ eschatological framework of Ladd.”⁶⁰ He commends progressive dispensational theologians for systematizing an inaugurated eschatology with a clear “‘already’” facet that is quite similar to the one proposed by Henry and constructed by Ladd.⁶¹

In the covenantal camp of evangelicalism, Moore thinks that the emerging consensus was not as noticeable: “The move toward an ‘already/not yet’ framework of eschatology by evangelical theology’s covenantal Reformed tradition was not as noticeable as the developments within Dispensationalism.”⁶² Covenantalists already had a theory of an inaugurated eschatology. Their move came in recognizing that the present soteriological stage of the Kingdom is an initial stage of a future eschatological consummation:

Thus, for Gaffin and likeminded Reformed theologians, the Kingdom present is not an exclusively soteriological matter pointing to an eschatological consummation. It is itself a manifestation of an initial fulfillment of the promised eschatological hope. “A global, elemental consideration, that comes from taking in the history of revelation in its organic wholeness, is the essentially unified eschatological hope of the Old Testament, a hope which, to generalize, has a single focus on the arrival of the Day of the Lord, inaugurated by the coming of the Messiah,” Gaffin asserts. “From this perspective, the first and second comings, distinguished by us on the basis of the New Testament, are held together as two episodes of *one* (eschatological) coming.”⁶³

Moore laments the fact that both dispensationalists and covenantalists miss the major point in identifying the seed of Abraham:

⁵⁹Ibid., 23.

⁶⁰Ibid., 39.

⁶¹Ibid., 40.

⁶²Ibid., 44.

⁶³Ibid., 47.

Until this point, both dispensationalist and covenantal evangelicals discussed the issue as though it could be abstracted from the purposes of God in the true Israelite, Jesus of Nazareth. . . . Both sides miss the impact of the mystery Paul is unveiling when he argues against the Judaizers that the “seed of Abraham” who inherits the kingdom promises is not plural but singular (Gal. 3:16a). Indeed, Paul explicitly identifies the “offspring of Abraham”—the Israel of God—as Jesus of Nazareth (Gal. 3:16b).⁶⁴

He criticizes dispensationalists for giving Israel a major role in the future millennium: “Dispensationalists, even progressives, mistakenly speak of the millennial Israel as having a ‘mediatorial’ role in dispensing the blessings of God to the nations. . . . The identification of Jesus with Israel—as her king, her substitute, and her goal—is everywhere throughout the apostolic understanding of the Old Testament promise.”⁶⁵ He criticizes covenantalists for their use of “replacement theology”: “As with the doctrine of salvation, this tension is resolved not by arguing for a ‘replacement’ of a Jewish nation with a largely Gentile church, but by centering on the head/body relationship between the church and Jesus, the true Israelite.”⁶⁶ Nevertheless, he still has no place in his Kingdom program for a special role of national Israel.

Moore disapproves of interpreting Abraham’s land promises to refer to the “spiritual” blessings of forgiveness of sins and eternal life.⁶⁷ He prefers rather to side with Justin Martyr who saw “all the promises to Israel—both material and spiritual—as belonging to Jesus the Israelite—and therefore by legal inheritance to those who are united to Him as His ‘brothers’ (John 20:17, ESV; Heb. 2:11, ESV).”⁶⁸ When the disciples asked Jesus when He would restore the Kingdom to Israel (Acts 1:6), according to Moore, Jesus did not dodge their question. Rather, “He is the ‘Immanuel,’ the temple presence of God with the people (Matt. 1:23; John 1:14; 2:19-21).”⁶⁹ National Israel has no future Kingdom, but Jesus does. Moore asks, “What does the resurrected Jesus inherit?” and answers, “The promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Acts 13:32-33). Thus, when dispensationalists speak of the ‘future’ of Israel, they should speak of it in terms of the ‘future’ of Jesus—a future He promises to share with His ‘friends’ (John 15:14-15).”⁷⁰

From the above survey, that Kingdom Theology has no place for referring Abraham’s land promises to a plot of ground on the surface of the present earth is evident. Moore’s case built on the new evangelicalism that arose after World War II is extremely interesting, but its use of Scripture is careless. It is another example of “hopscotch” exegesis, hopping from one text to another, never taking time to

⁶⁴Ibid., 117.

⁶⁵Ibid., 118.

⁶⁶Ibid., 149.

⁶⁷Ibid., 119.

⁶⁸Ibid., 120.

⁶⁹Ibid., 119.

⁷⁰Ibid.

investigate the contextual meaning of each verse cited. His case is primarily lacking in its failure to examine the Gospels carefully to delineate in detail the different ways that Jesus spoke of the Kingdom during His time on earth.

Progressive Dispensationalism

The similarity between Progressive Dispensationalism (hereafter, usually PD) and the covenant premillennialism of George Ladd has frequently been noted.⁷¹ Yet Nichols sees the millennium of PD as far more “Israelitish” than that of Ladd.⁷² In investigating the land promise to Abraham, one must ask, How much more Israelitish than covenant premillennialism is Progressive Dispensationalism? One feature that PD does have in common with the modified covenantal position is its willingness to combine the millennium and the eternal state into one dispensation, speaking of them as two phases of the one, final, future Kingdom.⁷³ What have they done with Israel’s land promise?

Apparently, Craig Blaising and Darrell Bock merge Gentiles with Israel in Israel’s future inheritance:

We can illustrate this progressive dispensational view of the church in the case of Jewish Christians. A Jew who becomes a Christian today does not lose his or her relationship to Israel’s future promises. Jewish Christians will join the Old Testament remnant of faith in the inheritance of Israel. Gentile Christians will be joined by saved Gentiles of earlier dispensations. All together, Jews and Gentiles will share the same blessings of the Spirit, as testified to by the relationship of Jew and Gentile in the church of this dispensation. The result will be that all peoples will be reconciled in peace, their ethnic and national differences being no cause for hostility. Earlier forms of dispensationalism, for all their emphasis on the future for Israel, excluded Jewish Christians from that future, postulating the church as a different people-group from Israel and Gentiles.⁷⁴

In its emphasis on only one people of God, PD must make everyone, including Gentiles in the church and saved Gentiles from other dispensations, inheritors of Israel’s promises. That does not make for a very “Israelitish” millennium. It rather merges everyone into the inheritance promised to Israel, or else it denies Israel what God had promised her.

From his perspective, covenantalist Vern S. Poythress notes the dilemma of

⁷¹Ibid., 208 n. 126. See also Vern S. Poythress, *Understanding Dispensationalists* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P & R, 1994) 137, who writes, “The forces that their [i.e., progressive dispensationalists’] own observation have set in motion will most likely lead to covenantal premillennialism after the pattern of George E. Ladd.”

⁷²Stephen J. Nichols, review of *Progressive Dispensationalism*, by Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, *TrinJ* 15 (1994):255.

⁷³Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism: An Up-to-Date Handbook of Contemporary Dispensational Thought* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor, 1993) 101-2, 116-23.

⁷⁴Blaising and Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism* 50.

progressive dispensationalists:

The issue is whether it [i.e., the future “physical kingdom on earth”] is for believing Gentiles also. Do believing Jews at some future point have some distinctive priestly privileges or religious blessings *from which believing Gentiles are excluded*? Does the phrase “for Israel” in actuality mean for Israel and *not* for Gentiles”? Or does it mean, “for Israel and for believing Gentiles also, who inherit such blessings through union with Christ”? Classic dispensationalism insists on the former meaning. Covenant theology insists on the latter.⁷⁵

At this juncture, it appears that Progressive Dispensationalism agrees with covenant theology.

Poythress continues,

Let us be more specific about the implications. Theoretically, one might imagine a situation where, in the future kingdom, Jewish Christians live predominantly in the land of Palestine, whereas Gentile Christians live predominantly elsewhere. Such geographical distinctiveness does not in and of itself create a problem. However, dispensationalists want to find particular religious significance in one special land, the land of Palestine, as distinct from other lands. Canaan undeniably had such significance in the Old Testament period, because, I would argue, it typified the inheritance of the world in Christ (Rom. 4:13; Heb. 11:16).⁷⁶

Apparently, PD again falls into the same position as covenant theology. Poythress does not distinguish between the millennium and the eternal state. Neither do Bock and Blaising, but George Ladd does.

Covenant Theology has no place for Israel’s inheriting the land that God promised to Abraham. Neither does PD, apparently. The response of PD to the land-promise issue is either silence or a mixture. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum has sought information from PD advocates regarding their understanding of God’s land covenant with Israel (Deut 29:1–30:20), and has found nothing.⁷⁷ Blaising and Bock view the land covenant as part of the Mosaic Covenant.⁷⁸

Robert Saucy discusses the land promise extensively as part of the Abrahamic Covenant, but is inconsistent in his application of it.⁷⁹ He expands the “seed” promise to Abraham to include all those in union with Christ.⁸⁰ He then ties

⁷⁵Poythress. *Understanding Dispensationalists* 135.

⁷⁶Ibid., 136.

⁷⁷“The Land Covenant,” in *Progressive Dispensationalism: An Analysis of the Movement and Defense of Traditional Dispensationalism*, ed. Ron J. Bigalke Jr. (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2005) 96-97.

⁷⁸Blaising and Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism* 142-43.

⁷⁹Ron J. Bigalke Jr., *Progressive Dispensationalism: An Analysis* 53.

⁸⁰Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progresssive Dispensationalism: The Interface Between Dispensational & Non-Dispensational Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993) 44.

the land promise to the seed promise as a land needing occupants.⁸¹ From that point, he develops extensively the position that the land promise must refer to the geographical territory originally promised to Abraham.⁸² In concluding his discussion of the land, he writes, "Thus the land aspect of the Abrahamic promise retains validity in the New Testament. . . . There is no evidence that the promise of the land has been either completely fulfilled historically or reinterpreted to mean a symbol of heaven or the blessing of spiritual life in general."⁸³ Yet he then goes on to say, "The spiritual position of being 'in Christ' in no way cancels out the reality of a real material universe, which is also the inheritance of the believer with Christ."⁸⁴ What is the land, then? Is it what God promised to Abraham, or is it the whole earth? Who are the "seed" of Abraham who will inherit the land? Abraham's physical descendants or all who are in Christ?

At best, PD sends a mixed message regarding the land promised to Abraham. At worst, it denies the fulfillment of the promise altogether.

Dispensationalism

Political Impact of Dispensationalism

The position of Dispensationalism in regard to the land promise made to Abraham has been summed up as follows:

The Abrahamic Covenant, and the sub-covenants of land, seed and blessing, is fulfilled in the thousand-year kingdom period. The Jews will be in the land as fulfillment of the promise. The clear biblical teaching is that the Son of David will be reigning and ruling as promised on the literal throne of David in Jerusalem. Jews and Gentiles, who enter the kingdom in their natural bodies are redeemed and blessed by the earlier work of Christ on the cross.⁸⁵

When God promised Abraham that his seed would inherit *this* land, Abraham understood God's words the same way that Adam understood God's words in Gen 2:16-17: "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die." In a sinless environment, Adam accurately transmitted what God had told him to Eve, because Eve's response to the serpent reflected such accuracy: "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²Ibid., 45, 47-48, 50-56.

⁸³Ibid., 56-57.

⁸⁴Ibid., 57.

⁸⁵Ron J. Bigalke Jr. and Mal Couch, "The Relationship Between Covenants and Dispensations," in *Progressive Dispensationalism: An Analysis* 36

it or touch it, or you will die” (Gen 3:3). In a sinless environment, Eve’s repetition of God’s instructions to her husband could not have been a distortion or an exaggeration. She did not report verbatim what Moses recorded in Gen 2:16-17, but probably chose words from a more extended discussion between God and Adam that was not recorded. She committed no sin of misrepresentation at this point; her sin came a little later when she acted on the serpent’s suggestion in eating the forbidden fruit. Before that suggestion, no distorted interpretation had occurred. The first hermeneutical error in understanding what God had said came in the serpent’s suggestion: “You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Gen 3:4-5). The serpent imposed a certain preunderstanding of the words on Eve, perhaps something like “God just gave you life by creating you; surely He will not take it away.” Unfortunately, Eve and Adam took his bait and the sad result is history.

At that point in history, national Israel had no existence. National Israel came into existence the moment that God said to Abram, “Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father’s house, To the land which I will show you; And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed” (Gen 12:1-3). After Abram had obeyed, God became more specific regarding the land: “To your descendants [lit, seed] I will give this land” (Gen 12:7a).

How was Abram to understand God’s words? They were plain enough. Historically, the geographical location was quite specific in this and later wordings of the land promise. Dispensationalism interprets the words as God intended them and as Abram understood them. No typology. No spiritualizing. No symbolism. No preunderstanding of how the words must fit into a system of theology. No reading back into the words a later special revelation. To take the words in any other sense than what God intended and Abram understood is a distortion. Though Abram’s environment was no longer sinless, God was still perfectly capable of communicating clearly. He cannot lie and must be taken at His word. Abram understood God correctly, and so Israel became a nation chosen by God in possession of a particular plot of land on the present earth’s surface.

Poythress, who argues for a heavy use of typology in the OT, would say a conclusion as to how God intended his promise to Abraham must be suspended because Scripture is not that precise and often includes ambiguities that are only clarified later when Scripture is fulfilled. He explains,

In particular, does he [i.e., Ryrie] think that the significance of an Old Testament type may go beyond what can be seen in the original Old Testament context? Some, perhaps most, interpreters with an orthodox view of biblical inspiration would say yes. The argument would be as follows. God knows the end from the beginning. Therefore, as the divine author of the Bible he can establish a relation between the type and its antitypical fulfillment. Since the fulfillment comes only later, the type becomes richer than what is available by ordinary means in Old Testament times. In other words the divine intention for a type may, in certain cases, be richer than what one can obtain by grammatical-

historical interpretation. Such richness, properly conceived, will not *violate* grammatical-historical meaning, or go contrary to it. The richness will arise from the added significance to the type when it is compared to the fulfillment.⁸⁶

Poythress is mistaken in saying that if “the type becomes richer than what is available by ordinary means in Old Testament times,” it does not violate grammatical-historical meaning. He is wrong. Grammatical-historical meaning is set by the historical context in which words are spoken, never to be changed or added to. Adding meaning to the promises God made to Abraham or changing that meaning does violate the grammatical-historical meaning just as the serpent added and/or changed the meaning of the words God spoke to Adam. Poythress’ explanation assumes that the promises to Abraham were ambiguous and needed clarification, which they were not and did not.

God’s land covenant in Deut 29:1–30:20 with Israel reaffirmed the land promise that God made to Abraham.⁸⁷ The land promise to Abraham receives confirmation throughout the OT (e.g., Deut 30:5; Isa 27:12-13; Jer 31:1-5, 11-12; Ezek 20:42-44; 28:25-26; 34:25-26; 36:8-11, 28-38; Joel 3:18; Amos 9:13-15).⁸⁸ Even PD advocate Robert Saucy concurs that the NT continues to imply the validity of the land promise though it does not do so as explicitly as the OT.⁸⁹ As noted earlier, New Covenant theologian Reisinger agrees regarding the OT focus on the land promise, but disagrees regarding the NT.⁹⁰ By reading the NT back into the OT—specifically Heb 4:11—he takes the land promise of the OT to be a pledge of something greater, the spiritual rest promised to the believer.⁹¹ To say that the land promise had already been fulfilled in Joshua’s day (Josh 21:43-45)⁹² will not suffice because in David’s day, a long time later, fulfilment of the land promise was still future (1 Chron 16:13-18).⁹³

If PD and New Covenant Theology agree that in the OT the land promise pertained to precisely the geographical territory that God stipulated to Abraham, that confirms the case for Dispensationalism. The question then turns on whether the NT ever reversed that promise or spiritualized it into something else. Covenant Theology, New Covenant Theology, Kingdom Theology, and PD—PD for the most part—say that it did. Dispensationalism would reply that nothing of the sort

⁸⁶Poythress, *Understanding Dispensationalists* 90-91.

⁸⁷Fruchtenbaum, “Land Covenant” 88.

⁸⁸Even PD proponent Robert Saucy is specific in noting the continuation of the land promise to Abraham throughout the rest of the OT (Saucy, *Case for Progressive Dispensationalism* 47-48).

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, 50-57.

⁹⁰Reisinger, *Abraham’s Four Seeds* 39-40. See also n. 41 above.

⁹¹*Ibid.*, 87, 91-92; cf. also Michael W. Adams, “In Defense of the New Covenant” (accessed 7/12/06) 9.

⁹²Adams, “In Defense of the New Covenant” 8-9.

⁹³Reisinger, *Abraham’s Four Seeds* 90-91.

occurred. From Matthew through Revelation God's promises to Israel hold true. The only question is, Which generation of Israel will receive those promises? Certainly not the generation alive when Christ became a man, came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him (John 1:11). Christ Himself told that generation, "The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matt 21:43). He spoke of a future generation of Israel who will repent and fully embrace Him as the Messiah.

When He offered His contemporary, fellow-Jews the fulfillment of Abraham's promises, they resisted Him, causing Him to broaden His offer of spiritual blessings to the rest of humanity. Paul notes this transition in beneficiaries: "I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous. Now if their transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be!" (Rom 11:11-12).

When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, He worded His explanation of the cup to include not just Israel, but all people: "for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins" (Matt 26:28); "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood" (Luke 22:20); "This cup is the new covenant in my blood" (1 Cor 11:25). That Jesus by this statement expanded the group to be benefitted by the redemptive aspects of His sacrifice is evident from two features. (1) Jesus said His blood of the covenant—the new covenant, of course—was shed for *many*, not just for Israel. The adjective *πολλῶν* has a "comprehensive sense" in Matt 26:28 just as it does in Matt 20:28.⁹⁴ It carries the force of "all" the same as *πάντων* does in 1 Tim 2:6 (cf. Rom 5:15, 19). In wording His statement this way, Jesus thereby extended certain benefits of the new covenant beyond the boundaries of Israel. (2) Paul quoted Jesus' words instituting the Lord's Supper in writing to a predominantly Gentile church (1 Cor 11:25). Here again is another indication of the extension of certain benefits beyond the scope of national Israel. The applicability of that to Gentiles in the church indicated that Jesus was extending those benefits to others who are not Israelites. The extended benefits of the new covenant were not all-encompassing, but rather pertained only to the forgiveness of sins. Jesus never extended the land benefits of the Abrahamic Covenant to anyone else. Those belonged exclusively to the generation of national Israel who at His second coming will embrace Jesus as Israel's promised Messiah.

That fulfillment of the land promises to Israel remains in place is evident. A future generation of Israel who repent and receive Jesus as the Messiah will enjoy the benefits of that land-promise provision of the Abrahamic Covenant. What then does the land promise have to do with United States foreign policy toward Israel? As noted above, non-dispensational writers have granted that dispensational eschatology

⁹⁴W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997) 3:95, 474; Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, vol 33B of Word Biblical Commentary, eds. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker (Dallas: Word, 1995) 583, 773.

bears much of the responsibility for this aspect of U. S. policy.

Social Impact Added

The social impact of Dispensationalism has also been noticeable even though critics have been slow to acknowledge it. Weber does acknowledge the social exploits of dispensationalists during the twentieth century in their attempts to solve social ills.⁹⁵ He classifies these efforts as “giving the devil as much trouble as we can” before Christ returns.⁹⁶

Jim Owen has a much more extensive listing of dispensational benevolent exploits in society during the 1930s and 1940s.⁹⁷ Regarding Owen's work, mainstream historian Richard V. Pierard writes, “All in all, the most valuable part of the book is his detailed descriptions of what fundamentalists actually were doing in the political and social realms in the 1930s and 1940s. He forces us to reconsider our assumptions about their alleged non-involvement and to nuance our assessments of their work. They may have been doing the right things for the wrong reasons, but they certainly were not passive or indifferent to human needs.”⁹⁸

Owen's book tries in two ways to dispel the picture of fundamentalism as socially and politically isolated from contemporary problems of the 1930s and 1940s. He states,

First, sufficient evidence is offered to show that an important segment of historic fundamentalism was vigorously active in seeking to help alleviate the distress and poverty that attended the Great Depression, and was *anything* but politically moribund. . . . Second, because many historic fundamentalists were involved socially and politically, historians must be questioned as to why they have allowed this important segment of historic fundamentalist's history to be ignored, denied, misinterpreted, reinterpreted or downplayed so that the contributions they did make are never given due consideration.⁹⁹

In the 367 pages of his book, Owen gives numerous examples of “historic fundamentalists” who during the eras after the Great Depression and during World War II served people both socially and spiritually, by tending to their physical and emotional needs as well as their need for a personal relationship with God. He closes his discussion on the following note:

[This study] is a corrective to what has been written about (or perhaps it would be better

⁹⁵Weber, *Road to Armageddon* 56-59.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, 54.

⁹⁷Jim Owen, *The Hidden History of the Historic Fundamentalists, 1933-1948: Reconsidering the Historic Fundamentalists' Response to the Upheavals, Hardships, and Horrors of the 1930s and 1940s* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2004).

⁹⁸“Foreword” to *The Hidden History of the Historic Fundamentalists, 1933-1948* x. Pierard is Professor of History Emeritus, Indiana State University and Resident Scholar at Gordon College.

⁹⁹Owen, *Hidden History* xxiv. [emphasis in original]

to say not written about) the historic fundamentalists hither-to-fore. I gladly admit to an agenda—to set the record “straighter” because it has been bent scandalously beyond recognition. However, considering the political correctness of our day (yes, even in evangelical circles) I may be playing Don Quixote to the nearest postmodern windmill. One can still hope, though, that a study such as this will challenge historians to a greater diligence in their research and a greater balance (fairness) in their interpretations. After all, it is the historian’s task, as much as is possible, to help us first know those who came before, before we construct self-satisfying caricatures of them.¹⁰⁰

Dispensationalism’s Role in the Public Square Summarized

The discussion above has shown that in at least one realm Dispensationalism has had a far greater impact on the public square than Covenant Theology, New Covenant Theology, Kingdom Theology, and Progressive Dispensationalism. As acknowledged by all, it has substantially influenced U. S. foreign policy, particularly in friendliness toward and support for Israel, and in its insistence on the fulfillment of God’s biblical land promises to Abraham. The influence of other theological systems in this realm has been next to negligible. Proponents of the dispensational system have also actively participated in projects of social as well as spiritual efforts to meet the needs of those in need. Yet Dispensationalism has consistently received a bad reputation at the hands of other evangelicals because of its alleged isolation and non-participation in current affairs. Hopefully, Dispensationalism’s antagonists will soon face reality and grant the system its deserved role of importance in the ongoing welfare of the United States of America and the world.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 365.

PAUL AND “THE ISRAEL OF GOD”: AN EXEGETICAL AND ESCHATOLOGICAL CASE-STUDY

S. Lewis Johnson, Jr.*

Persistent efforts to explain “the Israel of God” in Gal 6:16 as a reference to the church defy overwhelming grammatical, exegetical, and theological evidence that the expression refers to ethnic Israel. Among contemporary interpreters, three views of the phrase’s meaning emerge: (1) “The Israel of God” is the church; (2) “The Israel of God” is the remnant of Israelites in the church; and (3) “The Israel of God” is the future redeemed nation. View 1 suffers from the grammatical and syntactical weakness of endorsing the meaning of the Greek particle kai as “namely,” a rare usage of that word. Exegetically, View 1 is also weak in choosing to define “Israel” as the church, a usage that appears nowhere else in biblical literature. View 1 also is lacking theologically because the name “Israel” is not applied to the church at any time in history until A.D. 160. Views 2 and 3 coincide grammatically and syntactically, exegetically, and theologically in positive support for those views by taking kai in its frequent continuative or copulative sense and by understanding “Israel” as a reference to ethnic Israel. View 3 shows its exegetical superiority to View 2 through the six points of Peter Richardson, which develop the ethnic nature of “Israel,” and by recalling Paul’s eschatological outlook for ethnic Israel in Rom 11:26. Theologically, View 3 jibes with Paul’s teaching about two kinds of Israelites, the believing ones and the unbelieving ones. Those who persist in advocating View 1 present a classic case in tendentious exegesis.

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In spite of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, persistent support remains for the contention that the term *Israel* may refer properly to Gentile believers in the present age. Incidental support for this is claimed in such passages as Rom

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2:28-29; 9:6; and Phil 3:3; but the primary support is found in Gal 6:16 where Paul writes, "And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God" (NASB). The rendering of the NIV illustrates the point, for it has, "Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even to the Israel of God." It is obvious from this rendering that the term "the Israel of God" is to be equated with "all who follow this rule," that is, with believers in the present age, whether Jew or Gentile.

This rendering of the verse serves quite well the purpose of those who would like to find NT justification for the practice of the spiritualization of Scripture, that is, the habit of taking OT texts regarding ethnic Israel and referring them to the NT church.¹

I cannot help but think that dogmatic considerations loom large in the interpretation of Gal 6:16. The tenacity with which this application of "the Israel of God" to the church is held in spite of a mass of evidence to the contrary leads one to think that the supporters of the view believe their eschatological system, usually an amillennial scheme, hangs on the reference of the term to the people of God, composed of both believing Jews and Gentiles. Amillennialism does not hang on this interpretation, but the view does appear to have a treasured place in amillennial exegesis.

In speaking of the view that the term refers to ethnic Israel, a sense that the term *Israel* has in every other of its more than sixty-five uses in the NT and in its fifteen uses in Paul, in tones almost emotional, William Hendriksen, the respected Reformed commentator, writes, "I refuse to accept that explanation."²

I am reminded of the comment of Irving Kristol, John M. Olin Professor of Social Thought at the New York University Graduate School of Business. In another connection he once said, "When we lack the will to see things, as they really are, there is nothing so mysterious as the obvious."

It is often said by NT and OT scholars that systematic theologians do not pay enough attention to the text and its exegetical details. The claim is too frequently justified, but there is another side to the question. It may also be said that biblical scholars often unwittingly overlook their own theological presuppositions, logical fallacies, and hermeneutical errors. What I am leading up to is expressed neatly by D. W. B. Robinson in an article written about twenty years ago: "The glib citing of Gal. vi:16 to support the view that 'the church is the new Israel' should be vigorously challenged. There is weighty support for a limited interpretation."³ We can say more

¹For a defense of the hermeneutical practice see Albertus Pieters, "Darbyism vs. the Historic Faith," *Calvin Forum* 2 (May 1936):25-28; Martin J. Wymgaarden, *The Future of the Kingdom in Prophecy and Fulfillment: A Study of the Scope of the "Spiritualization" in Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1955) 167. Another familiar illustration of spiritualization is found in Oswald T. Allis's *Prophecy and the Church* (Wayne, Pa.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1974) 149, where in the discussion of Acts 15:12-21 Allis refers the rebuilding of the tabernacle of David to the ingathering of the Gentiles in the church age.

²William Hendriksen, *Exposition of Galatians*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1968) 247.

³D. W. B. Robinson, "The Distinction Between Jewish and Gentile Believers in Galatians," *Australian Biblical Review* 13 (1965):29-48.

than this, in my opinion. There is more than weighty support for a more limited interpretation. There is overwhelming support for such. In fact, the least likely view among several alternatives is the view that “the Israel of God” is the church.

I propose to review the present status of the interpretation of Gal 6:16, then offer an analysis grammatically, exegetically, and theologically of the principal suggested interpretations. A few concluding comments will bring the essay to its termination.

GALATIANS 6:16 IN CONTEMPORARY INTERPRETATION

VIEW ONE: “THE ISRAEL OF GOD” IS THE CHURCH

A few words will suffice for the context of the text in Galatians, for there is general agreement regarding it. Whereas others boast of their conquests and their statistics in winning adherents to their legalistic cause, Paul would confine his boasting to the cross of Christ, by which he had been severed from the world and its spirit. In Christ and in the church of Christ the circumcision issue has lost its relevance. He lives in the realm of the new creation where walking by the Spirit prevails. For those who walk accordingly there is the blessing of peace and mercy, and that also touches the Israel of God. His scars in the service of Jesus, not circumcision, certify and authenticate his confession that his master is the Lord. And, fittingly, picking up the note of grace with which he began his letter (cf. 1:3), a benediction concludes the epistle. So much for Gal 6:11-18.

Three principal interpretations have characterized the exegesis of Gal 6:16. The first is the claim that “the Israel of God” is simply a term descriptive of the believing church of the present age. The term is linked with the preceding words, “And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy by upon them,” by an explicative *kai* (NASB, “and”; NIV, “even”), giving practically the sense of apposition. The Israel of God is the body who shall walk by the rule of the new creation, and they include believing people from the two ethnic bodies of Jews and Gentiles.

It is well-known that Justin Martyr in his *Dialogue with Trypho* is first author to claim an identification of the term *Israel* with the church.⁴ Of the commentators, Chrysostom is one of the earliest apparently to identify the church with Israel, affirming that those who keep the rule are “true Israelites.”⁵ Others who follow this view include Daniel C. Arichea, Jr., and Eugene Nida,⁶ Ragnar Bring,⁷

⁴*Dialogue with Trypho* 11:1-5, etc.

⁵*Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians and Homilies on the Epistle to the Ephesians of S. John Chrysostom*, new rev. ed. (London: Walter Smith [Late Mosley], 1884) 98.

⁶Daniel C. Arichea, Jr., and Eugene A. Nida, *A Translator's Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1975) 158-59. Very disappointing help is provided for the translator here.

⁷Ragnar Bring, *Commentary on Galatians*, trans. Eric Wahlstroin (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1961) 291.

John Calvin,⁸ R. A. Cole,⁹ N. A. Dahl,¹⁰ Donald Guthrie,¹¹ William Hendricksen,¹² Robert L. Johnson,¹³ M. J. Lagrange,¹⁴ Hans K. LaRondelle,¹⁵ R. C. H. Lenski,¹⁶ J. B. Lightfoot,¹⁷ Martin Luther,¹⁸ Herman Ridderbos,¹⁹ Henrich Schlier,²⁰ and John R. W. Stott.²¹

The list of names supporting this view is impressive, although the bases of the interpretation are few and feeble, namely, the claim that the *kai* (KJV “and”;

⁸John Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians*, ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance, trans. T. H. L. Parker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965) 118. Calvin contends that the term *Israel of God* “includes all believers, whether Gentiles or Jews.”

⁹R. A. Cole, *The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965) 183-84. A cursory treatment in which the author appears to consider the key term as simply another way of saying “the people of God.”

¹⁰N. A. Dahl, “Der Name Israel: I. Zur Auslegung von Gal. 6, 16,” *Judaica* 6 (1950):161-70, a two-part article containing a debate with Gottlob Schrenk over the meaning of the term.

¹¹Donald Guthrie, ed., *Galatians*, The Century Bible (London: Thomas Nelson, 1969) 161-62. Though relating the terms *peace* and *Israel* to Ps 125:5, where the latter term refers to ethnic Israel, Guthrie says, “Israel seems to refer to the same people as ‘all who walk by this rule,’” that is, the church.

¹²Hendriksen, *Exposition of Galatians* 246-47.

¹³Robert L. Johnson, *The Letter of Paul to the Galatians* (Austin, Tex.: Sweet, 1969) 179-80. He has confused the question of the proper punctuation of the text.

¹⁴M. J. Lagrange, *Saint Paul Epste aux Galates* (Paris Libraire Lecoffre, 1950) 166. Lagrange, however, denies the explicative sense by which Lightfoot and others understand the *kai* before *epi ton Israel tou theou*. He understands it as simply copulative, “ouvrant un plus large horizon.”

¹⁵Hans K. LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy: Principles of Prophetic Interpretation* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews U., 1983) 108-14. LaRondelle’s defense of his position, made ostensibly according to sound hermeneutics, is faulty hermeneutically and logically.

¹⁶R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of Saint Paul’s Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians and to the Philippians* (Columbus, Ohio: Wartburg, 1937) 320-21. Lenski takes the *kai* to express “explicative apposition.”

¹⁷J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians* (London: Macmillan, 1896) 224-25. Lightfoot takes the *kai* to be “epexegetic, i.e., it introduces the same thing under a new aspect” (225). Cf. Heb 11:17.

¹⁸Martin Luther, *A Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians*, ed. Philip S. Watson (Westwood, N.J.: Revell, n.d.) 565.

¹⁹Herman N. Ridderbos, *The Epistle of Paul to the Churches of Galatia*, trans. Henry Zylstra (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953) 227; cf. also his *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, trans. John Richard de Witt (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) 336. In both works Ridderbos, for whose scholarship I have the greatest admiration, admits that Paul does not “generally,” or “in general” (*Paul*) speak of *Israel* as inclusive of all believers. In fact, he states that Paul “in general” continues to reserve the names “Israel,” “Jews,” and “Hebrews” for the national Jewish people (*Paul*, 336). Ridderbos’s use of “in general” and “generally” is a bit amusing, since he admits Gal 6:16 is the only example of such usage (if it is).

²⁰Henrich Schlier, *Der Brief an die Galater* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1951) 209. Schlier follows Lagrange in his understanding of *kai*.

²¹John R. W. Stott, *Only One Way: The Message of Galatians* (London: InterVarsity, 1968, 1974) 180. Stott takes the *kai* as “even,” but he also adds that it may be omitted, as the RSV does.

NASB, “and”; NIV, “even”) before the term “the Israel of God” is an explicative or appositional *kai*; the fact that the members of the church may be called “the seed of Abraham” (cf. Gal 3:29); and the claim that if one sees the “the Israel of God” as a believing, ethnic Israel, they would be included in the preceding clause, “And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them.”²²

VIEW TWO: “THE ISRAEL OF GOD” IS THE REMNANT OF ISRAELITES IN THE CHURCH

The second important interpretation of Gal 6:16 and “the Israel of God” is the view that the words refer simply to believing ethnic Israelites in the Christian church. Does not Paul speak of himself as an Israelite (cf. Rom 11:1)? And does not the apostle also speak of “a remnant according to God’s gracious choice” (cf. 11:5), words that plainly in the context refer to believing Israelites? What more fitting thing could Paul write, it is said, in a work so strongly attacking Jewish professing believers, the Judaizers, than to make it most plain that he was not attacking the true believing Jews? Judaizers are anathematized, but the remnant according to the election of grace are “the Israel of God.” At the conclusion of the *Kampfepistel*²³ the battle ceases, an “olive branch”²⁴ is offered to the beloved saints who are brethren. The epistle after a couple of lines concludes appropriately on the note of grace, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.”

Perhaps this expression, “the Israel of God,” contrasts with his expression in 1 Cor 10:18, “Israel after the flesh” (KJV), as the true, believing Israel versus the unbelieving element, just as in Rom 9:6 the apostle distinguishes two Israels, one elect and believing, the other unbelieving, but both ethnic Israelites (cf. vv. 7-13).

The names in support of this second interpretation are not as numerous, but they are important for scholarly attainment. They include Hans Dieter Betz, the author of a very significant and original recent commentary on Galatians, one destined to be consulted by advanced students of the letter for years to come,²⁵

²²This is the contention of Anthony A. Hoekema in his well-argued *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979) 197. It is a clever observation but unconvincing, especially in the light of Mark 16:7 and its *kai iōi Petrōi* (KJV, “and Peter”). It is clear that the *kai* may single out for special attention someone or something from a larger body or element.

²³Schrenk’s description of Galatians in his article, “Der Segenwunsch nach der Kampfepistel,” *Judaica* 6 (1950):170.

²⁴Cf. Cole, *The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians* 183.

²⁵Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians*, Hermeneia—A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979) 320-23.

Charles J. Ellicott,²⁶ Walter Gutbrod,²⁷ Adolf Schlatter,²⁸ and Gottlob Schrenk.²⁹

VIEW THREE: "THE ISRAEL OF GOD" IS THE FUTURE REDEEMED NATION

The third of the interpretations is the view that the expression "the Israel of God" is used eschatologically and refers to the Israel that shall turn to the Lord in the future in the events that surround the second advent of our Lord. Paul would then be thinking along the lines of his well-known prophecy of the salvation of "all Israel" in Rom 11:25-27. As F. F. Bruce comments, "For all his demoting of the law and the customs, Paul held good hope of the ultimate blessing of Israel."³⁰

There are some variations in the expression of their views, but those who hold that *Israel* here either refers to or includes the nation as a whole that will turn to the Lord eschatologically, in line with Romans 11, include F. F. Bruce, Ernest De

²⁶Charles J. Ellicott, *A Critical and Grammatical Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians with a Revised Translation* (Andover, Mass.; Draper, 1880) 154. Valuable for grammatical analysis, his commentaries illustrate the fact that the old is not always to be overlooked.

²⁷*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. "Ioudaios, Israēl, Ebraios in the New Testament," by Walter Gutbrod, 3:387-88. Gutbrod's comments are quite significant. He points out that Paul "neither could nor would separate the term from those who belong to Israel by descent." Cf. Rom 11:17-24.

²⁸Adolf Schlatter, *Die Briefe an die Galater, Epheser, Kolosser and Philemon* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1963) 150-51. He says Paul refers here in the blessing to the Israel that is a new creation in Christ, just as he is. Paul does not forget his genuine brethren (cf. Rom 11:1; Phil 3:5).

²⁹In two important articles Gottlob Schrenk argues persuasively for the second interpretation. His comments on the grammatical usage of *kai*, as well as the usage of *Israel* and *peace* (cf. Ps 124:5, LXX; 127:6, LXX), are telling. Cf. Gottlob Schrenk, "Was bedeutet 'Israel Gottes?'" *Judaica* 5 (1949):81-95; "Der Segenwunsch nach der Kampfepistel," *Judaica* 6 (1950):170-90. The second article is a reply to Dahl's response to his first article. I find Schrenk much more convincing.

³⁰F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, *The New International Greek Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) 275.

Witt Burton,³¹ W. D. Davies,³² Robert Govett,³³ Franz Mussner,³⁴ and Peter Richardson.³⁵

It is perhaps appropriate at this point to note simply that the weight of contemporary scholarship is opposed to the prevailing interpretation of amillennial interpreters that “the Israel of God” refers to the church, composed of both Jewish and Gentile believers, although the subjective nature of this comment is recognized by this writer. It is based upon the fact that those who hold to the second and third views unite in their opposition to the prevailing amillennial interpretation.

AN ANALYSIS OF THE COMPETING INTERPRETATIONS

VIEW ONE: “THE ISRAEL OF GOD” IS THE CHURCH

Grammatical and syntactical considerations. It is necessary to begin this part of the discussion with a reminder of a basic, but often neglected, hermeneutical principle. It is this: in the absence of compelling exegetical and theological considerations, we should avoid the rarer grammatical usages when the common ones

³¹Ernest De Witt Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1921) 357-59. Burton argues for a change in the common punctuation of the verse, preferring to put a comma after *autous* (NASB, “them”), pointing out that if *eirēnē* (NASB, “peace”) and *eleos* (NASB, “mercy”) were taken together, the order is illogical, for the effect would be placed first and the cause afterwards. Further, in countering the claim that the final clause of the verse is explicative of those who walk according to this rule and thus composed of both Jews and Gentiles in the church, he says, “[T]here is, in fact, no instance of his [Paul’s] using *Israel* except of the Jewish nation or a part thereof” (358). Burton takes the “and mercy” to be an afterthought and the final words, “and upon the Israel of God,” to be a second afterthought. He contends that the *kai* (NASB, “and”) following *eleos* (NASB, “mercy”) is slightly ascensive, introducing the last clause, “and mercy upon the Israel of God” (Burton’s rendering). This last clause refers to “those within Israel who even though as yet unenlightened are the true Israel of God” (ibid.). His view would be strengthened, it seems to me, if he had taken the first *kai* after “them” as copulative or continuative and the second one after “mercy” as adjunctive, rendering the verse, “And as many as shall walk by this rule, peace be upon them, and mercy also upon the Israel of God,”

³²W. D. Davies, “Paul and the People of Israel,” *New Testament Studies* 24:4-39. Davies specifically finds it difficult to see *Israel* here as the church of Jews and Gentiles, which would be contrary to Pauline usage elsewhere. He says, “If this proposal were correct one would have expected to find support for it in Rom. ix-xi where Paul extensively deals with ‘Israel’” (11 note). Davies’s views are not very definite or clear, but he does admit that the desire for peace in v. 16, recalling the *Shemoneh Esreh*, may refer to the Jewish people as a whole (10).

³³Robert Govett, *Govett on Galatians* (Miami Springs, Fla.: Conley and Schoettle, 1981 [orig. ed., 1872]) 233-36. Govett, the well-known nineteenth-century independent scholar, and pastor, referred the clause “and upon the Israel of God” to “the renewed men of Israel, whom God will restore to Himself and to their land in millennial days” (235). Cf. Pss 135:5; 128:5-6; Isa 54:7-8, 10; Mic 7:20.

³⁴Franz Mussner, *Der Galaterbrief* (Frieberg: Herders, 1977) 417. He links the clause with Rom 11:26. His final comments are, “So deutet der Apostel in Gal 6, 16 schon an, was er dann in Rom 9-11 explizieren wird. Paulus hat sein Volk nie vergessen” (417). The “Israel of God” is identical with the “all Israel” of Rom 11:26.

³⁵Peter Richardson, *Israel in the Apostolic Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge U., 1969) 74-84. Richardson’s discussion is one of the lengthiest of the treatments of the text.

make good sense.

We do not have the space to discuss the semantic range of the Greek conjunction *kai*. The standard grammars handle the matter acceptably. Suffice it to say, there are several well-recognized senses of *kai* in the NT. First and most commonly, *kai* has the continuative or copulative sense of *and*. Second, *kai* frequently has the adjunctive sense of *also*. Third, *kai* occasionally has the ascensive sense of *even*, which shades off into an explicative sense of *namely*.³⁶

The ascensive sense, to my mind, is to be distinguished from an explicative, or epexegetic, sense. It expresses a further, a heightened, identification of a term. For example, I might say, "I visited Dallas, I even visited Dallas Theological Seminary." The *kai* would be an ascensive *kai*. But suppose I said, "I visited Dallas, even the home of the Dallas Cowboy football team." The *kai*, then, would be practically an appositional *kai*. It would be called explicative or epexegetical by some. The point I would like to make is that the English word *even* has multiple usage also. In fact, I tend to think that this may account for renderings such as the "even" of the NIV.

The genuine and fairly common usage of *even* in the ascensive sense in Greek has been taken over in English and made an *even* in the rather rare explicative or appositional sense. Because the latter usage serves well the view that the term "the Israel of God" is the church, the dogmatic concern overcame grammatical usage. An extremely rare usage has been made to replace the common usage, even in spite of the fact that the common and frequent usage of *and* makes perfectly good sense in Gal 6:16.

There are other uses of *kai*, such as an emphatic and an adversative use, but these uses are so rare that we may safely drop discussion of them.

As for the problem, the first interpretation referred to above, that in which the term "the Israel of God" is referred to the believing church, involves taking *kai* in an explicative sense³⁷ and the rendering of it as *even*. There are compelling objections to this view. In the first place, this usage in the light of *kai* in all phases of the literature is proportionately very infrequent, as both G. B. Winer³⁸ and Ellicott acknowledge. Ellicott contends that it is doubtful that Paul ever uses *kai* in "so marked an explicative sense."³⁹ There is not anything in recent grammatical study and

³⁶Schrenk lists as examples of the explicative usage 1 Cor 8:12; 12:27f.; 14:27; 15:38; 2 Cor. 5:15. The usage is often found in conjunction with *kai touto*, as in 1 Cor 2:2; 5:1; 6:6, 8, 10-11; Rom 13:11; Eph 2:8; cf. Heb 11:12. A cursory study of these instances will cast doubt over the validity of some of the examples. Cf. F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. and rev. Robert W. Funk (Chicago: U. of Chicago, 1961) 228-29; Maximilian Zerwick, *Biblical Greek Illustrated by Examples*, adapted from the 4th Latin ed. by Joseph Smith (Rome: Scripta Pontificii Instituti Biblici, 1963) 152-54. Zerwick is undecided about Gal 6:16 (154).

³⁷Cf. Lenski, *Interpretation of Saint Paul's Epistles* 320-21; Lightfoot, *Epistle to the Galatians* 25; Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* 197.

³⁸G. B. Winer, *A Treatise on the Grammar of New Testament Greek, Regarded as a Sure Basis for New Testament Exegesis*, trans. with additions by W. F. Moulton, 9th English ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1882) 546.

³⁹Ellicott, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* 154. He also discusses and questions other of the relatively few claimed instances of this usage.

research that indicates otherwise.

Finally, if it were Paul's intention to identify the "them" of the text as "the Israel of God," then why not simply eliminate the *kai* after "mercy?" The result would be far more to the point, if Paul were identifying the "them," that is, the church, with the term "Israel." The verse would be rendered then, "And as many as shall walk by this rule, peace be upon them and mercy, upon the Israel of God."⁴⁰ A case could be solidly made for the apposition of "the Israel of God" with "them," and the rendering of the NIV could stand. Paul, however, did not eliminate the *kai*.

These things make it highly unlikely that the first interpretation is to be preferred grammatically. Because both of the other suggested interpretations are not cumbered with these grammatical and syntactical difficulties, they are more likely views.

Exegetical considerations. Under this heading are covered matters of context, both general and special, and matters of usage, both Pauline and other.

We turn again to consider the first interpretation, namely, that the "them" refers to the present people of God, and the term "the Israel of God" is a further description of the "them." From the standpoint of biblical usage this view stands condemned. There is no instance in biblical literature of the term *Israel* being used in the sense of the church, or the people of God as composed of both believing ethnic Jews and Gentiles. Nor, on the other hand, as one might expect if there were such usage, does the phrase *ta ethnē* (KJV, "the Gentiles") ever mean the non-Christian world specifically, but only the non-Jewish peoples, although such are generally non-Christians.⁴¹ Thus, the usage of the term *Israel* stands overwhelmingly opposed to the first view.⁴²

The usage of the terms *Israel* and *the church* in the early chapters of the book of Acts is in complete harmony, for Israel exists there alongside the newly formed church, and the two entities are kept separate in terminology.

Occasionally, Rom 9:6 has been advanced in support of the view that *Israel* may include Gentiles. Paul writes, "For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel" (NASB). But that will not do, for Paul is here speaking only of a division within ethnic Israel. Some of them are believers and thus truly Israel, whereas others, though ethnically Israelites, are not truly Israel, since they are not elect and believing (cf. vv. 7-13). In the NASB rendering, the words "who are descended from Israel" refer to the natural descendants of the patriarchs, from Abraham through Jacob, whereas the opening words, "they are not all Israel," limit the ideal sense of the term to the elect within the nation, the Isaacs and the Jacobs (cf. Rom 4:12). No Gentiles

⁴⁰Cf. Schrenk, "Der Segenwunsch," *Judaica* 6 (1950):177-78.

⁴¹Cf. Jacob Jervell, *Luke and the People of God: A New Look at Luke Acts* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1972) 49.

⁴²Cf. Davies, "Paul and the People of Israel" 11, who with others makes the point that if Israel here should include believing Gentiles, one would expect to find support for this in Romans 9-11. But none is there.

are found in the statement at all.⁴³

A book of recent vintage is that of Hans K. LaRondelle, entitled *The Israel of God in Prophecy: Principles of Prophetic Interpretation*. It launches a broad-scale attack on dispensational views and lectures dispensationalists for their hermeneutical lapses. In his treatment of Gal 6:16, Professor LaRondelle, a Seventh Day Adventist, takes a number of unsupportable positions, as well as largely avoiding obvious difficulties with his scheme of things. He misunderstands the general context of Galatians to begin with, contending that it is written by Paul to reject “any different status or claim of the Jewish Christians beside or above that of gentile Christians before God.”⁴⁴ On the contrary, the apostle is concerned with correcting the gospel preached to the Galatians by the Judaizers, particularly their false contention that it was necessary to be circumcised to be saved and to observe as Christians certain requirements of the law of Moses in order to remain in divine favor (cf. Gal 1:6-9; 2:1-3:29; 4:1-31; 5:1-4; 6:11-18). The apostle makes no attempt whatsoever to deny that there is a legitimate distinction of race between Gentile and Jewish believers in the church. His statement in Rom 11:5 should have warned Professor LaRondelle against this error. There is a remnant of Jewish believers in the church according to the election of grace. That the professor overlooked Paul’s careful language is seen in his equation of terms that differ. He correctly cites Paul’s statement that “‘there is neither Jew nor Greek’ in Christ”⁴⁵ (cf. Gal 3:28) but then a couple of pages later modifies this to ‘there is neither Jew nor Greek’ *within the Church*’⁴⁶ (emphasis added), as if the terms *Christ* and *church* are identical. This approach fails to see that Paul does not say there is neither Jew nor Greek within the church. He speaks of those who are “in Christ.” For LaRondelle, however, inasmuch as there is neither Jew nor Greek within the church and in Christ, there can be no distinction between them in the church. But Paul also says there is neither male nor female, nor slave nor free man in Christ. Would he then deny sexual differences within the church? Or the social differences in Paul’s day? Is it not plain that Paul is not speaking of national or ethnic difference in Christ, but of spiritual status? In that sense there is no difference in Christ.

Throughout LaRondelle’s discussion of the text there is no acknowledgment, so far as I can find, of the fact that the term *Israel* is never found in the sense of the church. Is not that very relevant to the interpretation of Galatians 6:16?

Finally, to sum up his position, Professor LaRondelle affirms that since the church is the seed of Abraham and Israel is the seed of Abraham, the two entities, the church and Israel, are the same. The result is a textbook example of the fallacy of the

⁴³Cf. Gutbrod, “Israel” 3:387. He comments, “On the other hand, we are not told here that Gentile Christians are the true Israel. The distinction at R. 9:6 does not go beyond what is presupposed at Jn. 1:47, and it corresponds to the distinction between *loydaios en tō krypṑ* and *loydaios en tō phanerṑ* at R. 2:28f., which does not imply that Paul is calling Gentiles the true Jews.”

⁴⁴LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy* 108.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid., 110.

undistributed middle.⁴⁷

Theological considerations. Peter Richardson has pointed out that no historical evidence points to the term *Israel* being identified with the church before A.D. 160. Further, at that date there was no characterization of the church as “the Israel of God.”⁴⁸ In other words, for more than a century after Paul there was no evidence of the identification.

To conclude the discussion of the first interpretation, it seems clear that there is little evidence—grammatical, exegetical, or theological—that supports it. On the other hand, there is sound historical evidence against the identification of *Israel* with believing or unbelieving Gentiles. The grammatical usage of *kai* is not favorable to the view, nor is the Pauline or NT usage of *Israel*. Finally, if D. W. B. Robinson’s article is basically sound, the Pauline teaching in Galatians contains a recognition of national distinctions in the one people of God.⁴⁹

VIEW TWO: “THE ISRAEL OF GOD” REFERS TO JEWISH BELIEVERS IN PAUL’S DAY

Perhaps it would be appropriate to confine attention to Hans Dieter Betz, due to the widespread recognition of his excellent commentary. He treats v. 16 as a conditional blessing upon those who walk according to the rule of the new creation mentioned in v. 15,⁵⁰ remarking also on its uniqueness in Pauline literature. After a discussion of the term “the Israel of God,” Betz concludes amid some ambiguity that the sentence refers to a blessing on those who remain faithful Paulinists in the Galatian churches, including both those of Gentile extraction and believing, ethnic Jews. His final comment is, “Thus, Paul extends the blessing beyond the Galatian Paulinists to those Jewish-Christians who approve of his *kanon* (‘rule’) in v 15.”⁵¹

Grammatical and syntactical considerations. In order to keep from prolonging the discussion, and also since the final interpretation has many similarities with the second, just a few comments are in order. So far as I can tell, there are no grammatical, or syntactical, considerations that would be contrary to Betz’s view. The common sense of *kai* as continuative, or copulative, is followed.

⁴⁷LaRondelle’s comments on Gal 6:16 indicate little, if any, interaction with Burton, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, the finest old technical commentary on Galatians; Betz, *Galatians*, the best new technical work in English; Bruce in his excellent work *Galatians: Commentary on the Greek Text*; or with the periodical articles of Dahl, Schrenk, and Robinson. The carefully thought through article by Robinson is particularly appropriate for questions concerning Gal 6:16, as its title (“The Distinction between Jewish and Gentile Believers in Galatians”) indicates.

⁴⁸Richardson, *Israel in the Apostolic Church* 83. Many amillennialists, including LaRondelle, overlook this.

⁴⁹Cf. Robinson, “The Distinction Between Jewish and Gentile Believers in Galatians,” especially 47-48.

⁵⁰Betz, *Galatians* 320-21.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, 323.

Exegetical considerations. Exegetically, the view is sound, since “Israel” has its uniform Pauline ethnic sense. And further, the apostle achieves a very striking climactic conclusion. Drawing near the end of his “battle-epistle” with its harsh and forceful attack on the Judaists⁵² and its omission of the customary words of thanksgiving, Paul tempers his language with a special blessing for those faithful, believing Israelites who, understanding the grace of God and its exclusion of any human works as the ground of redemption, had not succumbed to the subtle blandishments of the deceptive Judaizers. They, not the false men from Jerusalem, are “the Israel of God,” or, as he calls them elsewhere, “the remnant according to the election of grace” (cf. Rom. 11:5).

Theological considerations. And theologically the view is sound in its maintenance of the two elements within the one people of God, Gentiles and ethnic Jews. Romans 11 spells out the details of the relationship between the two entities from Abraham’s day to the present age and on to the fulfillment in the future of the great unconditional covenantal promises made to the patriarchs.

VIEW THREE: “THE ISRAEL OF GOD” REFERS TO THAT BODY OF ETHNIC ISRAEL WHO ARE SAVED AT THE MESSIAH’S RETURN

Exegetical considerations. The third view of “the Israel of God,” namely, that the term is eschatological in force and refers to the “all Israel” of Romans 11:26, is an extension of the previous interpretation. It, too, takes the term “the Israel of God” to refer to ethnic Israel but locates their blessing in the future. Their salvation was a great concern of Paul, as his ministry attests (cf. Rom 9:3-5; 10:1). An impressive array of contemporary interpreters hold this view, although with some minor variations.

Because Peter Richardson, largely following Burton, has discussed the matter at some length, his views will be emphasized. Seeking to overthrow the common misconception that “the Israel of God” refers to the church composed of both believing Gentiles and believing Jews, he makes the following points: First, the unique order of peace and mercy, probably suggested by Jewish benedictions, particularly Benediction XIX of the *Shemoneh Esreh* (Babylonian recension), may be significant. The prayer has the order of peace and then mercy in it, followed by a reference to “us and all Israel.”⁵³ Other OT passages, such as Ps 124:5 (= 127:6), offer more general parallels. In such places “Israel” is used ethnically and, if there is Pauline dependence on them, he probably used the term ethnically.

Second, the strange order of peace and mercy suggests, as Burton

⁵²The force of 1:8-9 and its “let him be accursed” is very strong, since *anathema* referred ultimately to that under the divine curse. In Rom 9:3 Paul says he could pray to be *anathema* from Christ, that is, consigned to Gehenna, if his people could be saved by his sacrifice. In other words, it is almost as if Paul were saying, “If any man should preach a contrary gospel, let him go to hell!” Galatians certainly is a “Kampfepistel!”

⁵³Cf. Richardson, *Israel in the Apostolic Church* 78-80.

contended, a repunctuation of the text as commonly edited. A comma should be placed after “them,” and the comma after “mercy” found in many English versions⁵⁴ and in editions of the Greek text should be eliminated. The text may then be rendered, *And as many as shall walk by this rule, peace be upon them, and mercy also upon the Israel of God* (or *peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God*).

Third, Richardson suggests that the future tense in “shall walk” may carry, by analogy, its future idea over into the benediction regarding mercy. In other words, it may point to Israel’s future belief. This seems questionable to me.

Fourth, “the Israel of God” is a part of the whole Israel (cf. Rom 9:6).

Fifth, the *kai* is only slightly ascensive, forestalling any inference that Paul in Galatians is condemning everything about Israel.⁵⁵ Richardson thinks the presence of the *kai* is important and argues strongly against the view that the church is the Israel of God. If it were omitted, then that view would be strengthened, but its acknowledged presence is a major signpost pointing in another interpretive direction.

Sixth, just as Mussner, Bruce, and others, Richardson sees the expression as a reference to a hoped-for future conversion of ethnic Israel, a view that Paul expounds in detail in the great theodicy of Romans 9–11.

Mussner’s identification of the phrase with Paul’s “all Israel” of Rom 11:26 is in harmony with Richardson. Thus also Bruce, who concludes his discussion with, “The invocation of blessing on the Israel of God has probably an eschatological perspective.”⁵⁶

Evaluative summary. Grammatically and syntactically, this last option is sound, whether we adopt Burton’s repunctuation of the text or not. There may exist some question regarding the exegetical aptness of the eschatological perspective. That certainly has not been one of the major emphases of the Galatian epistle as a whole, but in the immediate context it is very appropriate psychologically, providing a note of hope and expectation after a stern and severe admonition. And, further, the Abrahamic covenant and its benefits have been constantly before the readers, and the whole of the OT as well as previous NT revelation testifies to its glorious future consummation. Heirship of Abrahamic covenant blessing and the kingdom of God, mentioned just a few lines previously (cf. 5:21), fit in well with an eschatological note.⁵⁷

Theologically the view harmonizes with the important Pauline teaching that

⁵⁴Contrast the NASB.

⁵⁵Cf. Burton, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* 358.

⁵⁶Bruce, *Galatians: Commentary on the Greek Text* 275.

⁵⁷Several linguistic matters lend further support to an eschatological perspective. In addition to the mention of the phrase “the kingdom of God,” the frequent use of the concept of promise in the letter (cf. 3:14; 16, 17, 18 [twice], 19, 21, 22, 29; 4:23, 28) and the concept of inheritance (cf. 3:14, 18, 29; 4:1, 7, 30; 5:21), related as they are to the Abrahamic covenant, accent the future perspective. And finally, is there significance in the fact that the term *inheritance* in Romans 11 is related by Paul to God’s saving work toward the nation Israel in the future? The concept is found in 11:30, 31, and 32 in both noun and verb forms. And here in Gal 6:16 the concept appears also.

there are two kinds of Israelites, a believing one and an unbelieving one. The teaching is plainly set out in such passages as Rom 2:28-29; 4:11-12; 9:6; and 11:1-36. Gal 6:16 forms another link in the apostle's teaching.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

REFLECTIONS ON CONTEMPORARY EXEGETICAL METHODOLOGY

It is not uncommon in our evangelical seminaries to hear exegetes criticize the systematic theologians for the tendency to approach the biblical text with dogmatic presuppositions that predetermine exegetical conclusions. Some of this criticism is justified, I will admit. Theologians do not come to the text without their presuppositions. The measure of the good theologian, such as a Calvin, an Owen, a Hodge, a Warfield, a Murray, and a Berkower, is the skill with which one recognizes them, handles them, and avoids their dominion over us.

What is not as common as it should be in our schools, however, is the recognition of the fact that exegetes are exposed to the same perils and at least as often succumb to them. Presuppositionless exegesis is an illusive mirage, and exegesis is finest when it acknowledges the fact and seeks to guard against it. Exegetes frequently are as guilty of false methodology as that financial writer whose logic and unsound premises the *London Economist* once neatly impaled by commenting that he was "proceeding from an unwarranted assumption to a foregone conclusion."⁵⁸

The present study illustrates this. If there is an interpretation that totters on a tenuous foundation, it is the view that Paul equates the term "the Israel of God" with the believing church of Jews and Gentiles. To support it, the general usage of the term *Israel* in Paul, in the NT, and in the Scriptures as a whole is ignored. The grammatical and syntactical usage of the conjunction *kai* is strained and distorted—and the rare and uncommon sense accepted when the usual sense is unsatisfactory—only because it does not harmonize with the presuppositions of the exegete. And to compound matters, in the special context of Galatians and the general context of the Pauline teaching, especially as highlighted in Romans 11, Paul's primary passages on God's dealings with Israel and the Gentiles, are downplayed. If, as LaRondelle asserts, "Paul's benediction in Galatians 6:16 becomes, then, the chief witness in the NT in declaring that the universal church of Christ is the Israel of God, the seed of Abraham, the heir to Israel's covenant promise (cf. Gal. 3:29; 6:16),"⁵⁹ then the doctrine that the church of Gentiles and Jews is *the* Israel of God rests on an illusion. It is a classic case of tendentious exegesis.

⁵⁸Steward Chase, *Guides to Straight Thinking: With 13 Common Fallacies* (New York: Harper & Row, 1956) 122

⁵⁹LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy* 110-11.

REFLECTIONS ON LOGICAL FAILURE

This is hardly the place to enlarge upon this theme. It has been done well elsewhere.⁶⁰ Nevertheless I think it is permissible to suggest that exegetes seem particularly prone today to logical fallacies. The case of the undistributed middle, mentioned earlier, underlines the importance of clear thinking in exegetical discussion.

REFLECTIONS ON CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGICAL POSITIONS

A certain rigidity in evangelical eschatological debate emerges again in the discussion of Gal 6:16. For example, amillennialists seem to desire strongly to equate “the Israel of God” with the church. Some amillennialists, however, think an ethnic future for Israel is compatible with their system. An example of this is found in the fine work of Anthony A. Hoekema on eschatology. He grants that an ethnic future for Israel would with certain strictures be compatible with his amillennial views, but he argues strongly against such an interpretation.⁶¹

Why, then, are amillennialists so opposed generally to an ethnic future for Israel? That is not an easy question to answer. It may be perfectly conceivable that an amillennialist would grant that an ethnic future for Israel at the Lord’s return could be fitted into his system. But if such a normal interpretation of the language of the OT is followed in this instance, it is difficult to see how one can then escape the seemingly plain teaching of the many OT prophecies that the nation Israel shall enjoy a preeminence in certain respects over the Gentiles in the kingdom that follows our Lord’s advent (cf. Isa 60:1-4; 62:1-12; Mic 4:1-5; Hag 2:1-7; Zech 14:16-21, etc.).

On the other hand, the case for premillennialism does not rest on the reference of the term “the Israel of God” to ethnic redeemed Israel here. Its case against the exegetical practice of the spiritualization of the Scriptures would be weakened a bit, but premillennialism’s support in the history of the church’s eschatological interpretation, in the use of the grammatico-historico-theological method of exegesis, and in the interpretation of Scripture by the prophets and the apostles would still stand firm.

Let the church, then, seek to avoid the practice of rigidly, tendentiously defending its systems. Let us listen to the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scriptures, and then let us freely and forcibly proclaim what we are taught. After all, His system—and there is such—is the best one.

⁶⁰Cf. D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984) 91-126.

⁶¹Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* 146-47. He also adds certain strictures to the common perception of a future for Israel. Referring to Rom 11:26 he says, “There is nothing in the passage which would rule out such a future conversion or such future conversions, as long as one does not insist that the passage points *only* to the future, or that it describes a conversion of Israel which occurs *after* the full number of Gentiles has been gathered in” (147). That, of course, is just what Rom 11:25-27 does do. It points to the future, and the conversion of Israel is placed by the apostle after the gathering in of the Gentiles. It, therefore, really is difficult for Hoekema to include an ethnic future for Israel in his amillennial scheme.

VARIOUS FORMS OF REPLACEMENT THEOLOGY

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Some replacement theologians prefer the title “fulfillment theology” in describing their view of Israel’s current and future role in relation to the church. Since “supersessionism” is a term that describes both “replacement theology” and “fulfillment theology,” that term can be used interchangeably with “replacement” and “fulfillment” terminology in describing various forms which the two theologies may take. Supersessionism is the view that the NT church is the new and/or true Israel that has forever superseded the nation Israel as the people of God. It may take the form of “punitive supersessionism,” i.e., God is punishing Israel for her rejection of Christ. Or it may be in the form of “economic supersessionism,” i.e., it was God’s plan for Israel’s role as the people of God to expire with the coming of Christ and be replaced by the church. The final form of supersessionism is “structural supersessionism,” i.e., the OT Scriptures are largely indecisive in formulation of Christian conviction about God’s work as consummator and redeemer. Strong supersessionists hold that Israel has no future in the plan of God, but moderate supersessionists see a divine plan for the future salvation of the Jews as a group, but not their national restoration to the promised land. This last view holds that Israel is the object of God’s irrevocable gift of grace and calling, but that such a role guarantees them no national blessing as the OT promised. It assures them only of becoming part of the church as the people of God.

* * * * *

Few theological issues are as hotly debated as the Israel/church issue. It is a constant topic of debate between covenant theologians and dispensationalists. More recently new covenant theologians have thrown their theological hat into the ring with their views on the Israel/church relationship. At issue is whether the New Testament church replaces, fulfills, and/or displaces national Israel as the people of God. And if so, to what extent does this affect national Israel?

Giving a title to the view that the church replaces or supersedes Israel as the people of God has not been without controversy or debate. As Marten Woudstra observes, “The question whether it is more proper to speak of a replacement of the

Jews by the Christian church or of an extension (continuation) of the OT people of God into that of the NT church is variously answered.”¹

A common designation used in recent scholarly literature to identify this position is “supersessionism.” The term “supersessionism” comes from two Latin words: *super* (“on” or “upon”) and *sedere* (“to sit”). Thus it carries the idea of one person sitting on another’s chair, displacing the latter.² The title “replacement theology” is often viewed as a synonym for “supersessionism.”³ This title appears to be the most common designation in popular literature, at least for now.

The label, “replacement theology,” does not appear to be well received by some. Several have noted that they would rather be known as “fulfillment theologians” or some other title that is more positive. Steve Lehrer, for example, shies away from the term “replacement theology” since he does not see the church replacing the nation Israel. He says, “Instead I would rather use the term ‘fulfillment theology.’ Israel was simply a picture of the true people of God, which the church fulfills.”⁴ This sentiment has been expressed by others as well.

Unfortunately for those who desire a different label, apparently the horse is already out of the barn.⁵ The title “replacement theology” is well established and does not appear to be going away any time soon. Plus, many theologians who espouse a supersessionist view have used the terms “replace” and “replacement” in regard to Israel and the church to warrant the title “replacement theology.” It is not simply the case that nonsupersessionists have imposed the title “replacement theology” against the will of supersessionists. Those who espouse the supersessionist view are partly to credit or blame for this title since they often have used replacement terminology themselves. Thus, an argument against the designation “replacement theology” is not

¹Marten H. Woudstra, “Israel and the Church: A Case for Continuity,” in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments*, ed. John S. Feinberg (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 1988) 237. Woudstra believes that the terms “replacement” and “continuation” are both acceptable and consistent with biblical teaching. See also G. B. Caird, *New Testament Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994) 55.

²Clark M. Williamson, *A Guest in the House of Israel: Post-Holocaust Church Theology* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993) 268 n. 9.

³Diprose views the titles “replacement theology” and “supersessionism” as synonymous. He also notes that the title “replacement theology” is a “relatively new term in Christian theology” (Ronald E. Diprose, *Israel in the Development of Christian Thought* (Rome: Istituto Biblico Evangelico Italiano, 2000) 31 n. 2. This present article treats the titles “supersessionism” and “replacement theology” as synonyms. This writer acknowledges, though, that these designations may not be entirely satisfactory to those who view the church more as the *continuation* or *fulfillment* of national Israel. See Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, trans. John Richard De Witt. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) 333-34; Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2d. ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999) 1058-59.

⁴Steve Lehrer, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered* (n.p.: Steve Lehrer, 2006) 203. Lehrer is a leading representative of New Covenant Theology.

⁵The title “amillennialism” is another theological term that makes some unhappy. Jay Adams has pointed out that this is a negative term since the term literally means “no millennium” and is mostly a term in reaction to the premillennial view of the millennium. Adams’s suggestion that amillennialism be replaced with “realized millennialism” has been unsuccessful.

in order. For purposes of this article, though, the designation “supersessionism” will often be used because this term can encompass the concepts of “replace” or “fulfill.” Thus, this is the word that will be used most frequently in this article.

Defining Supersessionism

Several theologians have offered definitions of “supersessionism” or “replacement theology.” According to Walter C. Kaiser, “Replacement theology . . . declared that the Church, Abraham’s spiritual seed, had replaced national Israel in that it had transcended and fulfilled the terms of the covenant given to Israel, which covenant Israel had lost because of disobedience.”⁶ Diprose defines replacement theology as the view that “the Church completely and permanently replaced ethnic Israel in the working out of God’s plan and as recipient of Old Testament promises to Israel.”⁷

Richard Kendall Soulen argues that supersessionism is linked with how some view the coming of Jesus Christ: “According to this teaching [supersessionism], God chose the Jewish people after the fall of Adam in order to prepare the world for the coming of Jesus Christ, the Savior. After Christ came, however, the special role of the Jewish people came to an end and its place was taken by the church, the new Israel.”⁸ Herman Ridderbos asserts that there is a positive and negative element to the supersessionist view: “On the one hand, in a positive sense it presupposes that the church springs from, is born out of Israel; on the other hand, the church takes the place of Israel as the historical people of God.”⁹

These definitions from Kaiser, Diprose, Soulen, and Ridderbos appear consistent with the statements of those who explicitly declare that the church is the replacement of Israel. Bruce K. Waltke, for instance, declares that the New Testament teaches the “hard fact that national Israel and its law have been permanently replaced by the church and the New Covenant.”¹⁰ According to Hans K. LaRondelle, the New Testament affirms that “Israel would no longer be the people of God and would be *replaced* by a people that would accept the Messiah and His message of the kingdom of God.”¹¹ LaRondelle believes this “people” is the church

⁶Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., “An Assessment of ‘Replacement Theology’: The Relationship Between the Israel of the Abrahamic–Davidic Covenant and the Christian Church,” *Mishkan* 21 (1994):9.

⁷Diprose, *Israel in the Development of Christian Thought* 2.

⁸Richard Kendall Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996) 1–2.

⁹Ridderbos, *Paul* 333–34.

¹⁰Bruce K. Waltke, “Kingdom Promises as Spiritual,” in *Continuity and Discontinuity* 274. He also states, “The Jewish *nation* no longer has a place as the special people of God; that place has been taken by the Christian community which fulfills God’s purpose for Israel” (275, emphasis in the original).

¹¹Hans K. LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy: Principles of Prophetic Interpretation* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1983) 101 (emphasis in the original).

who replaces “the Christ-rejecting nation.”¹² Loraine Boettner, too, writes, “It may seem harsh to say that ‘God is done with the Jews.’ But the fact of the matter is that He is through with them as a unified national group having anything more to do with the evangelization of the world. That mission has been taken from them and given to the Christian Church (Matt. 21:43).”¹³

When comparing the definitions of Kaiser, Diprose, Soulen, and Ridderbos with the statements of those who openly promote a replacement view, it appears that supersessionism is based on two core beliefs: (1) the nation Israel has somehow completed or forfeited its status as the people of God and will never again possess a unique role or function apart from the church; and (2) the church is now the true Israel that has permanently replaced or superseded national Israel as the people of God.

Supersessionism, then, in the context of Israel and the church, is the view that *the New Testament church is the new and/or true Israel that has forever superseded the nation Israel as the people of God*. The result is that the church has become the sole inheritor of God’s covenant blessings originally promised to national Israel in the OT. This rules out a future restoration of the nation Israel with a unique identity, role, and purpose that is distinct in any way from the Christian church.¹⁴

Variations within Supersessionism

Though all supersessionists affirm that the church has superseded national Israel as the people of God, variations exist within supersessionism. Three major forms of supersessionism that have been recognized are punitive supersessionism, economic supersessionism, and structural supersessionism.

Punitive Supersessionism

“Punitive” or “retributive” supersessionism emphasizes Israel’s *disobedience* and *punishment* by God as the reason for its displacement as the people of God. Or in other words, Israel is replaced by the church because the nation acted wickedly and has forfeited the right to be the people of God. As Gabriel J. Fackre explains, this form of supersessionism “holds that the rejection of Christ both eliminates Israel from God’s covenant love and provokes divine retribution.”¹⁵ With punitive supersession-

¹²Ibid.

¹³Loraine Boettner, *The Millennium* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1957) 89-90. According to Bright, “The New Testament triumphantly hails the Church as Israel . . . the true heir of Israel’s hope” (John Bright, *The Kingdom of God* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1953] 226).

¹⁴This writer uses this term “restoration” strategically and by it he means more than just a salvation of Israel. By “restoration” he means a return of Israel to her land and a role to the nations in an earthly millennium that is not the same as that of the church as a whole.

¹⁵Gabriel J. Fackre, *Ecumenical Faith in Evangelical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993) 148.

ism, according to Soulen, “God abrogates God’s covenant with Israel . . . on account of Israel’s rejection of Christ and the gospel.”¹⁶ Because the Jews reject Christ, “God in turn angrily rejects and punishes the Jews.”¹⁷ In sum, with punitive supersessionism, God has rejected the Jews because of their disobedience and their rejection of Christ.

Belief in punitive supersessionism was common in the Patristic Era. Origen (c. 185-254) espoused a form of punitive supersessionism: “And we say with confidence that they [the Jews] will never be restored to their former condition. For they committed a crime of the most unhallowed kind. . . .”¹⁸ Lactantius (c. 304–313) also asserted that the Jews were abandoned by God because of their disobedience:

For unless they [the Jews] did this [repent], and laying aside their vanities, return to their God, it would come to pass that He would change His covenant, that is, bestow the inheritance of eternal life upon foreign nations, and collect to Himself a more faithful people out of those who were aliens by birth. . . . On account of these impieties of theirs He cast them off forever.¹⁹

Punitive supersessionism was also held by Martin Luther. For him, the destruction of Jerusalem was proof of God’s permanent rejection of Israel:

“Listen, Jew, are you aware that Jerusalem and your sovereignty, together with your temple and priesthood, have been destroyed for over 1,460 years?” . . . For such ruthless wrath of God is sufficient evidence that they assuredly have erred and gone astray. . . . Therefore this work of wrath is proof that the Jews, surely rejected by God, are no longer his people, and neither is he any longer their God.²⁰

Economic Supersessionism

A second form of supersessionism is “economic” supersessionism. This view is not as harsh as punitive supersessionism since it does not emphasize Israel’s disobedience and punishment as the primary reason for its displacement as the people of God. Instead, it focuses on God’s plan for the people of God to transfer from an ethnic group (Israel) to a universal group not based on ethnicity (church). In other words, it was God’s plan from the beginning that Israel’s role as the people of God would expire with the coming of Christ and the establishment of the church. According to Soulen, economic supersessionism is the view that “carnal Israel’s history is providentially ordered from the outset to be taken up into the spiritual

¹⁶Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* 30.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Origen, *Against Celsus* 4.22, *ANF* 4.506.

¹⁹Lactantius, *Divine Institutes* 4.11, *ANF* 7.109.

²⁰Martin Luther, “On the Jews and Their Lies,” in *LW* 47:138-39. See also *WA* 53:418.

church.”²¹ With this form of supersessionism, national Israel corresponds to Christ’s church in a merely prefigurative and carnal way. Thus, Christ, with His advent, “brings about the obsolescence of carnal Israel and inaugurates the age of the spiritual church.”²²

With economic supersessionism, Israel is not replaced primarily because of her disobedience but rather because her role in the history of redemption expired with the coming of Jesus. It is now superseded by the arrival of a new spiritual Israel—the Christian church.

For those who adopt an economic supersessionist view, the key figure in bringing about this expiration of national Israel’s role in redemptive history is Jesus Christ. According to Rudolf Bultmann, “The new *aeon* has dawned in the Christ-event.”²³ As a result, “The people of God, the true Israel, is present in the Christian community.”²⁴ Because of this “Christ-event,” the people of God is no longer an “empirical historical entity.”²⁵

Economic supersessionism, according to Soulen, “logically entails the ontological, historical, and moral obsolescence of Israel’s existence after Christ.”²⁶ With His coming, Jesus, the ultimate Israelite, fulfills all God’s plans and promises regarding Israel. All those who are in Jesus, then, are the true Israel. This appears to be the approach of Vern S. Poythress:

Because Christ is an Israelite and Christians are in union with Christ, Christians partake of the benefits promised to Israel and Judah in Jeremiah. With whom is the new covenant made? It is made with Israel and Judah. Hence it is made with Christians by virtue of Christ the Israelite. Thus one might say that Israel and Judah themselves undergo a transformation at the first coming of Christ, because Christ is the final, supremely faithful Israelite. Around him all true Israel gathers.²⁷

Though punitive supersessionism was popular in the early church, several

²¹Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* 181 n. 6.

²²*Ibid.*, 29.

²³Rudolf Bultmann, “Prophecy and Fulfillment,” in *Essays on Old Testament Hermeneutics*, ed. Claus Westermann, trans. James C. G. Greig (Richmond, Va.: John Knox, 1969) 71.

²⁴*Ibid.*

²⁵*Ibid.*

²⁶Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* 30. Dubois writes, “Now that the messiah has come, the church—*versus Israel*—has taken the place of the ‘old’ Israel and the Jewish people no longer has any reason to occupy the historic land of Israel” (Marcel J. Dubois, “Israel and Christian Self-Understanding,” in *Voices From Jerusalem: Jews and Christians Reflect on the Holy Land*, eds. David Burrell and Yehezkel Landau [New York: Paulist, 1992] 65 [emphasis in the original]).

²⁷Vern S. Poythress, *Understanding Dispensationalists*, 2d. ed. (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1994) 106. See also John W. Wenham, *Christ and the Bible* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1972) 106-7.

early church fathers also espoused economic supersessionism.²⁸ Melito of Sardis, for example, declared,

The people [Israel] was precious before the church arose, and the law was marvelous before the gospel was elucidated. But when the church arose and the gospel took precedence the model was made void, conceding its power to the reality. . . . The people was made void when the church arose.²⁹

A more recent advocate of economic supersessionism was Karl Barth.³⁰ He stated,

The first Israel, constituted on the basis of physical descent from Abraham, has fulfilled its mission now that the Saviour of the world has sprung from it and its Messiah has appeared. Its members can only accept this fact with gratitude, and in confirmation of their own deepest election and calling attach themselves to the people of this Saviour, their own King, whose members the Gentiles are now called to be as well. Its mission as a natural community has now run its course and cannot be continued or repeated.³¹

In line with an economic supersessionist viewpoint, N. T. Wright asserts that “Israel’s purpose had come to its head in Jesus’ work.”³² As a result “Those who now belonged to Jesus’ people . . . claimed to be the *continuation of Israel in a new situation*.”³³ Wright also argues that, “Jesus intended those who responded to him to see themselves as the true, restored Israel.”³⁴

Structural Supersessionism

According to Soulen there is a third form of supersessionism—*structural supersessionism*. This is a deeper form of supersessionism than both the punitive and economic positions, he claims, because it involves how the unity of the Christian

²⁸Pelikan points out that Gen 49:10 was sometimes used by the early fathers as evidence that the “historic mission of Israel” came to an “end with the coming of Jesus” (Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition* [100-600], vol. 1, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine* [Chicago: University of Chicago, 1971] 560). Cf. Justin, *First Apology* 32, *ANF* 1:173.

²⁹Melito of Sardis, *On Pascha*, trans. S. G. Hall (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979) 21.

³⁰According to Soulen, “Barth’s theology of consummation embodies the logic of economic supersessionism as clearly as any in the history of the church. The incarnation brings Israel’s history to a conclusion in principle, after which Israel’s sole legitimate destiny is to be absorbed into the spiritual church” (*The God of Israel and Christian Theology* 92-93).

³¹Karl Barth, *CD* III/2 584.

³²N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992) 457.

³³*Ibid.* (emphasis in the original). According to Wright, these who make up the redefined Israel were able to draw upon Israel’s images, read Israel’s Scriptures and “fulfil Israel’s vocation on behalf of the world” (457-58).

³⁴N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996) 316 (emphasis in the original).

canon has been understood:

The problem of supersessionism in Christian theology goes beyond the explicit teaching that the church has displaced Israel as God's people in the economy of salvation. At a deeper level, the problem of supersessionism coincides with the way in which Christians have traditionally understood the theological and narrative unity of the Christian canon as a whole.³⁵

Whereas punitive and economic supersessionism are "explicit doctrinal perspectives," structural supersessionism concerns how the standard canonical narrative as a whole has been perceived.³⁶ According to Soulen, "Structural supersessionism refers to the narrative logic of the standard model whereby it renders the Hebrew Scriptures largely indecisive for shaping Christian convictions about how God's works as Consummator and as Redeemer engage humankind in universal and enduring ways."³⁷

Soulen argues that the standard canonical narrative model, which the church has accepted since Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, turns on four key episodes: (1) God's intention to create the first parents; (2) the fall; (3) Christ's incarnation and the inauguration of the church; and (4) the final consummation.³⁸ He says two facts stand out from the narrative content of this standard model.

First, the foreground of this standard model emphasizes God's engagement with human creation in "cosmic and universal terms."³⁹ Second, the foreground of this model "completely neglects the Hebrew Scriptures with the exception of Genesis 1–3!"⁴⁰ The standard model tells how God engaged Adam and Eve as Consummator and how God's consummating plan for them was disrupted at the fall. The story, however, then "leaps to the Apostolic Witness" and the "deliverance of humankind from the fall through Jesus Christ."⁴¹

Thus, according to Soulen, God's purposes as Consummator and Redeemer "engage human creation in a manner that simply outflanks the greater part of the Hebrew Scriptures and, above all, their witness to God's history with the people of Israel."⁴² What is the result of this leap over the Hebrew Scriptures? God's identity as the God of Israel and His history with the Jewish people "become largely

³⁵Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* 33.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 181 n. 6.

³⁷*Ibid.*

³⁸*Ibid.*, 31.

³⁹*Ibid.*

⁴⁰*Ibid.*

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 32.

⁴²*Ibid.*

indecisive for the Christian conception of God.”⁴³ Craig Blaising states that the “structural nature of supersessionism” has established “the deep set tradition of excluding ethnic, national Israel from the theological reading of Scripture.”⁴⁴

It appears that Soulen is claiming that supersessionists have adopted a hermeneutical approach that ignores or removes the Hebrew scriptures of the OT from having a voice. Clearly, those who hold a supersessionist view will deny the claim of Soulen or call it something different from “structural supersessionism.”

Supersessionism and the Future of Israel

In light of the discussion so far, it might seem natural to assume that supersessionism always leads to the view that Israel has absolutely no future whatsoever in the plan of God. God is done with Israel and that’s that. Though this certainly is the case for some supersessionists, others hold to or are open to some future significance for Israel as a nation or the Jews as a group.

Two terms are important for understanding what some supersessionists believe about Israel. These terms are *salvation* and *restoration*. In short, some supersessionists believe there will be a future *salvation* of Israel, but this salvation does not mean a *restoration* of Israel.

So what is the difference between a salvation of Israel and a restoration of Israel? Belief in a salvation of the nation Israel means that in the last days the Jews as a group will believe in Christ and be saved. In short, salvation means simply that—many Jews will believe in Christ and be saved. The concept of restoration on the other hand includes the ideas of Israel being replanted in her land and given a unique role and mission to the nations. A restoration of Israel means that Israel will have a role and a place of prominence that is not shared with any other group, including the church.

Those who are nonsupersessionists believe in both concepts. They believe Israel as a nation will be saved and they also believe Israel will be restored to a place of prominence among the nations.

Some supersessionists do not believe in either a salvation or restoration of Israel. Other supersessionists believe in a salvation of Israel, but do not believe in a restoration of Israel. No supersessionists believe in a restoration of Israel. In fact, belief in a restoration of Israel is the main factor that distinguishes all supersessionists from all nonsupersessionists.

In regard to Israel’s future then, there are two major variations on the future of Israel among supersessionism. “Strong” supersessionism asserts that Israel will not experience salvation as a nation. Moderate supersessionism, though, holds that the nation Israel will experience a salvation. Thus, the major distinguishing factor among supersessionists is whether they believe in a future salvation of Israel or not. Strong

⁴³Ibid., 33.

⁴⁴Craig A. Blaising, “The Future of Israel as a Theological Question,” *JETS* 44/3 (2001):442.

supersessionists say “No” to a future salvation of Israel. Moderate supersessionists say “Yes” to a future salvation of Israel.

Moderate Supersessionism

Below are statements from various moderate supersessionists who hold that the church is the new Israel but still hold to a future for national Israel. Ridderbos, for instance, believes there is “tension-filled unity” concerning Israel’s rejection and its election.⁴⁵ He asserts that, “the church takes the place of Israel as the historical people of God.”⁴⁶ For him, “This means a new definition of the people of God, and likewise a new concept of Israel.”⁴⁷ This belief, though, does not lead him to conclude that the historical people of Israel have permanently lost their role in the history of redemption.⁴⁸ For Ridderbos, the historical bond between God and Israel continues to be maintained with real significance:

Thus, on one hand Paul is able to see the church of the gentiles as endowed with all the privileges and blessings of Israel, and to see it occupy the place of unbelieving Israel, and yet on the other hand to uphold to the full the continuation of God’s original redemptive intentions with Israel as the historical people of God.⁴⁹

According to Ridderbos, this tension regarding Israel’s rejection and election is not inconsistent: “There is therefore no contradiction between the definition of the essence of the New Testament church as the people of God and holding to Israel as the object of God’s irrevocable gift of grace and calling.”⁵⁰

This dialectical approach concerning Israel’s acceptance and rejection is found often in church history. Tertullian, for example, declared that the church had overcome Israel as the people of God and that Israel had been “divorced” by God.⁵¹ Yet he also encouraged Christians to “rejoice” at the coming “restoration of Israel.”⁵²

John Y. B. Hood asserts that there was a “dualistic view” concerning the fate of the Jews among theologians of the Middle Ages.⁵³ According to Hood, “Medieval Christians believed Jews would eventually accept Christ and be saved, but they also

⁴⁵Ridderbos, *Paul* 356.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 333-34.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 334.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 355.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 360-61.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 360.

⁵¹Tertullian, *PL* 2:598.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 2:996.

⁵³John Y. B. Hood, *Aquinas and the Jews* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1995) xii.

saw them as dangerous infidels who had been rejected and punished by God.”⁵⁴ Hood notes that Thomas Aquinas, like other medieval theologians of his day, accepted the supersessionism theory as a “given,” yet Aquinas also held to a future salvation of the Jews.⁵⁵ Aquinas attempted to deal with the “dualities” of this view. As Hood states, “He [Aquinas] made an effort to explain how it was possible for Jews to be at the same time chosen *and* rejected, ignorant *and* malicious Christ-killers, damned *and* destined for salvation.”⁵⁶

John Calvin’s views on Israel also appear to evidence a rejection/acceptance tension. According to Willem VanGemerren, “Some have seen the utter rejection of Israel in Calvin’s writing, whereas others have also viewed the hope for national Israel.”⁵⁷ Williamson, for example, believes there is a tension in Calvin’s writings on this issue when he states, “On the one hand, Calvin strongly insisted that God’s promise to and covenant with the people Israel was unconditional, unbreakable, and gracious. . . . On the other hand, Calvin often makes statements exactly opposing the above.”⁵⁸

At times, Calvin made statements consistent with supersessionism. For him, the “all Israel” who will be saved in Rom 11:26 is a reference to the church composed of Jews and Gentiles.⁵⁹ He also took the interpretation that the “Israel of God” in Gal 6:16 refers to “all believers, whether Jews or Gentiles, who were united into one church.”⁶⁰ At other times, though, Calvin made statements that seem to indicate he believed in some form of a future for the Jewish people. For example, in his commentary on Isa 59:20, he stated,

Paul quotes this passage, (Rom. xi. 26,) in order to shew that there is still some remaining hope among the Jews; although from their unconquerable obstinacy it might be inferred that they were altogether cast off and doomed to eternal death. But because God is continually mindful of his covenant, and “his gifts and calling are without repentance” (Rom. xi. 29), Paul justly concludes that it is impossible that there shall not at length be some remnant that come to Christ, and obtain that salvation which he has procured. Thus

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Aquinas believed in a future conversion of the Jews based on his view of Romans 11. See Thomas Aquinas, *Sancti Thomae de Aquino Super Epistolam B. Pauli ad Romanos lectura*, 11.4 (<http://www.unav.es/filosofia/alarcon/cro05.html> [accessed January 26, 2004]). Especially significant is the statement in which Aquinas asserted that Paul believed all Jews will be saved in a general sense.

⁵⁶Hood, *Aquinas and the Jews*, xii (emphases in the original).

⁵⁷Willem VanGemerren, “Israel as the Hermeneutical Crux in the Interpretation of Prophecy,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 45/1 (1983):142.

⁵⁸Williamson, *A Guest in the House of Israel* 131.

⁵⁹John Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians*, trans. Ross Mackenzie, eds. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961) 255.

⁶⁰John Calvin, “Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians,” *Calvin’s Commentaries*, vol. 21, trans. William Pringle (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1844–56; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999) 186.

the Jews must at length be collected along with the Gentiles that out of both “there may be one fold” under Christ. (John x. 16). . . . Hence we have said that Paul infers that he [Christ] could not be the redeemer of the world, without belonging to some Jews, whose fathers he had chosen, and to whom this promise was directly addressed.⁶¹

More recently, a dualistic view of Israel can be found in the writings of George Ladd. Ladd asserted that the church is now the new “spiritual Israel.”⁶² Yet he also believed, “The New Testament clearly affirms the salvation of literal Israel.”⁶³ He bases this conclusion on his study of Romans 11. Commenting on Rom 11:26 and its statement that “all Israel will be saved,” Ladd declared, “It is difficult to escape the conclusion that this means literal Israel.”⁶⁴

Millard Erickson too holds that the church is the new Israel, yet he also believes in a salvation of national Israel: “To sum up then: the church is the new Israel. It occupies the place in the new covenant that Israel occupied in the old. . . . There is a special future coming for national Israel, however, through large-scale conversion to Christ and entry into the church.”⁶⁵ He also says, “There is, however, a future for national Israel. They are still the special people of God.”⁶⁶

Wayne Grudem, in his discussion of Israel and the church, espouses a supersessionist view when he states that “many New Testament verses . . . understand the church as the ‘new Israel’ or new ‘people of God.’”⁶⁷ Yet he also declares that the Jews have a future in the plan of God: “I affirm the conviction that Rom. 9–11 teaches a future large-scale conversion of the Jewish people.”⁶⁸ Karl Rahner said Israel still possesses some role in salvation history: “The church is made up of Jews and pagans. . . . But the unfinished role of Israel in salvation history is also recognized (cf. Rom. 9–11).”⁶⁹

As these quotations show, it is possible to believe that the church is the new Israel while still holding to a large-scale conversion of the Jews. This salvation, though, is usually viewed as being in conjunction with an incorporation into the Christian church. Though affirming a future salvation of the Jews, supersessionists do not see this salvation as inferring any special role for Israel apart from the church.

⁶¹John Calvin, “Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah,” in *Calvin's Commentaries* 8:269.

⁶²George Eldon Ladd, “Historic Premillennialism,” in *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views*, ed. Robert G. Clouse (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1977) 25.

⁶³*Ibid.*, 28.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 27.

⁶⁵Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2d. ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999) 1053.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*

⁶⁷Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994) 861.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 861 n. 17.

⁶⁹Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, trans. William V. Dych (New York: Seabury, 1978) 338.

As Erickson explains,

In Romans 9 and Galatians 3, for example, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that Paul regarded the church, Jew and Gentile alike, as the true heir to the promises originally made to national Israel. It does appear that there will be a period of special favor toward the Jews and that they will in large numbers turn to God. It seems likely, however, that this will be brought about through their being converted and integrated into the church rather than through God resuming the relationship He had with them, as the chosen or covenant nation, in the Old Testament.⁷⁰

So in addition to affirming the existence of three variations of supersessionism—punitive, economic, and structural—it is also valid to affirm that there are variations within supersessionism on the future of Israel. A stronger form of supersessionism holds that there is no special future whatsoever for national Israel or ethnic Jews as a group. A milder or more moderate form of supersessionism holds that the church supersedes national Israel as the people of God, but it also asserts that the future will bring an *en masse* salvation of Jews into the Christian church.

Conclusion

As the previous discussion has shown, replacement theology or supersessionism is not a 'one size fits all' perspective. There are variations within this view. Punitive supersessionism emphasizes Israel's disobedience as the reason for its displacement as the people of God. Economic supersessionism emphasizes that national Israel's role as the people of God expired with the coming of the New Testament church. Structural supersessionism is an approach to the canon that minimizes the role of the Hebrew scriptures. Within supersessionism strong and mild forms are discernible. Strong supersessionism does not believe in a future salvation or restoration of Israel. Mild supersessionism believes in a salvation of the nation Israel but no restoration to a place of prominence. Thus, any discussion of supersessionism or replacement theology should take into account the various nuances that exist within the supersessionist view.

⁷⁰Millard J. Erickson, *A Basic Guide to Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998) 123–24.

THE LANGUAGES SPOKEN BY JESUS

Aaron Tresham^{*}

For decades scholarly consensus has held that Jesus usually spoke the Aramaic language. To evaluate the accuracy of this assumption, one must investigate to learn which language(s) was(were) spoken in Israel during the first century A.D., and whether the sayings of Jesus in the Gospels record the spoken Greek of Jesus or are translations of what He said in Hebrew or Aramaic. Evidence for the use of Aramaic in the areas where Jesus lived and taught is strong, but not necessarily strong enough to exclude His use of other languages. Hebrew was not a dead language after the Babylonian Exile as some have assumed. Documents, inscriptions, and coins have shown the continued use of Hebrew during the time that Jesus was in Israel, particularly in the area of Judea. The fact that the Gospels as well as the rest of the NT were originally written in Greek bolsters the case for a widespread use of Greek in Jesus' time. Specific instances of internal evidence in the NT itself, along with widespread use of the Septuagint, in the NT indicate the trilingual nature of first-century Israel. Indications that are external to the NT also show the use of Greek in Jesus' first-century surroundings. Yet impressive voices question the case for Greek as the language Jesus used. A weighing of the evidence on both sides seems to indicate that Jesus spoke and taught in both Greek and Aramaic, with the degree to which He used each one yet to be clarified by further research on this important subject.

* * * * *

The hypothesis that Jesus usually spoke Aramaic has dominated scholarly discussion for decades. Joseph Fitzmyer writes, "If asked what was the language commonly spoken in Palestine in the time of Jesus of Nazareth, most people with some acquaintance of that era and area would almost spontaneously answer

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Aramaic.”¹ Just seven years ago Darrell Bock noted, “Most New Testament scholars believe Aramaic was the primary language of Palestine in Jesus’ day.”² Coming from a leading evangelical scholar of the NT, this assessment of the state of current scholarship is surely accurate. If these scholars are correct, then the sayings of Jesus found in the Gospels in Greek are usually translations of original Aramaic sayings (at best). This would make the number of Jesus’ *ipsissima verba* found in the Gospels very small, and it would discredit the independence view of Synoptic Gospel origins (How likely is it that three independent witnesses would make the same translations from Aramaic into Greek?). It also leads many scholars to adopt an exegetical method whereby the “original” Aramaic is sought to elucidate the Greek text.³

Is this scholarly consensus correct? Is it possible that Jesus actually spoke and taught in Greek? Do the Gospels provide the original words spoken by Jesus in Greek (at least occasionally)?

To decide which languages Jesus commonly spoke and which languages He used for teaching, the languages spoken in Israel⁴ in the first century A.D. must be identified. Such a study is necessarily limited and tentative. Available evidence comes from written sources, but spoken and written languages may not coincide. The linguistic milieu was subject to change in the period from 200 B.C. to A.D. 135, but the evidence is spotty and not evenly distributed. Different languages and dialects were spoken by various groups of people, some of which have no written record preserved to the present day.⁵ Since the teaching of Jesus is the focus of this article, the discussion will be limited to Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek.⁶

Of course, a distinction may exist between the languages spoken by Jesus

¹Joseph A. Fitzmyer, “The Languages of Palestine in the First Century AD,” in *The Language of the New Testament: Classic Essays*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 60, ed. Stanley E. Porter, 126-62 (Sheffield, Eng.: Sheffield Academic, 1991) 147. Other scholars assert simply, “Jesus’ native tongue was Aramaic” (Robert W. Funk, Roy W. Hoover, and the Jesus Seminar, *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* [New York: Macmillan, 1993] 27).

²Darrell L. Bock, review of *The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research: Previous Discussion and New Proposals*, by Stanley E. Porter, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 159/633 (January 2002):126. A similar point is made in Scot McKnight, review of *The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research: Previous Discussion and New Proposals*, by Stanley E. Porter, *Trinity Journal* 23/1 (Spring 2002):124.

³To provide just one example, consider the discussion of Matt 16:18 in D. A. Carson, “Matthew,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 12 vols., ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, 8:1-599 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984) 367-70. His conclusions may be correct, but his argument involves the Aramaic allegedly underlying Πέτρος and πέτρα (he also discusses the Aramaic behind ἐκκλησία).

⁴In this article the names “Israel” and “Palestine” are used somewhat interchangeably because use of “Palestine” as a name for that part of the world in the first century A.D. is anachronistic.

⁵Michael O. Wise, “Languages of Palestine,” in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, eds. Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight, 434-44 (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1992) 434.

⁶Some, including Roman officials and soldiers, would have spoken Latin. However, “Latin never gained a strong foothold in Palestine” (Eric M. Meyers and James F. Strange, *Archaeology, the Rabbis, and Early Christianity* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1981] 88).

and the languages usually spoken in Israel, but it is reasonable to assume that Jesus taught in a language his audience understood. In fact, no reason supports the assumption that Jesus always spoke the same language. Evidence shows that many Jews in the first century were at least bilingual. Jesus would have used whatever language best met the needs of the occasion.

Which languages the Lord spoke is not merely an academic concern. This article seeks to answer whether it is likely that the sayings of Jesus recorded in Greek in the Gospels are based on the spoken Greek of Jesus or are the translations of words He spoke in another language. The external evidence may prove it to be likely that Jesus could speak Greek; the internal evidence can reveal if He actually did.

ARAMAIC

The classic presentation of the view that Jesus spoke primarily Aramaic was provided by Gustaf Dalman, who concluded that Jesus knew some Hebrew and Greek but usually used Aramaic.⁷ That Jews spoke Aramaic after the Exile is rarely disputed; even portions of the OT are in Aramaic (see Daniel and Ezra).⁸ Those who see Aramaic as the primary language of Jesus assert that Aramaic dominated Israel even after Greek had become the *lingua franca* of the Greco-Roman world.⁹

Archaeological finds have confirmed the continued use of Aramaic in Israel. Literary documents in Aramaic from the first centuries B.C. and A.D. were found at Qumran. While the documents in Aramaic are in the minority, they show that Aramaic was at least a literary language at the time. Ossuary inscriptions show that Aramaic also continued as a colloquial language in the first century A.D. A contract in Aramaic dated A.D. 56 was found at Murabba'at. Finds at Masada can be dated A.D. 68-73. These include an Aramaic invoice written on an ostrakon, along with an inscription on a storage jar and an inscription of ownership on a vessel.¹⁰

Documents found in the Cave of Letters at Murabba'at show that Aramaic was also in use at the beginning of the second century. These documents include

⁷Gustaf Dalman, *Jesus-Jeshua: Studies in the Gospels*, trans. Paul P. Levertoff (New York: MacMillan, 1929) 1-37, esp. 37. Pinchas Lapide says that Dalman is "so far the most eloquent proponent of Aramaic as Jesus' native tongue" ("Insights from Qumran into the Languages of Jesus," *Revue de Qumran* 8/32 [December 1975]:497).

⁸However, Chaim Rabin writes, "The Aramaic portions of Daniel and Ezra are no evidence that Aramaic had become a Jewish literary language. The book of Daniel describes happenings at the court of the king of Babylon, and the Aramaic portions of Ezra consist largely of official documents to and by functionaries of the Achaemenid Persian empire" ("Hebrew and Aramaic in the First Century," in *The Jewish People in the First Century: Historical Geography, Political History, Social, Cultural and Religious Life and Institutions*, 2 vols., eds. S. Safrai and M. Stern, 2:1007-39, *Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976] 2:1013).

⁹Stanley E. Porter, "Jesus and the Use of Greek in Galilee," in *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research*, New Testament Tools and Studies 19, eds. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans, 123-54 (Leiden, Neth.: E. J. Brill, 1994) 124.

¹⁰Meyers and Strange, *Archaeology* 75-77.

deeds and letters. For example, one deed for a palm grove dated December 18, 99 is in Aramaic. A marriage contract from the same cache of documents is also in Aramaic.¹¹

To find the original language of Jesus, James Barr suggests translating the Gospels into Hebrew and Aramaic. The one which provides a better understanding of the Greek is more likely to be the original language. He writes, "This kind of evidence is, as evidence, extremely intangible, and yet in a way it forms, for the New Testament scholar, the main ultimate importance of the whole exercise."¹² Barr does not seem to consider the possibility that the Greek itself may be original. Moreover, the whole process is subjective, and the assumption that the Greek cannot be understood without knowing the alleged original betrays a low view of Scripture.

However, it cannot be doubted that Jesus did speak Aramaic.¹³ In fact, the Gospels record several Semitic words uttered by Jesus and his disciples, and many scholars believe most of them are Aramaic.¹⁴ Aramaic was commonly spoken in Israel in the first century, and so Jesus would likely speak Aramaic at times. Thus, the question is whether Jesus spoke any other languages, and more important, Did Jesus ever teach in a language other than Aramaic?¹⁵

HEBREW

Scholars have argued that Hebrew became a dead language after the Exile, so the first-century Jews spoke primarily Aramaic. However, this view has proven to be too simplistic.¹⁶ Scholars used to believe that Jews had created an artificial hybrid of Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic in order to write the Mishna in the second

¹¹Ibid., 77-78.

¹²James Barr, "Which Language Did Jesus Speak?—Some Remarks of a Semitist," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 53/1 (Autumn 1970):14-15. According to Barr, such a study had not been done, since everyone who did such translation assumed Jesus spoke Aramaic (ibid., 17). However, David Bivin and Roy Blizzard argue that translation into Hebrew reveals the true meaning of many difficult passages in the Gospels (*Understanding the Difficult Words of Jesus* [Arcadia, Calif.: Makor Foundation, 1983] 79-91, 119-69).

¹³Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "Did Jesus Speak Greek?" *Biblical Archaeology Review* 18/5 (September/October 1992):58.

¹⁴For example, see Dalman, *Jesus-Jeshua* 11-13. Barr notes that some *may* be Hebrew, but he claims none can be only Hebrew and not Aramaic (Barr, "Which Language" 16-17). In this he disagrees with Isaac Rabinowitz, who argues that εφφαθα in Mark 7:34 must be Hebrew and not Aramaic ("ΕΦΦΑΘΑ (Mark VII. 34): Certainly Hebrew, Not Aramaic," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 16/2 [Autumn 1971]:152-55).

¹⁵Discussion of the hypothesis of a Semitic original of Matthew has been omitted (there is some disagreement whether this alleged document was in Hebrew or Aramaic). Even if such a document existed, it would not prove that Jesus always taught in a Semitic language.

¹⁶Wise, "Languages" 435.

century A.D.¹⁷ However, M. H. Segal refuted this view eighty years ago.¹⁸ His argument was not based on external evidence but on an examination of the grammar and vocabulary of Mishnaic Hebrew itself.¹⁹ Far from being an “artificial scholastic jargon,” it was “essentially a popular and colloquial dialect.”²⁰ The alleged dependence on Aramaic cannot withstand scrutiny. In fact, the grammar of Mishnaic Hebrew essentially depends on Biblical Hebrew, not on Aramaic. Those forms which Mishnaic Hebrew shares with Aramaic are usually found in other Semitic languages as well, and Mishnaic Hebrew has some forms that are unknown in Aramaic.²¹ In the same way that grammatical dependence had been exaggerated, Segal found that the alleged lexical dependence of Mishnaic Hebrew on Aramaic had also been exaggerated.²²

Segal’s conclusion must have been radical at the time (and still is today): the language commonly used by educated, native Jews of Judea from 400 B.C. to A.D. 150 was Mishnaic Hebrew. Although they understood Aramaic, they used it only occasionally.²³ However, it is important to note a caveat: “With regard to the language of Jesus, it is admitted that in the Roman period, and perhaps earlier, [Aramaic] was the vernacular of the native Galilean Jews. But even in Galilee,

¹⁷For example, see Dalman, *Jesus-Jeshua* 16.

¹⁸With the publication of *A Grammar of Mishnaic Hebrew* (Oxford, Eng.: Oxford University, 1927). Nevertheless, Rabin could write in 1976 of the view that Mishnaic Hebrew was an artificial hybrid of Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic, “This theory is still held by many scholars and given in handbooks as statement of fact” (“Hebrew and Aramaic” 2:1022). According to Rabin, by 1909 Segal had already “demonstrated in detail that some of the distinct features of mishnaic Hebrew could not be accounted for by interaction of biblical Hebrew and Aramaic” (*ibid.*, 2:1023; Rabin cites M. H. Segal, “Mishnaic Hebrew and Its Relation to Biblical Hebrew and to Aramaic,” *Jewish Quarterly Review*, o.s., 20 [1908-9]:647-737). Rabin adds a few arguments of his own to Segal’s grammatical arguments. One of interest is that “the way the Septuagint translates some Hebrew words shows that the translators understood them in mishnaic Hebrew senses rather than biblical ones” (“Hebrew and Aramaic” 2:1023).

¹⁹Segal calls it “Mishnaic Hebrew” to distinguish it from Biblical Hebrew, but he argues that Mishnaic Hebrew existed as a vernacular centuries before the Mishna. In fact, he believes the use of Mishnaic Hebrew overlapped the use of late Biblical Hebrew. However, the Mishna and its associated literature was the only literature remaining from the period, which justified the name (*ibid.*, 1).

²⁰*Ibid.*, 6. Barr notes, “That this is so is no longer questioned by major workers in the field” (“Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek in the Hellenistic Age,” in *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, 2 vols., eds. W. D. Davies and Louis Finkelstein, 2:79-114 [Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University, 1989] 2:83). Later scholars found more Aramaic influence in Mishnaic Hebrew than Segal without negating his conclusion of spoken Hebrew (*ibid.*, 2:87).

²¹Segal, *Grammar* 6-7.

²²*Ibid.*, 7-9.

²³*Ibid.*, 13. Segal believes that the use of Aramaic increased during this period. He sees the decline of Mishnaic Hebrew beginning with the Herodian period. The Herodians probably spoke Aramaic, the Roman occupation brought closer connections between Judea and the Aramaic-speaking Jews of the Eastern Diaspora, and settlement of Aramaic-speaking Jews in Jerusalem spread the use of Aramaic at the expense of Hebrew (*ibid.*, 14-15).

[Mishnaic Hebrew] was understood and spoken, at least by the educated classes.”²⁴ Chaim Rabin adds, “Those who, like Jesus, took part in the synagogues (Mark 1:21) and in the Temple of Jerusalem (Mark 11:17) and disputed on Halakah (Matthew 19:3) no doubt did so in mishnaic Hebrew.”²⁵

Harris Birkeland also argued for the extensive use of Hebrew in first-century Israel. He claimed that the presence of Aramaic terms in the Gospels, far from proving that Jesus usually spoke Aramaic, actually proved that Jesus usually spoke Hebrew.²⁶ According to Birkeland, Jesus’ usual Hebrew was translated into Greek, but the occasional Aramaic was left untranslated, much like a translation of this article today would leave the Latin phrase *ipsissima verba* untranslated.²⁷ Matthew Black writes of Birkeland’s view, “This extreme position has found little if any support among competent authorities.”²⁸

David Bivin and Roy Blizzard claim the original Gospel was written entirely in Hebrew, and the canonical Gospels are merely translations (and not particularly good translations). They assert that many passages can be understood only after they have been translated into Hebrew.²⁹ Weston Fields writes, “The ideas of the book are generally good,” but he admits that many scholars will not find them readily acceptable.³⁰ These authors do not consider the possibility that Jesus Himself used the alleged literal translations into Greek of Hebrew idioms.

Few today would go as far as Bivin and Blizzard,³¹ but external evidence, including documents, inscriptions, and coins, has demonstrated the continued use of Hebrew. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls near Qumran made much literary evidence available. This collection of documents includes texts written in Aramaic, Greek, and Hebrew, with various types of Hebrew predominant.³² For Barr, the Dead

²⁴Ibid., 17.

²⁵Rabin, “Hebrew and Aramaic” 2:1036.

²⁶Harris Birkeland, *The Language of Jesus* (Oslo: Dybwad, 1954) 25.

²⁷Rabinowitz argues that the author of Mark (or one of his sources) must have translated both Aramaic and Hebrew source texts into Greek, since both Aramaic and Hebrew terms are left untranslated (“ΕΦΦΑΘΑ”156). Rabinowitz does not consider the possibility that Greek was usually original, which would also explain this.

²⁸Matthew Black, “Aramaic Studies and the Language of Jesus,” in *The Language of the New Testament* 124. Black does admit that Jesus may have used some Hebrew, since he was a rabbi “well-versed in the Scriptures” (ibid., 125).

²⁹Bivin and Blizzard, *Understanding the Difficult Words of Jesus* 19-23.

³⁰Weston W. Fields, review of *Understanding the Difficult Words of Jesus*, by David Bivin and Roy B. Blizzard, *Grace Theological Journal* 5/2 (Fall 1984):271.

³¹For example, J. A. Emerton admits rabbinical literature probably implies that “Hebrew was used as a vernacular by some Jews in the first two centuries A.D.” (“The Problem of Vernacular Hebrew in the First Century A.D. and the Language of Jesus,” *Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s., 24/1 [April 1973]:15). However, he concludes that Jesus normally spoke Aramaic and may have spoken Hebrew occasionally (ibid., 21).

³²Wise, “Languages” 435.

Sea Scrolls suggest “the Jewish community, or some part of it, was bilingual, trilingual or even multilingual in yet higher multiples.”³³ Clearly there were people living at Qumran who could read and write Hebrew, but could they also speak it? Segal and others argue that Hebrew was a spoken dialect in Judea, while other scholars continue to maintain that it was merely a second language for scholars, like Latin in Europe during the Middle Ages.³⁴

In addition to the Qumran material, works such as 1 Maccabees, Ecclesiasticus, and much of the apocryphal and pseudepigraphic literature from the time period under consideration are preserved in Hebrew. There is not as much evidence for written Hebrew apart from these literary texts. Archaeological finds include ostraca, papyri, inscriptions, and coins with Hebrew writing from the second century B.C. to the second century A.D.³⁵ One example of a public inscription in Hebrew dates to the first half of the first century A.D. This inscription on the Tomb of James in the Kidron Valley written in square Hebrew letters states: “This is the tomb and memorial of . . .” and lists the names of several priests.³⁶ Presumably such inscriptions were intended to be understood by at least some of those who lived in the area.

Finds at Masada also provide important evidence. Literary texts in Hebrew include fragments of biblical and apocryphal books, including 26 fragments of Ecclesiasticus, which was previously known only in Greek and medieval Hebrew fragments. Some vessels are marked with the Hebrew names of their owners, and several “tags” were found with Hebrew letters on them (apparently abbreviations; one reads “priest’s tithe” in Hebrew).³⁷

Finds at Murabba’at provide evidence for the use of Hebrew in the early second century A.D. These include letters between commanders of the Bar Kochba revolt (c. 132-35). Some of them are in Aramaic, but others are in Hebrew or Greek. Other documents in Hebrew include deeds, biblical texts, phylacteries, hymns or prayers, bills of divorce, marriage contracts, real estate transactions, and rental contracts.³⁸ These documents come from a later period, a time when Jewish nationalistic fervor was high, but they provide evidence for the continued use of Hebrew in Israel.

It may be concluded that forms of Hebrew were understood by Jews in Jerusalem and the outlying villages in the first century. This evidence applies only to Judea, since similar evidence from Galilee is lacking. Since Galilee had been controlled by Aramaic and Greek-speaking rulers for some time, it seems likely that Hebrew was less well-known there than in Judea. However, the educated classes

³³Barr, “Which Language” 20.

³⁴Meyers and Strange, *Archaeology* 67.

³⁵Wise, “Languages” 436.

³⁶Meyers and Strange, *Archaeology* 69.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 69-70.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 71-72.

would probably have had some knowledge of Hebrew.³⁹

GREEK

The most obvious factor in considering Greek as a language of Jesus is the fact that the NT was written and preserved entirely in Greek. Alexander Roberts wrote over a century ago,

Here we possess, in the volume known as the New Testament, a collection of writings, composed for the most part *by* Jews of Palestine, and primarily intended to some extent *for* Jews of Palestine, and all of them written . . . in the *Greek* language. Now what is the natural inference? Is it not that Greek must have been well known both to the writers and their readers, and that *it* was deemed the most fitting language, at the time, in which for Jews of Palestine both to impart and receive instruction?⁴⁰

Of course, for many scholars the Greek NT is not sufficient evidence to conclude that Greek was commonly spoken in first-century Israel; for such scholars the dominance of Aramaic is often a forgone conclusion. However, archaeological evidence from the last few decades of the twentieth century provides ample confirmation that Greek was used in Israel during the time of Christ. This evidence will be reviewed below. However, the evidence provided by the NT itself will be considered first.

Internal Evidence

Not only the Gospels, but the whole NT is in Greek. Peter and John were recognized as “uneducated and untrained men” (Acts 4:13);⁴¹ certainly they did not have special training in the Greek language beyond that of the middle classes, and yet they were able to write in Greek. James, the brother of Jesus, was most likely a carpenter like his father, certainly not one of the social or political elite, and yet he composed a letter in Greek to other Jews less than two decades after the death of Christ.⁴² Did he learn Greek (and of a quality sufficient to produce such an epistle)

³⁹Wise, “Languages” 437. Rabin asserts, “Late biblical Hebrew must have been widely understood and read in circles close to nascent Christianity, as well as by the early Christians themselves” (“Hebrew and Aramaic” 2:1015). He seems to base this on the fact that the church preserved the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, large parts of which likely existed in late biblical Hebrew, according to Rabin.

⁴⁰Alexander Roberts, *Greek: The Language of Christ and His Apostles* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1888) 82 (emphasis in the original). Hans Betz writes, “The fact is that none of Jesus’ sayings is transmitted in Aramaic. The Gospel writers take it as self-evident that Jesus and his contemporaries spoke and taught in Greek” (“Wellhausen’s Dictum ‘Jesus Was Not a Christian, but a Jew’ in Light of Present Scholarship,” *Studia Theologica* 45 [1991]:90).

⁴¹Scripture quotations are from the *New American Standard Bible*, Updated Edition.

⁴²T. K. Abbott states, “Probably the earliest book in the New Testament is the Epistle of James, written in Greek, and showing a considerable mastery of the language” (“To What Extent Was Greek the Language of Galilee in the Time of Christ?” in *Essays Chiefly on the Original Texts of the Old and New*

in those few years, while he was leading the church in Jerusalem, where they allegedly spoke primarily Aramaic?⁴³ Perhaps Peter, James, and John merely produced their works in Aramaic, and faithful (bilingual) secretaries translated them into Greek. However, scholars are agreed that the NT is not written in “translation Greek.” For example, Dalman writes of the Gospels, “He who wishes to re-think the words of Jesus in Aramaic is confronted with a considerable difficulty; these words, as we have them in our Gospels, were not slavishly translated from an Aramaic original, but were moulded into Greek, although into a Greek which has been influenced by the Semitic idiom and occasionally also by the O.T. style.”⁴⁴ Most agree that all of the NT books were originally composed in Greek. Roberts concludes, “If they, humble fishermen of Galilee, understood Greek to such an extent as naturally and easily to write it, that language must have been generally known and used among the people.”⁴⁵

In the Gospels, the authors give no hint that they are translations.⁴⁶ However, there is a problem with this argument. In Acts 9:4 Jesus confronts Saul with the words, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” These words of Jesus are presented in Greek without any hint of translation. However, when Paul is relating these events to Agrippa, he states, “I heard a voice saying to me *in the Hebrew dialect* [τῆ Ἑβραϊδὶ διαλέκτῳ], ‘Saul, Saul why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads’” (26:14, emphasis added). Regardless of whether this refers to Hebrew or Aramaic, it appears that Christ did not address Paul in Greek.⁴⁷ Unless Jesus said the same thing to Paul in both Greek and a Semitic

Testaments [London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1891] 154).

⁴³Roberts notes the suggestion of other scholars that the apostles had the gift of tongues; that is, they were supernaturally endowed with the ability to write in Greek (*Greek*, 84-85). It is doubtful that any scholar would take this suggestion seriously today. This also fails to explain how the readers were supposed to understand what they wrote, unless one assumes that *none* of the NT was intended for those who allegedly spoke Aramaic.

⁴⁴*Jesus-Jeshua* 23. Betz comments, “We now also know that the New Testament sources, even the older ones, are not thoroughgoing translations from the Aramaic. . . . Most of even the oldest layers of the synoptic tradition give the impression that they existed in Greek from the start” (“Wellhausen’s Dictum” 90). He later says, “It would be much more consistent with both the gospel tradition and the multilinguistic culture to assume that Greek versions of Jesus’ sayings existed from the beginning. If at that time Aramaic versions of sayings of Jesus also existed, they have not been preserved” (*ibid.*, 92).

⁴⁵Roberts, *Greek* 91.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 95.

⁴⁷It is commonly assumed that the references to “Hebrew” (Ἑβραϊστί or τῆ Ἑβραϊδὶ διαλέκτῳ) in the NT actually refer to Aramaic, allegedly the usual language of the “Hebrews” (Ἑβραῖοι, see Acts 6:1; 2 Cor 11:22; Phil 3:5). The NIV usually translates the references to a Semitic language by “Aramaic.” Although the NASU usually translates “Hebrew,” it includes the footnote, “i.e., Jewish Aramaic” (see John 5:2; 19:13, 17, 20; 20:16; Acts 21:40; 22:2; 26:14). However, both translations use “Hebrew” in Rev 9:11; 16:16 (and the NASU does not include a footnote), even though the same Greek term is used in John and Revelation. Philip Hughes writes, “Linguistic research is making it increasingly difficult to maintain that by terms like *Hebraisti* (John 19:20; Acts 21:40; 22:2; 26:24) and *Hebraikos* (Luke 23:28) the Aramaic language is unquestionably intended” (“The Languages Spoken by Jesus,” in

language, then this seems to be an instance in which the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus were not recorded. This raises the possibility of similar situations occurring in the Gospels. Nevertheless, other indications show that Jesus used Greek.

Roberts rightly questions those who cite the occasional appearance of Aramaic words in the Gospels as proof that Jesus usually spoke Aramaic.⁴⁸ The fact that a few Aramaic words show up in the midst of predominantly Greek words would seem to argue the opposite. If Jesus habitually spoke Aramaic, then why would only a few of these words appear in the Gospels while the rest were translated?⁴⁹ In fact, when the Gospel writers provide translations for the Aramaic originals of Jesus, they explicitly note that they are doing so.⁵⁰ On the contrary, if Jesus often spoke in Greek, then it is easy to believe that he would also use Aramaic when appropriate. For example, when speaking to the daughter of Jairus, Jesus says, “Talitha cum” (Mark 5:41). It is understandable that the young daughter of a synagogue official (vv. 22-23) would not be familiar with Greek.⁵¹

Roberts next examines the quotations of the OT found in the NT. These quotations could be Greek translations of the original Hebrew, Greek translations of an Aramaic version, or the Greek of the Septuagint. When one examines the citations

New Dimensions in New Testament Study, eds. Richard N. Longenecker and Merrill C. Tenney, 127-43 [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974] 134). In fact, Aramaic was called “Syriac” as “Syria” was the Greek name for “Aram” (ibid., 138-39). Birkeland also argues that these references are to Hebrew not Aramaic. He notes that Josephus distinguishes between the language of the “Syrians” (Aramaic) and the “Hebrew” language (*Language of Jesus* 13). Nevertheless, Black still maintains that the terms refer to a peculiar Jewish dialect of Aramaic (“Aramaic Studies” 125). Jehoshua Grintz also argues that Hebrew is actually intended in all these passages, not Aramaic. His argument is based on Matthew, Josephus, and the Talmud. He examines several passages in Matthew “where the Greek text points unmistakably to a Semitic original, and where a clear distinction can be made between Hebrew usage and Aramaic” (“Hebrew as the Spoken and Written Language in the Last Days of the Second Temple,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 79/1 [March 1960]:33-34). He concludes, “One can assert that the original language behind the Gospel of Matthew was Hebrew” (ibid., 41). He also concludes that Josephus’ references to a Semitic language all refer to Hebrew (ibid., 42), and he believes references in the Talmud confirm this (ibid., 45-56). Grintz believes Matthew was originally composed in Hebrew, based on evidence from the church fathers (ibid., 33). However, it is not clear that the alleged Hebraisms in Matthew are based on a Hebrew original. Accepting these Hebraisms and assuming for the sake of argument that Jesus spoke Hebrew as His first language and Greek as His second language, would it not be possible for Hebraic expressions to creep into any of His teaching which was originally in Greek?

⁴⁸Roberts, *Greek* 96-101. This argument is also refuted by Abbott, “Greek” 134-45. Wise notes, “Isolated substantives are not necessarily indicative of the language spoken. Aramaic words might appear, for example, in the course of a conversation conducted mainly in Hebrew or *vice versa*; such phenomena are commonly observed in the speech of modern bilinguals” (“Languages” 442).

⁴⁹Emerton suggests that these Aramaic words “had special value for those who told the story—they were words of power used in healing, or words of emotional and dramatic significance or of theological importance like the words from the cross” (“Problem of Vernacular Hebrew” 19). Paul also uses a few Semitic words in his epistles. Note $\alpha\beta\beta\alpha$ (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6) and $\mu\alpha\rho\nu\alpha\ \theta\alpha$ (1 Cor 16:22).

⁵⁰To cite one example: “Jesus looked at him and said, ‘You are Sim on the son of John; you shall be called Cephas [Aramaic] (which is translated Peter [Greek])’” (John 1:42).

⁵¹Roberts, *Greek* 104-6.

of the OT in the NT, he finds that the majority are derived from the Septuagint.⁵² This implies at the very least that the NT authors were familiar with the OT in Greek. But does their use of the Septuagint reflect the language commonly spoken by the authors, or does it represent the language spoken by the original readers? The fact that the NT is in Greek itself implies that it was intended for an audience who also knew the OT in Greek. Thus it would be reasonable to find quotations from the Septuagint in the Epistles and portions of the Gospels.

The situation is slightly different when a Gospel has an OT citation in direct speech. It is conceivable that the Gospel authors used the Septuagint for these OT quotations regardless of what the original speaker used. But if these OT quotations reflect what was spoken, then the language reflected in them should reflect the language commonly spoken. Roberts does not seem concerned with the situation of direct speech in particular, but T. K. Abbott makes this distinction. In fact, he says that Matthew usually follows the Septuagint in direct speech, but his own comments “never agree with the LXX exactly, and their variations sometimes are clear approximations to the Hebrew.”⁵³ Abbott uses this argument to show that Matthew was originally composed in Greek, but it also provides evidence that Jesus Himself used the Septuagint (and thus spoke Greek). If Matthew put the Septuagint on Jesus’ lips, then why did he not use the Septuagint consistently throughout his Gospel? It appears that Matthew faithfully reproduced Jesus’ own citations of the Septuagint.

Robert Gundry, who has studied Matthew extensively, disagrees. He suggests that explicit quotations of the OT in the “Markan tradition” (Gundry, of course, holds to Markan priority) were “assimilated to the Septuagint.” However, Gundry asserts that “allusive quotations” were not so assimilated. These allusions show “affinities with both the Septuagint and the Semitic forms of the OT.”⁵⁴ He states, “This early quotation material exhibits the same threefold language milieu which archaeological evidence should have taught us to expect.”⁵⁵ Thus, even if assimilation of direct quotations has occurred, the Gospels still provide evidence for the use of the Septuagint by Jesus.

According to Abbott, there are similar cases in Acts. At the Jerusalem Council James argues from the Greek version of Amos where it differs from the Hebrew (15:16-18).⁵⁶ Martin Hengel asserts that this Council must have been in

⁵²Ibid., 134. One might also consider the possibility that the Greek of the NT was influenced by the Septuagint, providing further evidence that the Greek version of the OT was in common use. This question continues to be debated. For a brief discussion of the issues involved see Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996) 24-30.

⁵³Abbott, “Greek” 157-58. Abbott notes that OT quotations in direct speech are all by Jesus himself, except for one quotation by Satan during the Temptation (Matt 4:6).

⁵⁴Robert H. Gundry, “The Language Milieu of First-Century Palestine: Its Bearing on the Authenticity of the Gospel Tradition,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 83/4 (December 1964):407.

⁵⁵Ibid., 408.

⁵⁶Abbott, “Greek” 161.

Greek (at least “also in Greek”) since the Greek Titus was there.⁵⁷ Stephen also quotes from the Septuagint in his defense before the Sanhedrin (7:2-53). This is not surprising, since he was a Hellenistic Jew, but it may be assumed that his speech was understandable to the council.⁵⁸ Luke’s use of the terms Ἑλληνισταῖ and Ἑβραῖοι in Acts 6:1 may also imply the use of Greek in Jerusalem. C. F. D. Moule argued from the context of Acts that the best way to understand these terms (in Acts) is linguistically. The first refers to “Jews who spoke *only* Greek” and the second to “Jews who, while able to speak Greek, knew a Semitic language also.”⁵⁹ If this interpretation is correct, it provides textual evidence for the use of Greek in Jerusalem.

Stanley Porter notes, “The Greek used by Jesus in Mark’s Gospel at points conforms to a higher register than the Greek of the narrative itself.”⁶⁰ Would Mark have put better words on the Master’s lips on purpose? Or does Mark reflect the actual language of Jesus? This latter possibility seems more consistent with the writing of an inspired Gospel.

Consider also the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew states, “Large crowds followed Him from Galilee and the Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judea and from beyond the Jordan. When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain” (Matt 4:25-5:1). Then Jesus began to teach his disciples. However, many people were listening to the sermon, since at the end Matthew records, “When Jesus had finished these words, *the crowds* were amazed at His teaching” (7:29, emphasis added). Presumably this crowd consisted of people from all the regions mentioned in 4:25, including the Decapolis. Roberts argues that the cities of the Decapolis were primarily Gentile, and the Jews living there were Hellenized. These people probably did not speak Aramaic, so if Jesus wanted such people to understand his sermon, he needed to speak in Greek.⁶¹

A similar situation is found in Luke’s Sermon on the Plain (it is not important to this argument how this relates to the Sermon on the Mount). Luke 6:17-18 says, “Jesus came down with them and stood on a level place; and there was a large crowd of His disciples, and a great throng of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the coastal regions of Tyre and Sidon, who had come to hear Him.” Roberts provides evidence that the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon generally spoke Greek, so if the Lord was to be understood by them, he would have spoken in

⁵⁷Martin Hengel, *The ‘Hellenization’ of Judaea in the First Century after Christ* (Philadelphia: Trinity/London: SCM, 1989) 17.

⁵⁸Abbott, “Greek” 161. Abbott also thinks that Zacharias borrowed from the Septuagint in Luke 1:68-79 (ibid.).

⁵⁹C. F. D. Moule, “Once More, Who Were the Hellenists?” *Expository Times* 70/4 (January 1959):100 (emphasis in the original).

⁶⁰Stanley E. Porter, “Did Jesus Ever Teach in Greek?” *Tyndale Bulletin* 44/2 (November 1993):224.

⁶¹Roberts, *Greek* 147-49.

Greek.⁶² Since people from Judea and Jerusalem were also present, this implies that these also understood Greek. Hence, it is possible that Jesus spoke Greek even when people from Tyre, Sidon, or the Decapolis were not present.

John 12:20-21 tells of some “Greeks” who wanted to see Jesus. They spoke to Philip, presumably in Greek (or had these “Greeks” learned Aramaic?).⁶³ The text notes that Philip was from Bethsaida of Galilee;⁶⁴ it seems that this comment is intended to indicate that Philip was more likely to respond to these Gentiles (Because those from Galilee spoke Greek and the other disciples did not or because those from Galilee had more contact with Greek-speaking Gentiles?). The text does not indicate whether Jesus spoke directly to them, but it seems unreasonable to think that Jesus would completely ignore those who were seeking him. Thus Jesus could have spoken in Greek at this point so that the Greeks might understand.⁶⁵ However, he was in Jerusalem at the time for the upcoming Passover, so if the rest of the crowds understood him, then Greek was also spoken in Jerusalem⁶⁶ (of course, many Jews from outside Jerusalem would also be there for Passover).

Roberts then considers the accounts of Jesus before Pilate, which Roberts believes “bears the clearest and most conclusive testimony” to the common use of Greek.⁶⁷ In these accounts Jesus speaks to Pilate, and Pilate speaks to Jesus, the priests, and the crowds. There is no mention of an interpreter, and many of the exchanges would not lend themselves to the use of an interpreter.⁶⁸ As a Roman, Pilate spoke Latin, but this language was probably not spoken by Jesus, the priests, or the crowd. It also seems unlikely that Pilate had learned Aramaic or Hebrew. Greek would be the natural medium of communication for Pilate to use with the people of Judea.

John 20 records a meeting between Jesus and Mary after the resurrection. In the middle of the conversation John writes, “She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, ‘Rabboni!’ (which means, Teacher)” (v. 16). Whether Ἑβραϊστί refers to Hebrew or Aramaic in this verse is beside the point.⁶⁹ In the midst of a conversation

⁶²Ibid., 149-50.

⁶³Porter notes, “The expression Ἕλληνας here almost certainly refers to Greek-speaking gentiles, whether or not they came from Greece (as they almost assuredly did not), and does not mean Greek-speaking Jews, as the comparative terminology of Acts 6:1 indicates” (“Use of Greek” 150).

⁶⁴Hengel notes that Herod’s son Philip had refounded this city before 2 B.C., so “it was therefore more markedly ‘Hellenized’ than the surrounding villages” (*Hellenization* 16).

⁶⁵Dalman argues, “In John xii.20 it is taken for granted that our Lord did not belong to the Greek-speaking Jews. Greeks who desired to speak to Him in the Temple of Jerusalem, approached His disciple, Philip,” whose Greek name “prove[s] relationship to the Greek cultural circle” (*Jesus-Jeshua* 5).

⁶⁶Roberts, *Greek* 158.

⁶⁷Ibid., 159.

⁶⁸Ibid., 160-64. Porter notes, “Interpreters or translators are specified by other writers during this period (e.g. Josephus)” (“Use of Greek” 149).

⁶⁹It is generally assumed that this term refers to Aramaic (see n. 47 above).

recorded in Greek, John makes a point of noting Mary's use of a Semitic language. It seems safe to conclude that the rest of the conversation actually occurred in Greek.⁷⁰

In John 21:15-17 a conversation takes place between Jesus and Peter, which involves the interplay of three pairs of near-synonymous Greek terms: ἀγαπάω and φιλέω, ποιμαίνω and βόσκω, and οἶδα and γινώσκω. These pairs cannot be reproduced in Aramaic or Hebrew. Similarly, the wordplay between πέτρος and πέτρα in Matthew 16:18 is lost in Aramaic or Hebrew.⁷¹ Should these be explained by the creativity of the Evangelists, or are these the actual words of Jesus?

Porter suggests Mark 7:24-30 records another situation in which Jesus spoke Greek.⁷² Jesus is in the region of Tyre and speaks with a Gentile woman. Mark calls her an Ἑλληνίς and Συροφοινίκισσα. This region had been under Hellenistic influence for some time, and Mark's reference to her as "Greek" emphasizes that she spoke Greek (since she was Syrophenician she was not ethnically Greek).⁷³ There is no mention of an interpreter, so Jesus likely spoke to her in Greek.⁷⁴

Joseph Fitzmyer notes John 7:35: "The Jews said to one another, 'Where does this man [Jesus] intend to go that we will not find Him? He is not intending to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks, is He?'" Presumably Jesus would teach the Greeks in Greek, so these Jews must have thought He could speak Greek.⁷⁵

Porter also notes the NT use of ἐκκλησία. This term is found in the Gospels only in Matthew 16:18; 18:17 in quotations of Jesus. Did those in the early church call themselves an ἐκκλησία because of Jesus' use of the term, or does Matthew's use of the term indicate his redactional tendencies?⁷⁶ If Matthew put the term on Jesus' lips, then why did the early church use that name in the first place? It seems more likely that Jesus used the term than that Matthew introduced an anachronism

⁷⁰Roberts, *Greek* 170-72.

⁷¹Hughes, "Languages" 141. There is a fourth pair in John 21: ἀρνίον and πρόβατον. Hughes does not comment on this pair, perhaps because it is reproducible in Hebrew or Aramaic.

⁷²Porter, "Use of Greek" 149-50.

⁷³However, J. M. Ross states that calling her Greek "does not necessarily imply that her language was Greek; it merely means that she was not a Jew" ("Jesus' Knowledge of Greek," *Irish Biblical Studies* 12 [January 1990]:43).

⁷⁴Porter suggests Matt 8:5-13 = Luke 7:2-10 as another example when Jesus would have spoken Greek ("Use of Greek"). This is the account of Jesus healing the servant of a centurion, who was presumably a Greek-speaker. Some scholars believe that Jesus did not actually speak to the centurion. Luke records that some Jewish elders came and spoke on his behalf, although Matthew has the centurion himself speaking with Jesus. Since this passage is disputed, discussion of it has been left to this note. The present writer thinks both accounts are correct and that Jesus spoke to both the Jewish elders and later the man himself, probably in Greek.

⁷⁵Fitzmyer, "Did Jesus Speak Greek" 61.

⁷⁶Porter, "Did Jesus Ever Teach in Greek" 233. Further research into this issue would be interesting and potentially valuable, but it goes far beyond the scope of this article.

into his Gospel.

A similar argument regarding the use of a single word is made by A. W. Argyle. He cites the use of ὑποκριτής, which appears 17 times in the Synoptics, all on the lips of Jesus. The term is used only twice in the Septuagint (Job 34:30; 36:13), where it translates אָנִי, “godless.” This does not fit the context in the NT, where the Greek meaning “play actor” makes sense (note Matt 6:2, 5, 16). Since theater was forbidden among the Jews, neither Hebrew nor Aramaic has an equivalent for Jesus to have spoken. According to Argyle, Matthew Black gives an Aramaic equivalent that refers to a liar, which does not fit the context.⁷⁷ Thus Argyle concludes that Jesus spoke Greek on this occasion.⁷⁸

Argyle also notes that the Jewish Sanhedrin got its name from the Greek word συνέδριον. Moreover, Paul quotes from the Greek poet Menander (1 Cor 15:33), indicating that Greek literature was studied in the rabbinic training of the time.⁷⁹ G. H. R. Horsley finds Argyle’s arguments to be weak. Regarding ὑποκριτής, Horsley notes the distinction between loanwords and bilingualism. For example, an English speaker may use a French phrase without knowing French.⁸⁰ This is true, but to be understood the audience must also understand the foreign phrase, so it must be something of a stock phrase. Is ὑποκριτής likely to have been such a word?

Note also the use of ἐπιούσιος in the Lord’s Prayer (Matt 6:11; Luke 11:3).⁸¹ This word is unknown outside of these two verses and Christian writings dependent on them.⁸² Since Matthew and Luke wrote independently, this word must go back to Jesus Himself. This is consistent with the conclusion above that Jesus spoke the entire Sermon on the Mount/Plain in Greek.

Nigel Turner notes that “the characteristically Greek phrase, *men . . . de*, occurs twenty times in [Matthew], and that is an unusual proportion for translation Greek. . . . Every occurrence of *men . . . de* is in the words of Jesus, His disciples, or the Baptist.”⁸³ Similarly, Matthew and Luke have the genitive absolute more

⁷⁷A. W. Argyle, “‘Hypocrites’ and the Aramaic Theory,” *Expository Times* 75/4 (January 1964):114.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 113. See also A. W. Argyle, “Greek among the Jews of Palestine in New Testament Times,” *New Testament Studies* 20/1 (October 1973):89.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 87.

⁸⁰G. H. R. Horsley, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity*, vol. 5, *Linguistic Essays* (Australia: Macquarie University, 1989) 21.

⁸¹Suggested by Ross, “Jesus’ Knowledge of Greek” 43-45. The preservation of this unusual term is understandable if the early church knew that Jesus Himself had uttered it in Greek (*ibid.*, 46).

⁸²The word might occur in one Greek papyrus. Unfortunately, this papyrus has gone missing, and the published versions all depend on the transcription of one who is known to have made transcriptional errors (Bruce M. Metzger, “How Many Times Does ‘Epiusios’ Occur Outside the Lord’s Prayer?” *Expository Times* 69/2 [November 1957]:53).

⁸³Nigel Turner, “The Language of Jesus and His Disciples,” in *The Language of the New Testament* 177.

frequently than the Septuagint.⁸⁴ These facts argue against a Semitic original for this material, for in that case the translations provided by Matthew and Luke were very free. This is not consistent with the reverence a Christian translator would have had for the sayings of Christ. The Septuagint offers a parallel: “As reverence for the sacred books increased, so did the degree of literalness in the translation.”⁸⁵ Turner also notes Jesus’ use of the phrase “an honest and good heart” in Luke 8:15, which reflects the traditional Greek phrase for a gentleman. However, it has no parallel in Hebrew or Aramaic. The alliteration also argues for a Greek original (ἐν καρδίᾳ καλῇ καὶ ἀγαθῇ).⁸⁶ Similarly, κακοὺς κακῶς (Matt 21:41), λιμοὶ καὶ λοιμοί (Luke 21:11, Jesus speaking), and the wordplay αἶρει . . . καθαίρει (John 15:2, Jesus speaking) support the claim of Greek originals.⁸⁷

This testimony from the Gospels is not surprising. Jesus’ family fled to Egypt shortly after His birth, where Greek was used. Jesus spent most of his life in Galilee, where many Greek-speaking Gentiles lived. Gerard Mussies notes that Jesus “grew up in surroundings where Greek was the second language of many people if not a majority of the population.”⁸⁸ Thus, Jesus must have spoken Greek. The passages above indicate that He also used Greek in His ministry.⁸⁹

External Evidence

Now consider the external evidence for the use of Greek in Israel. Greek had been making inroads long before the first century A.D., and even before the conquests of Alexander the Great. According to Mussies, Greek individuals had been in Israel as early as the eighth century B.C.⁹⁰ Greek pottery from the sixth century B.C. has been found in coastal sites in Israel. Greek coins are known in Israel before the fourth century B.C. Ostraca from the early third century B.C. were found at Khirbet el-Kôm. These eight ostraca include six in Aramaic, one in Aramaic and Greek, and one in Greek. The bilingual one is dated July 25, 277 B.C. The text refers to a loan from a certain moneylender (the word for moneylender in the Aramaic text is actually a Greek loanword). This moneylender had clients with Nabataean, Aramaean, Jewish, Greek, Arab, and Egyptian names. A businessman with such diverse clientele apparently used Aramaic and Greek (as inelegant as it may be) for business

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵Ibid., 178.

⁸⁶Ibid., 182.

⁸⁷Ibid., 182-83.

⁸⁸Gerard Mussies, “Greek as the Vehicle of Early Christianity,” *New Testament Studies* 29/3 (July 1983):359.

⁸⁹Roberts, *Greek* 172-73.

⁹⁰Mussies, “Greek” 357.

purposes.⁹¹

Public inscriptions also testify to the use of Greek before the time of Christ. An inscription honoring Ptolemy IV was erected in Joppa in 217 B.C. The remains of several Seleucid inscriptions in Greek from the second century B.C. have been found in various locations in Israel. In addition to these political inscriptions, religious inscriptions in Greek have been found dating to the second and first centuries B.C.⁹²

Even Dalman, the proponent of Aramaic, admitted that Greek was the common language in the coastal cities and had “obtained a footing also in Palestine.”⁹³ Summarizing the available evidence, Abbott wrote in 1891:

Taking roughly the period from B.C. 170, and ending A.D. 160 or 150, we find at the beginning Greek was making its way; we find at the end that it had superseded Aramaic, and in the middle of the period we find Galileans speaking and writing Greek, and speeches in Greek made to the authorities in Jerusalem. The inevitable inference is that the language was steadily making its way all the time, the middle period being one in which both languages were used, more or less.⁹⁴

The evidence made available since Abbott’s time has only served to strengthen this view. Writing in 1968, J. N. Sevenster has an extended discussion of archaeological finds in Israel relating to the question of language.⁹⁵ He cites evidence for the use of Greek in the centuries before Christ, as well as evidence for the use of Greek in the second and third centuries after Christ in various parts of Israel. Also, an interesting inscription from Galilee has been found, dated in the first half of the first century A.D., based on the form of the letters. This inscription is in Greek, and it pronounces a death sentence on anyone who desecrates tombs. Presumably the inhabitants of this region were expected to understand this Greek inscription.⁹⁶

Sevenster also discusses Greek synagogue inscriptions. While many of these date to later centuries, the oldest comes from the first century A.D. It was found in Jerusalem and probably dates before A.D. 70. It refers to a man named Theodotos (a

⁹¹Meyers and Strange, *Archaeology* 78-79.

⁹²Ibid., 79-81. Barr asserts, “From the third century B.C.E. on, apart from the inscriptions on tombs and ossuaries and in synagogues, inscriptions in Palestine are almost entirely in Greek” (“Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek” 2:102).

⁹³Dalman, *Jesus-Jeshua* 1-2. Dalman states that Jesus “could not have lived in isolation from the influence of Greek” (ibid., 4).

⁹⁴Abbott, “Greek” 177.

⁹⁵J. N. Sevenster, *Do You Know Greek? How Much Greek Could the First Jewish Christians Have Known?* Supplements to Novum Testamentum 19, trans. J. de Bruin (Leiden, Neth.: E. J. Brill, 1968) 96-175.

⁹⁶Ibid., 117-21. David Lewis suggests caution. What the government thought was readable and what actually was may not have been the same. Nevertheless, he agrees that there is sufficient evidence for the widespread use of Greek in the first century in Jerusalem and Hellenistic towns. (Review of *Do You Know Greek? How Much Greek Could the First Jewish Christians Have Known?*, by J. N. Sevenster, *Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s., 20/2 [October 1969]:587-88).

Greek name), who was head of the synagogue and a priest. This provides testimony to the use of Greek in certain Jewish circles in Jerusalem before A.D. 70.⁹⁷

Similar testimony is provided by the large number of ossuaries discovered in and around Jerusalem. Many scholars date these to the first century before A.D. 70. There are inscriptions on the ossuaries in Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, and combinations thereof. While some of these may belong to Diaspora Jews who were buried in Jerusalem, it is unlikely that all of them can be explained this way. Thus, evidence for a variety of languages commonly spoken in Jerusalem at the time of Christ has surfaced.⁹⁸ Speaking of funerary inscriptions, Porter notes, "Greek was apparently that dominant, that in the majority of instances it took precedence over the Jewish sacred language, even at a moment of highly personal and religious significance."⁹⁹

Since Sevenster wrote, additional examples of the use of Greek in Israel have been found. Porter reviews the evidence provided by coins, papyri, literary texts, and inscriptions.¹⁰⁰ This evidence supports the use of Greek in the centuries before and after Christ. One example is an inscription, probably from the time of Herod the Great, which honors a man who paid for a stone pavement for the Temple precincts. Although this man was from Rhodes, one would expect that those honoring him would want the local population to understand the inscription.¹⁰¹

In addition to this physical evidence is the commonly accepted view that Greek was the *lingua franca* of the Greco-Roman world.¹⁰² James Voelz claims, "Greek was alive and well in Israel in the first century of the Christian era (and many years before). For Greek had supplanted Aramaic as the *lingua franca* of the eastern Mediterranean."¹⁰³ Porter makes a noteworthy observation worth quoting in full:

I find it interesting, if not a bit perplexing, that virtually all biblical scholars will accept that the Jews adopted Aramaic, the *lingua franca* of the Persian empire, as their first language, with many if not most Jews of the eastern Mediterranean speaking it in the

⁹⁷Sevenster, *Do You Know Greek* 131-33.

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, 143-49.

⁹⁹Porter, "Did Jesus Ever Teach in Greek" 222.

¹⁰⁰Porter, "Use of Greek" 137-47. Some of Porter's evidence was known to Sevenster, but some of it was discovered or published later. The interested reader can examine the publications cited in Porter's footnotes.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*, 145.

¹⁰²*Ibid.*, 129. Barr admits that Greek became the language of government, commerce, and education throughout the East, but he claims it did not advance as far in Israel, because Hebrew and Aramaic literature was so important and connected with the religion ("Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek" 2:101). Nevertheless, he admits, "The cultural movement was overwhelmingly in one direction: orientals learned Greek, but not much was done by native Greek speakers to learn oriental languages or to assimilate oriental culture through their written sources" (*ibid.*, 2:103). He concludes, "In Palestine also Greek made enormous headway, but it is clear that Semitic languages retained a stronghold" (*ibid.*, 2:111).

¹⁰³James W. Voelz, "The Linguistic Milieu of the Early Church," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 56/2-3 (April-July 1992):82.

fourth century BCE. Many of these same scholars, however, will almost categorically reject the idea that the Jews adopted Greek, the *lingua franca* of the Graeco-Roman world, as their language, even though the social, political, cultural and, in particular, linguistic contexts were similar in so many ways, and the evidence is at least as conclusive.¹⁰⁴

Although the evidence indicates that Israel was multilingual, Greek functioned as the “prestige language.” Porter states, “Prestige languages are those languages that dominate political, educational and economic forces at play in a language milieu. In Palestine, the prestige language was Greek, even if Greek was not the first language for a significant number of its speakers.”¹⁰⁵ In such a situation it would be very natural for the inhabitants of Israel to obtain a functional knowledge of Greek. This would be particularly true of Galilee, which was surrounded by Hellenistic culture and acted as a center for trade, with a number of waterways and roads connecting important cities running through Galilee.¹⁰⁶

Jesus grew up in Nazareth. While this was a small village (pop. 1600-2000), it overlooked an important trade route, the Via Maris, which connected Damascus and the Mediterranean. Jesus also spent time in Capernaum, a city of 12,000-15,000, which acted as an entrance to Gaulanitis (Golan Heights) and had the means to support tax collection (Mark 2:14).¹⁰⁷ Fitzmyer notes, “Jesus was not an illiterate peasant and did not come from the lowest stratum of Palestinian society. . . . He would naturally have conducted business in Greek with gentiles in Nazareth and neighboring Sepphoris.”¹⁰⁸ Matthew was a tax collector from Capernaum, so he probably used Greek in the course of his official duties. Many of the other disciples were fishermen, and they most likely used Greek in the business of selling fish.¹⁰⁹

Dissenting Voices

This understanding of the Hellenization and the use of Greek in Israel is not without critics. P. Casey notes that Aramaic documents from before A.D. 70 “show

¹⁰⁴ Stanley E. Porter, *The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research: Previous Discussion and New Proposals*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 191 (Sheffield, Eng.: Sheffield Academic, 2000) 169.

¹⁰⁵ Porter, “Use of Greek” 133.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 135.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 135-36.

¹⁰⁸ Fitzmyer, “Did Jesus Speak Greek” 61.

¹⁰⁹ Porter, “Use of Greek” 136. One area of external evidence has been omitted: the testimony of Josephus. Sevenster thinks this testimony is important, and yet he admits that care is needed when examining it. Josephus may indicate that the native language of first-century Israel was Semitic, but he does not say how much Greek was spoken. Of course, Josephus is subject to interpretation. Rather than using valuable space to discuss disputed passages of Josephus, this article focuses on the NT and physical evidence. The interested reader can refer to Sevenster, *Do You Know Greek* 61-76, and the brief treatment in Porter, *Criteria of Authenticity* 169-71.

significant interference from Hebrew,” which one would expect after centuries of diglossia among educated Jews. However, he finds “no significant interference from Greek” at this time (although there was later). Casey concludes, “We must infer that, at the time of Jesus, Aramaic was not generally spoken by people who were bilingual with Greek.”¹¹⁰ Casey cites Porter: “There is a possibility if not a likelihood that we have some of the actual words of Jesus recorded in the Gospels,” to which Casey responds, “This is a fundamentalist’s dream, and ultraconservative assumptions are required to carry it through.”¹¹¹ On the contrary, even the Jesus Seminar admits, “It is possible that Jesus was bilingual. Recent archaeological excavations in Galilee indicate that Greek influence was widespread there in the first century of our era. If Jesus could speak Greek, some parts of the oral tradition of sayings and parables preserved in the gospels may actually have originated with him.”¹¹²

Mark Chancey argues that the case for the widespread use of Greek in Galilee is flawed.¹¹³ He notes two main problems: using finds from elsewhere in Israel to make conclusions about Galilee and using artifacts from a range of centuries to draw conclusions about the first century.¹¹⁴ He is critical (rightly it seems) of earlier scholars who used rabbinic materials from later centuries to conclude that Greek was widespread in the first century.¹¹⁵ Discussion of these materials has been omitted from this article.

Chancey then critiques the use of archaeological data by some scholars. He accuses them of using inscriptions and ossuaries from several centuries found all over Israel and assuming that these data allow them to make valid conclusions about Galilee.¹¹⁶ For example, one catalogue of 897 ossuaries from the late first century B.C.

¹¹⁰P. M. Casey, “In Which Language Did Jesus Teach?” *Expository Times* 108/11 (August 1997):326.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, 328. Porter is quoted from “Did Jesus Ever Teach in Greek” 223. For Porter’s response to Casey’s article see *Criteria for Authenticity* 164-80.

¹¹²Funk et al., *Five Gospels* 28.

¹¹³Similar arguments appear in Richard A. Horsley, *Archaeology, History, and Society in Galilee: The Social Context of Jesus and the Rabbis* (Harrisburg, Penn.: Trinity, 1996) especially 154-75 on languages.

¹¹⁴Mark A. Chancey, *Greco-Roman Culture and the Galilee of Jesus*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 134 (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University, 2005) 124. Chancey’s work of well over 200 pages attempts to show that Galilee was not as Hellenized in the first century A.D. as many scholars claim (he seems to accept more Hellenization in Judea). Most of his discussion goes far beyond the scope of this article, but it seems that scholars should address his concerns. In the end, he may have been too pessimistic, but some of his criticism appears valid.

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*, 125-29.

¹¹⁶The use of inscriptions is made more difficult because the scholar has to track down individual finds in scores of books and journal articles written by different authors in different languages over the course of several decades. This hindrance may be removed in the next few years. Pieter van der Horst writes, “The Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palaestinae (CIIP) will be a new corpus of all inscriptions, in all languages, arranged topographically, found in Israel (including the West Bank, Gaza, and the Golan Heights) and dating from the 4th century BCE to the 7th century CE. . . . The corpus will include a full

to the third century A.D. included 227 with inscriptions. Approximately one-third of these inscriptions were in Greek, but only one was from Galilee (in a tomb with pottery from the first and second centuries A.D.).¹¹⁷ Later he claims, “The *only* extant inscriptions definitely produced within Galilee during the first part of that century [1st century A.D.], the lifetime of Jesus, are the bronze coins of Herod Antipas and a lead marker weight from Tiberias from 29/30 CE naming its *agoranomos*, Gaius Julius.”¹¹⁸ This evidence is indeed slight, if accurate. The present writer is not in a position to respond to his claims, though the word “definitely” cited above may indicate that some more possibilities exist. However, one should note the sharp bifurcation Chancey makes between Galilee and the rest of Israel. While there were certainly differences (e.g., Peter’s Galilean accent was recognizable in Jerusalem; Matt 26:73), it seems likely that many scholars would disagree with the sharp division Chancey makes.¹¹⁹

Chancey’s argument is largely from silence, but he asserts that there is much more evidence for the use of Greek in neighboring areas, so he doubts that the evidence for Galilee has simply been lost.¹²⁰ He also claims that the number of inscriptions increases during the Roman period in all areas.¹²¹ However, if the relative absence of inscriptions in Galilee (in any language) is expected in the first century, then when a few Greek inscriptions are found this would seem to provide even more evidence for the use of Greek. If the Galileans had only a few inscriptions in the first century, would one not expect those few to be in the common language? So when Greek appears at all, is that not noteworthy? Chancey’s argument seems to be that the presence of more inscriptions itself reflects greater Hellenization, so the relative infrequency of inscriptions in Galilee from the first century argues for less Hellenization in this region. The present writer does not see a necessary connection between the adoption of the Greek language and the adoption of the inscripational habits of Greco-Roman culture. Galileans may well have used the Greek language

re-editing of every text, a drawing or photograph, textual apparatus, English translation, and commentary. The estimate is that there will be between 6000 and 7000 texts in the corpus” (*Japheth in the Tents of Shem: Studies on Jewish Hellenism in Antiquity*, Contributions to Biblical Exegesis & Theology 32 [Leuven: Peeters, 2002] 10). The CIIP is a research project of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. It began in 2001 and is scheduled to end in 2017 according to the university’s website (www.huji.ac.il/cgi-bin/mm/new/data/ihoker/MOP-PROJ_LINK?project_id=000010019, accessed 12/30/08).

¹¹⁷Ibid., 130.

¹¹⁸Ibid., 135 (emphasis in the original). He notes several more inscriptions from the second half of the first century (ibid., 135-37).

¹¹⁹Andrew Overman argues against those who assert the “economic or cultural isolation” of upper Galilee. However, his argument seems to be largely based on remains from the third and fourth centuries. His picture of the first century is unclear (“Recent Advances in the Archaeology of the Galilee in the Roman Period,” *Currents in Research: Biblical Studies* 1 [1993]:42).

¹²⁰Chancey, *Greco-Roman Culture* 150.

¹²¹Ibid., 151.

without becoming thoroughly Hellenized.¹²²

In fact, Chancey questions the use of inscriptions at all. He claims that inscriptions represent only the official language. He rejects the argument that the government would necessarily inscribe in a language that the common people could understand, since most people were illiterate and would not be able to read the inscriptions anyway.¹²³

Chancey also questions the use of the Qumran material. Not only is Qumran far to the south of Galilee, but only three percent of the manuscripts found there are in Greek. Greek writings also make up a minority of material found at Masada. The material from Murabba'at post-dates Jesus by several decades. Chancey notes, "Using these texts to understand the linguistic environment of second-century Judea is complicated enough; using them to understand that of first-century Galilee is almost impossible."¹²⁴

Chancey notes two important factors after the time of Jesus that would have likely increased the use of Greek in Galilee. The first is the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Many Judeans would have fled to Galilee, and Chancey accepts the evidence for the use of Greek in Judea, especially around Jerusalem. The second is the arrival of the Roman legion around A.D. 120. This increase in Roman presence would have elevated the use of Greek.¹²⁵ Chancey believes that the historical development of Galilee rules out the use of second- or third-century data to understand the linguistic situation in first-century Galilee. He believes that Aramaic was the most commonly-spoken language.¹²⁶

Chancey's arguments should be given due weight. However, it must also be noted that he offers no evidence against the use of Greek—his only complaint is that evidence is lacking (and this lack is primarily for Galilee, not Judea).¹²⁷ This makes it clear that one must balance the external and internal evidence. The external evidence at least raises the likelihood that Greek was spoken by some people in Israel

¹²²Chancey writes, "It is hard to avoid the conclusion that the higher number of inscriptions in some cities also reflects a greater receptivity to this aspect of Greco-Roman culture than offered in the Galilean cities" (*ibid.*, 155). But does receptivity to the Greek language correlate with receptivity to other aspects of Greek culture?

¹²³Chancey suggests literacy rates as low as ten percent in the Roman Empire, perhaps higher in the cities (*ibid.*, 143). For this figure he cites William V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1989) 22. Chancey claims, "There is little reason to suppose that literacy was more common in Galilee than elsewhere in the Roman world; given that the region was mostly rural, it may have even been less common" (*Greco-Roman Culture* 143). He cites Catherine Hezser, *Jewish Literacy in Roman Palestine* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001) 496-504. The present writer cannot imagine how one goes about determining literacy rates 2,000 years ago, but this may be an argument worth considering.

¹²⁴*Ibid.*, 132.

¹²⁵*Ibid.*, 140-41.

¹²⁶*Ibid.*, 165.

¹²⁷The same can be said of R. Horsley, *Archaeology*.

in the first century. This makes the internal evidence for Jesus' use of Greek all the more powerful. Gundry concludes, "Many of the dominical sayings in the present Greek text of the gospels may be closer to the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus than has been supposed. Many may, in fact, be identical with dominical sayings originally spoken in Greek."¹²⁸

CONCLUSION

The evidence available today indicates that Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek were commonly spoken in Israel in the first century A.D.¹²⁹ Gundry made an interesting observation over 40 years ago: "Usually the strongest arguments in favor of conflicting views are left largely unrefuted, the weight of discussion being put on evidence favorable to the author's viewpoint. This has happened for a very good reason: proof now exists that all three languages in question—Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek—were commonly used by Jews in first century Palestine."¹³⁰ Archaeological evidence since Gundry wrote has only confirmed this reality.

Of course, each individual would speak the different languages at various levels of competency. It seems reasonable to conclude that Jesus could speak Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. The language(s) in which He taught would depend not only on His abilities but also on the abilities of His listeners.¹³¹ It is unnecessary to conclude that Jesus taught in Greek only. He may have taught in both Greek and Aramaic (or Hebrew), perhaps even alternating between them when appropriate. It is reasonable to conclude that the Gospel authors chose to record things which were originally spoken in Greek since they were writing in Greek.¹³² Jesus may well have repeated much of the same teaching in Aramaic. It is possible that the Gospels record the translations of Aramaic sayings. If so, they are the inspired translations of what Jesus said, and so they communicate the divinely intended meaning, even if they do

¹²⁸Gundry, "Language Milieu" 408.

¹²⁹Lapide writes, "It seems that *Triglossia* is the most adequate term to describe Jesus' multilingual milieu" ("Insights from Qumran" 498). Voelz concludes, "It is probable that many, if not most, of the inhabitants of the land of Israel [in the first century A.D.] were trilingual" ("Linguistic Milieu" 84). Horst similarly states, "We may tentatively conclude that Roman Palestine was a largely bilingual, or even trilingual, society" (*Jewish Hellenism* 26).

¹³⁰Gundry, "Language Milieu" 405.

¹³¹Fitzmyer states, "Did Jesus himself speak Greek? The answer is almost certainly yes. The more difficult question, however, is whether he taught in Greek" ("Did Jesus Speak Greek" 60). Fitzmyer concludes that Jesus usually used Aramaic for "both conversation and teaching" (*ibid.*). The fact that the Gospels do not agree word-for-word on Jesus' sayings leads Fitzmyer to discount the possibility of original Greek sayings. Commenting on the Lord's Prayer as given by Matt 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4 he writes, "One could naively maintain that he uttered it both ways. But is such a solution, which is always possible, really convincing?" (*ibid.*, 62).

¹³²Fitzmyer believes that if one uses the available evidence to claim that the Gospels have Greek *ipsissima verba* of Jesus, "then the evidence is being pressed beyond legitimate bounds" ("Languages of Palestine" 145). However, Fitzmyer was focused on the external evidence.

not convey every nuance of the original Aramaic.

It is clear that the last fifty years have seen a dramatic increase in interest in this question. This is an encouraging development, and research should continue in this area. The more one understands about first-century Israel, the better equipped he is to apply grammatical-historical exegesis to the text of Scripture. Much work remains to be done. For example, G. H. R. Horsley suggests a number of points from “bilingual theory.”¹³³ First, most bilinguals are not fluent in their second language. It is also important to note the differences between speaking, listening, and writing competencies. Second, bilinguals may prefer their second language over their first language. For example, a native Aramaic-speaker may prefer to speak Greek. Third, it is necessary to distinguish between “primary bilingualism” and “secondary bilingualism.” The former refers to those who are forced to pick up a second language by circumstances; the latter refers to those who have formal language instruction. Fourth, there is a difference between “receptive” and “productive” bilingualism. The first refers to the ability to understand a second language (written or spoken); the second refers the ability to write and speak a second language. In a complex linguistic environment like Israel in the first century A.D., these issues impact the language(s) available for Jesus to use in his teaching.¹³⁴

In a similar vein, Barr notes that “one has to allow for the possibility that the ‘common people’ might be able to *understand* levels of discourse which they could not freely *produce*.”¹³⁵ In fact, they may have *expected* public discourses to be in a higher linguistic register.¹³⁶ In such an environment, a discourse like the Sermon on the Mount, for example, could very well be delivered in Greek (it is doubtful that Barr would go this far), even if Jesus usually spoke Aramaic at home.

One final remark is in order. Even if Jesus spoke only Aramaic (or Hebrew), the inspired text of Scripture is in Greek; hence, it is questionable whether it is ever appropriate to seek the Aramaic “behind” the inspired text to elucidate its meaning. The authors intended the Greek text to be understood by the original readers, who presumably spoke Greek and not Aramaic. Thus, knowledge of Aramaic should not be necessary to understand the meaning the human author intended. Does the divine Author expect modern readers to use Aramaic to get the “real” meaning 2,000 years later? The facts of history and principles of grammar are sufficient to understand the Word of God without speculating about the Aramaic that *might* have been originally spoken by Jesus.

¹³³G. Horsley, *New Documents* 23-25.

¹³⁴Such issues also affect how one evaluates the available archeological and literary evidence as he tries to determine what languages Jesus was likely to have used. For example, G. Horsley believes most scholars focus on productive bilingualism (*ibid.*, 24). Ignoring receptive bilingualism biases the scholar as he examines the evidence.

¹³⁵Barr, “Which Language” 26-27 (emphasis in the original).

¹³⁶*Ibid.*, 26.

REVIEWS

David Berlinski, *The Devil's Delusion, Atheism and Its Scientific Pretentions*. New York: Crown Forum, 2008. 237 pp. \$23.95. Reviewed by F. David Farnell, Professor of New Testament.

Berlinski has a Ph.D. from Princeton University and has taught mathematics and philosophy at universities in the United States and France. He is a senior fellow at the Discovery Institute in Seattle and lives in Paris.

Though not a theist by any stretch of the imagination, Berlinski's task in the book is more toward freedom of thought in exposing the scientific fallacies and pretensions of atheism that has been recently seen in such authors as Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, Daniel Dennett, and Christopher Hitchens. Berlinski is a secular Jew, who admits he knows no Hebrew, nor has Judaism had any impact on his thinking. However, with a delightful wit and acerbic manner, Berlinski exposes the false assertions of scientism masquerading in universities as proof against traditional religious belief. Among his conclusions regarding today's militant atheism in science, he demonstrates the following: science has not even come close to disproving God's existence, the bankruptcy of quantum physics to explain the origin of the universe, secularism has caused more damage, destruction, and death than religion ever has (e.g., Hitler and Darwin). He also highlights the oppression of scientific "orthodoxy" that rigorously tries to destroy anything that would suggest a higher power. His conclusion is that scientific atheism is a frivolous exercise in intellectual contempt. This book is a spin-off from the movie *Expelled* by Ben Stein. It is incisive, witty, and boldly bares the hypocrisy of the orthodox, atheistic scientific community by exposing its false claims. It is a thought-provoking book that every Christian who believes in creation should read.

Darrell L. Bock and Mitch Glaser, eds. *To the Jew First: The Case for Jewish Evangelism in Scripture and History*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008. 347 pages. \$17.74. Reviewed by Trevor Craigen, Professor of Theology.

The editors have brought together twelve other writers, from nine seminaries and three mission organizations, in producing this book on Jewish evangelism. The material is divided into three parts, i.e., "Bible" comprising

chapters 1-8, "Theology" chapters 6-10, and "Mission" chapters 11-14. The reader is reminded by Mitch Glaser in his introduction that the second of the two conferences sourced some of the chapters in the book. The theme of these two conferences was "To the Jew First in the New Millennium," the first one in New York City and the second in Palm Beach, Florida, A.D. 2000. The Christian reader or the Gentile believer, Glaser notes, should be broken-hearted at the state of Jewish evangelism and should accord it high priority in his outreach agenda today.

A nice touch is the introductory abstracts given at the beginning of each part, providing an overview, a panoramic sweep, of what is treated in the chapters to follow (22-23; 100-101; 218-19). Perhaps it was designed to encourage a selection of individual chapters for reading—and the layout of the chapters does not demand sequential reading.

Walt Kaiser in his foreword observed that "to the Jew first" is more than some slogan or cute way for Paul to introduce his message to Jewish and Gentile believers in Rome. The phrase he called the "two-step," i.e., like Paul's "two-step," first going to the Jews and then to the Gentiles just as it is displayed in Acts (40). Kaiser further declared, "[A] church cut off from Israel is a church that merely floats in the air with no past, no grounding, and no promises on which to build her present or the future" (7). Well said! His contribution is chapter 2, "Jewish Evangelism in the New Millennium in Light of Israel's Future (Romans 9–11)," wherein he points out that it is impossible to read and interpret the letter to the Romans without grappling with the main issue, namely the Jewish people in relation to God.

In chapter 6, Blaising tackles the theological question of the future of Israel and introduces the reader to two-covenant theology, which is incisively critiqued and set aside since it is a repudiation of NT Christianity. He sets forth the implications of a non-supersessionist evangelical theology in the areas of the doctrines of God, Man, Christ, as well as the doctrines of the church and the last things. (112-21). His treatment is undoubtedly a superior and more mature understanding of these doctrines than supersessionism can put forward.

The work also pays attention to the distorted understanding of Jesus' denunciation of Jewish leaders as being a critique of Judaism as a whole. Such misinterpretation apparently led into Christian anti-Semitism. "The Holocaust and the Sacred Romance," is the title of chapter 7, and it presents a reminder of the most dreadful period in Israel's history to this day. Whatever the effects may have been, the Holocaust cannot be allowed to stop the straightforward preaching of the gospel. The reader is reminded that both indifference toward and rejection of Jewish missions, have resulted from the Holocaust. The barriers to be crossed in the presentation of the gospel to the Jew and the biblical realities which cannot be ignored are well presented in chapter 7. The barriers are emotional, intellectual, and volitional. Obviously, they deserve attention and reflection. The truths of total depravity, of life and death, and of time and eternity can never be overlooked. The final reality is the eschatological one which points attention to the time of Jacob's trouble and to the Day of the Lord.

Richard Pratt introduces a Reformed perspective in chapter 9 with an alternative to both dispensationalism and replacement theology—it is not convincing.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum presents the “dispensational perspective” in chapter 10. That key phrase, “to the Jew first,” points to an ongoing priority, which is not a matter of preference but of procedure.

In his chapter on the ongoing importance of messianic prophecy, Michael Rydelnik, starting with Justin Martyr, identifies various men from different ages (patristic, medieval, and modern) who used messianic prophecy in their writings when speaking to the Jew. The chapters dealing with the history of missions to the Jews present much pertinent and interesting information.

Of course, a call for a renewed commitment to Jewish missions rings out loud and clear in the closing chapters. Every chapter is instructive and at times one’s interest is piqued to dig further and study a theme more extensively. *To the Jew First* is worth having on the shelf alongside the other books on missions and evangelism.

Paul Copan and William Lane Craig. *Creation out of Nothing: A Biblical, Philosophical, and Scientific Exploration*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004. 280 pp. \$19.99 (paper). Reviewed by William D. Barrick, Professor of Old Testament.

Creation out of Nothing systematically examines the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* from the biblical, philosophical, and scientific perspectives. The authors develop a strong cumulative case for the doctrine while taking care to respond to the critics of that viewpoint. Dealing with the biblical witness, Copan and Craig declare that “there simply is no other plausible and consistent way to read the biblical text” (29). In their chapter on the OT’s witness (29-70) they discuss the relationship of Genesis 1 to the Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) cosmogonies, the relationship of Gen 1:1 to the rest of the passage, the meaning of the Hebrew verb *bārā’*, the issue of “double creation,” and the testimony of OT texts outside Gen 1:1–2:3. This reviewer seldom disagreed. However, when the authors discuss *bārā’*, they emphasize “*the utter absence of preexisting material in connection with it*” (51, emphasis in the original), ignoring the contextual information provided by 2:7, 21, and 22 to the meaning of *bārā’* in 1:27. Later, however, they mention that man was not created *ex nihilo* (98). In their attempt to explain the grammatical construction of Gen 1:2, they fail to identify it as a disjunctive clause (42) and erroneously classify the conjunction *waw* at the start of that verse as a “*wāw-consecutive*” (64). These two weaknesses, however, do not diminish the effect of their overall argumentation from the OT.

The discussion of the NT’s witness (71-91) covers John 1:3, Rom 4:17, Heb 11:3, miscellaneous passages supporting creation *ex nihilo*, and the apparent problem text in 2 Pet 3:5. For each text Copan and Craig mention the various viewpoints or interpretations and present the evidence for the view they believe to be the most

consistent with sound hermeneutics.

Extrabiblical witnesses (93-145) includes brief surveys of pertinent citations in Jewish sources (2 Maccabees, Jubilees, 2 Enoch, Joseph and Asenath, 2 Baruch, Josephus, Dead Sea Scrolls, 3 Maccabees, Philo of Alexandria, Rabban Gamaliel II, Hellenistic synagogal prayers, and Medieval Jewish exegetes), as well as Christian sources among the church fathers (Odes of Solomon, Clement of Rome, *The Shepherd of Hermes*, the *Didache*, Polycarp, Aristides, Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Tatian, Theophilus of Antioch, Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Pseudo-Justin, Athanasius, and Augustine). Unfortunately, they do not mention the significant contributions of Origen or Ephrem the Syrian.

The fourth chapter ("Understanding the Notion of *Creatio ex Nihilo*," 147-65) enters the realm of logical and philosophical discussion of *creation originans* and *creation continuans* as they relate to a proper understanding of both creation and conservation (preservation). Chapter 5 ("*Creatio ex Nihilo* and Abstract Objects," 167-95) pursues a topic derived from Platonism. This philosophical discussion compares absolute creationism with modified Platonism, nominalism, fictionalism, and conceptualism. Chapter 6 ("Philosophical Arguments for *Creatio ex Nihilo*," 197-217) continue the philosophical treatment of creation from nothing.

Copan and Craig present the scientific evidence (219-48) as empirical confirmation of the philosophical argument. Topics include the expansion of the universe and the thermodynamics of the universe. After the examination of the various cosmogonic theories and their models (big bang, steady state, oscillating, vacuum fluctuation, chaotic inflationary, quantum gravity, and ekpyrotic), the authors conclude that all of them failed to avoid the absolute beginning of the universe (240). No matter which model one might adopt, both expansion and thermodynamics imply a beginning for the universe (248).

Lastly, the authors discuss "Naturalistic Alternatives to *Creatio ex Nihilo*" (249-66). They compare naturalistic with supernaturalistic alternatives, concluding that the only plausible view is a personal, divine cause. The biggest problem with the entire presentation within this volume is that Copan and Craig totally ignore the issue of millions and billions of years in contrast to thousands of years for the age of the universe. Indeed, the implication of their discussion is that the age of the universe does not matter, just its beginning. Though providing excellent information in support of the biblical doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*, they offer no solution to the question "When?"

Paul Copan is the Pledger Family Chair of Philosophy and Ethics at Palm Beach Atlantic University (2005-present) and was a writer and researcher with Ravi Zacharias International Ministries from 1998 until 2003. His many published writings include *When God Goes to Starbucks: A Guide to Everyday Apologetics* (Baker, 2008), *True for You, But Not for Me: Overcoming Objections to Christian Faith* (Bethany House, 1998), *Loving Wisdom: Christian Philosophy of Religion* (Chalice Press, 2007), and *The Rationality of Theism* (Routledge, 2003; co-authored with Paul K. Moser). William Lane Craig is research professor of philosophy at Talbot School of Theology (1994-present) and has published over 50 books for

which he was either author, co-author, contributor, or editor. Among his works are *Hard Questions, Real Answers* (Crossway, 2003), *Time and Eternity: Exploring God's Relationship to Time* (Crossway, 2001), *The Only Wise God: The Compatibility of Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom* (Wipf & Stock, 2000), *The Son Rises* (Wipf & Stock, 2001), and *Cosmological Argument from Plato to Leibniz* (Wipf & Stock, 2001).

Allan Coppedge. *The God Who Is Triune: Revisioning the Christian Doctrine of God*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2007. 345 pp. \$27.00 (paper). Reviewed by Cliff McManis. TMS alumnus and Associate Professor of Theology, The Cornerstone Seminary.

Coppedge is Beeson Professor of Theology at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky. He writes from a Wesleyan/Methodist perspective (11, 284) and is a staunch Arminian (193, 197, 252). His work represents the recent growing renewed interest in trinitarian studies from an Eastern emphasis as opposed to the Western's bent toward the oneness of God's essence (15).

The author's goal in this book is multi-faceted: (1) he seeks to establish a Christological starting point as the basis for the rest of his theology (237, 251); (2) he purposes to study the Trinity from a scriptural basis as opposed to a philosophical one (149); (3) he attempts to view God first in His triune nature as the paradigm from which to explicate the doctrine of God (19, 113); (4) he wants to present a mediating position between open theism and classical theism (17); (5) in keeping with the subtitle, he tries to "revision," or "redefine" some of God's key attributes like sovereignty (210, 300, 314), foreknowledge (197-99; 314-16), and foreordination (197-99; 314-15); (6) and he wants to debunk the long-accepted classical view of God, the Trinity, and election (16, 272, 276, 297, 305).

This book has strengths and weaknesses. First are the strengths. Coppedge undertakes one of the most challenging tasks imaginable—trying to define and explain the nature and work of the eternal, triune God of the universe in a way that is reverent, comprehensible, practical, relevant, and in keeping with Scripture. Here he does an admirable job. He has a high view of Scripture (149, 191) and of God (131). He's not a rationalist, but reserves room for mystery where Scripture is silent about God's being (139, 196, 231, 319). His exposition of God's transcendence is noteworthy, thoroughly biblical, and free of any dualism, naturalism, Platonism, or deistic tendencies (237-61). He is not an esoteric, ivory-tower theologian, but a schooled believer who is concerned about the church, Christ's body on earth (19, 283-88).

The strongest contribution of this work is its explanation of *perichoresis* and its implications relative to the ontological and economic Trinity. He takes his lead here from the works of T. F. Torrance (14). *Perichoresis* refers to the shared life among the three Persons of the Trinity, who eternally, mutually, and equally

coinhere or interpenetrate one another in all ways, at all times in perfect love and holiness (179-81). The doctrine of *perichoresis* is clearly taught in many passages like Matt 11:27; John 1:1,18; 10:30-38; 14:7 (28-29,180). *Perichoresis*, then, becomes paradigmatic for Coppedge's hermeneutic in explicating the doctrine of God. He proposes that God should first be understood as a triune person, as revealed in Scripture, prior to investigating the relative and absolute attributes of God. Augustine and Aquinas (and many in the Western church who followed suit) had it backwards—they began a study of the nature of God irrespective of His triune nature, and began with isolated studies of His oneness, which in turn bequeathed an unbalanced view of God (16, 207, 211). This is a welcomed corrective on the part of Coppedge. Many systematic theologies begin the study of God's nature with the relative and absolute attributes, relegating God's triune nature to a mere aside or sub-point (296). Coppedge contends God's triune nature is primary and every other attribute should be defined in that context (195, 211, 233).

Other strengths of the author include the following: (1) several charts and visual aids, some original, that effectively illustrate trinitarian truths and implications (112-65); (2) in his apologetics and epistemology, he is presuppositional (149, 191, 282); (3) he affirms historical-grammatical hermeneutics (55); he rejects subordinationism within the Trinity (134); (4) he rejects process theology (205); (5) and he gives an exhaustive outline of all relevant NT trinitarian passages (50-51).

But the work has many weaknesses. First, in ascending order of importance, an inordinate number of simple typos, usually elision (seventeen in all or one every twenty pages), characterize the work.

Second, Coppedge is at times theologically naïve. He asserts that Islam derives all of its doctrine and practice "from a single source: the Scriptures of Israel" (241, 265). That is overly simplistic and inaccurate. He is also too sympathetic to open theism. He wants to improve it by modifying it, rather than exposing it and rejecting it as a heretical system of thought (17, 311-26). Additionally, he misrepresents the historic definition of God's "impassibility" (176, 211). He is also ignorant of Calvin and unwittingly likens his trinitarian views to those of Aquinas (16, 320). Letham, in *The Holy Trinity* (P&R, 2004), has painstakingly shown that Calvin and his predecessors were not akin in this regard. Letham shows Calvin was biblically driven in his theology, whereas Aquinas pursued philosophical arguments and syllogisms about the divine essence (252-68).

Third, his historical analysis of the doctrine of the Trinity is scant and non-determinative (79-110)

Fourth, although Coppedge gives evidence of being conversant with a vast array of theologians and current trinitarian works, he has a proclivity for taking cues from those who lean toward liberal, higher critical hermeneutics, like Pannenberg, Kasper, and Gunton (14-15, 83), while at the same time he postures himself as the nemesis of reliable conservative scholars such as Frame, Feinberg and others (296, 320).

Fifth, exegesis in the book is frequently flawed and imprecise. Coppedge is a theological and dogmatic exegete more than an exegetical and expository one.

This becomes most evident when he tries to explain the meaning of “foreknowledge,” “foreordination,” and “sovereignty.” Instead of giving a survey of such words from biblical occurrences, he simply assigns a preferred, strained meaning to the words in keeping with his loyalty to Arminian theology. He limits God’s “foreknowledge” to omniscience, divorcing it from God’s “foreordination” (314-15), and offers “middle knowledge” as a panacea (197). As a result, he says that God foresees what He did not foreordain. For Coppedge, foreordination has nothing to do with election, for he jettisons election altogether, often confusing it with determinism or fatalism (207, 210-11, 234, 251). He redefines “sovereignty” by bending over backwards to preserve ultimate human free will, alleging that, “God...limits himself by human freedom...God limits his own choices by permitting persons to make free choices” (308). The author is driven to preserve human freedom and God’s love so much that one could aver that Coppedge holds to universalism (296). He never gives a reference to the reality of hell and in his exhaustive study of God’s attributes, he never mentions “wrath” as a part of God’s nature, but instead says God’s love is primary and paramount (166-90).

In conclusion, for this reviewer, the book’s weaknesses outweigh the strengths. The author’s Arminian propensity is all-embracing and infects his whole theology in an unbalanced manner. It could be a helpful book if the reader is keenly aware of the faults beforehand. But as an introductory and comprehensive study of the biblical doctrine of the Trinity, this book is not recommended. Rather, students should first be directed to Robert Letham’s unrivaled work, *The Holy Trinity* (P&R, 2004), as well as other standard works by James White, Millard Erickson, and John Feinberg.

John A. D’Elia. *A Place at the Table: George Eldon Ladd and the Rehabilitation of Evangelical Scholarship in America*. New York: Oxford, 2008. \$45.00. 271 pp. William Varner, Professor of Biblical Studies, The Master’s College

George Eldon Ladd was one of the foremost evangelical NT scholars in twentieth-century America. He almost single-handedly pioneered the “now and not yet” view of eschatology which currently is probably the dominant view among a majority of evangelical scholars. Whatever one thinks of his approach to the NT teaching about kingdom of God, he must acknowledge the huge role he played in defining evangelicalism through his teaching and literary works. And yet this acclaimed scholar, during what some considered the pinnacle of his career, considered himself a failure for not fulfilling his own promise. During this period he descended further and further into depression and alcoholism and became more and more alienated from his immediate family. What can one make of such a complex career?

John A. D’Elia, currently minister of the American Church in London and graduate of Fuller Seminary where Ladd taught, has authored the most insightful and

interesting biography of an academic that this reviewer has ever read. D'Elia's volume, a revision of his doctoral dissertation at University of Stirling under David Bebbington, is a thoroughly researched work that does justice to Ladd's great contributions while not engaging in the hero-worship that marks that type of biography termed a "hagiography." D'Elia thoroughly mines the large amount of historical archives at Fuller Seminary and utilizes Ladd's extensive personal correspondence to bring insight into the heart and mind of this troubled giant. Personal interviews with many of Ladd's former colleagues and students add a familiar touch to the plethora of official historical sources.

Ladd's early life in New England as a self-described "freak" growing up in the home of a family that often moved and suffered poverty is thoroughly traced. D'Elia looks for keys to Ladd's persona throughout his emergence as a promising Bible college student, young pastor, and eventually as an academic at Gordon College and finally at Fuller. He traces Ladd's painful, almost decade-long struggle to get into a doctoral program, which finally culminated in a doctorate from Harvard in 1949. When all his doctoral dreams were fulfilled and the invitation came to be part of the Fuller faculty that was being built in the late forties and early fifties, one would think that the young man who had been so teased would find fulfillment as he approached middle age. The theme of D'Elia's biography, reflected in the title and subtitle of the book, is that Ladd desperately desired to earn "a place at the table" of mainstream scholarship in America and Europe. Furthermore, he desired to do this while maintaining a more open evangelicalism than what he had experienced during the first forty years of his life. His career is traced through that upward effort that, in Ladd's own opinion, ended in abject failure.

Ladd's conflict within the evangelical fold is traced primarily through his efforts to rehabilitate evangelical scholarship by overthrowing what he considered to be the repression caused by Dispensationalism. His early works, *Crucial Questions about the Kingdom of God* and *The Blessed Hope*, were internal polemical works directed against the Dispensationalism associated with Dallas Seminary. Ladd's debates with John Walvoord, President of Dallas at the time, are thoroughly explored. Ladd also desperately desired to secure that place at the table, however, not by simply tilting against dispensationalists, but by convincing critics outside the evangelical fold that an evangelical scholar could do critically acclaimed, scholarly work. When Harper and Row finally published his *magnum opus* in 1964 titled *Jesus and the Kingdom*, he was confident that his place at that table was secured. The book describes, however, his deep emotional pain when a critical scholar, Norman Perrin, savaged Ladd's book in a scholarly journal in 1965. D'Elia makes a strong case that Perrin's review, despite positive reviews both within and without evangelicalism, was the turning point in Ladd's life and career. After that crushing experience, even though he published five more acclaimed volumes before his physical decline in the late seventies, D'Elia portrays Ladd as a defeated man who was just going through the motions.

Along the way, D'Elia offers insights into Ladd's involvement in the struggles of Fuller Seminary as the school was finding its identity in the fifties and

sixties. For professors in theological education, the description of those battles is a familiar one, since many institutions slowly shake off the restraints which they perceive as holding them back. The fundamentalism of the founder Charles Fuller and the similar influence of Harold Ockenga were the losers in this battle at Fuller. Though Ladd was one of those progressives who won out in the end, he never enjoyed the fruits of that victory because of his perceived failures outside the school in the world of scholarship. Compounding all of this is the sad story of his alcoholism and depression, which the author traces through many personal interviews, as well as the disciplinary actions against him because of his drinking.

Much is here from which to learn, whatever be the reader's denominational identity. One missing element, however, in the author's thorough analysis of each of Ladd's volumes is his overlooking of the second edition of *Jesus and the Kingdom*, re-titled by his new publisher Eerdmans as *The Presence of the Future*. In this second edition (1974) and in the likewise unmentioned volume *The Pattern of NT Truth* (1968), Ladd responds to Perrin's critical review. The impression left by these omissions is that Ladd retreated after the perceived defeat of his life-long project. On the contrary, though he never wrote again for a secular publisher like Harper and Row, he did in these books offer one last salvo against the critical rejection of his ideas.

One of the endearing things about Ladd was his whole-hearted commitment to world evangelization. He believed, as he felt Matt 24:14 clearly taught, that when the gospel is proclaimed throughout the world, then Jesus would return bodily. At the end of this very significant book, this reviewer was filled with a combination of appreciation and sadness for George Eldon Ladd. As an undergraduate in the late 1960s, I read *Crucial Questions* and *The Blessed Hope*. Little did I know that at that same time across the country the author was going through torment because he sincerely believed that he had not earned that "place at the table" which he so earnestly desired.

Perhaps another lesson emerges here, and it is not one that D'Elia suggests. At the end of the day, Christians answer to the Lord and not to men. Can one really expect that those in the liberal establishment will ever accept evangelicals? In consideration of the legacy of Ladd's life and career, Paul's statement in Gal 1:10 keeps ringing in my ears: "Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God?"

John Goldingay. *Old Testament Theology, Volume 1: Israel's Gospel*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2003. 940 pp. \$45.00 (cloth).

John Goldingay. *Old Testament Theology, Volume 2: Israel's Faith*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2006. 891 pp. \$45.00 (cloth). Reviewed by William D. Barrick, Professor of Old Testament.

These two are the first of three volumes Goldingay is producing on OT theology. He intends the first volume as a theological commentary on the OT story

regarding God's relationship with the world and Israel and the second volume as a more traditional OT theology dealing with "the Old Testament's faith and hope, or how things are and will be, or who God is and who we are" (1:28). Volume three will use the Psalms and the Torah to consider "people's relationship with God and their lifestyle, their worship and their ethics, their spirituality and their community life" (*ibid.*).

Hundreds of pages of reading impressed this reviewer with the immense scope of Goldingay's purpose and the huge task in which he has engaged. The results are voluminous (over 1800 pages in the first two volumes alone) and overwhelming. Reading the volumes is not a task for the faint of heart. It is as though the author has distilled every thought he ever had on the OT and poured it out into these bound vessels. His presuppositions include an affirmation of "the entire trustworthiness and authority of Scripture" and a "conviction that one hundred percent of the Old Testament has theological significance" (1:19). Unfortunately, his self-imposed limits include a belief that the OT "lacks a 'positive' picture of life after death or a stress on the Messiah" (1:21; on the former, see 2:631-44). He purposefully avoids paying much attention to the NT use of the OT (1:25). In fact, Goldingay identifies clearly what he will *not* focus on: (1) the OT as a witness to Christ, (2) the OT pointing to Christ, (3) the OT as prophesying or predicting Jesus, (4) the OT revealed in the NT, (5) the OT as foreshadowing the NT, and (6) the OT as law succeeded by gospel (1:26-27).

Volume one's structure relates the OT narrative to how God began (creation, 1:42-130), how God started over (from Eden to Babel, 1:131-92), how God promised (Israel's ancestors, 1:193-287), how God delivered (the Exodus, 1:288-368), how God sealed (Sinai, 1:369-450), how God gave (the land, 1:451-528), how God accommodated (from Joshua to Solomon, 1:529-612), how God wrestled (from Solomon to the Exile, 1:613-95), how God preserved (exile and restoration, 1:696-788), and how God sent (the coming of Jesus, 1:789-858). A postscript on OT theology and history (1:859-83) discusses the question of whether the writers of the OT were writing factually or imaginatively. The second volume explores major theological themes: God (2:21-172), Israel (2:173-253), sin (2:254-349), renewal (2:350-516), humanity (2:517-646), the world (2:647-731), and the nations (2:732-833).

In such a large amount of material, many sound observations and conclusions come to the attention of readers determined enough to read through it. One exhibit is Goldingay's valuable comparison between the events of Genesis 6 and 11 when he points out that the "climax of the first came with heavenly beings refusing to acknowledge the line that divides heaven and earth. The climax of the second comes with human beings refusing to acknowledge the line that divides earth and heaven" (1:190). Readers must unpack and carefully read all the supporting information, but the author's statement that "Creation is only the First Testament of the First Testament of the First Testament" (1:290) has profound, positive implications with regard to covenant in the OT and soteriology. His ten models of the peoplehood of Israel (1:437-50) provide a comprehensive examination of the

identity and nature of God's people. Readers desiring to get a grasp of the OT's view of warfare will learn much from Goldingay's treatment of war's nature and rationale in the OT (1:474-85). Looking at significant biblical personalities, the author develops the respective roles of both men (1:588-96) and women (1:596-606) as revealed by OT historical narratives. Developing the OT narrative into the NT's presentation of the person and work of Jesus (1:789-858) provides a basis for a biblical theology as opposed to sticking with the OT alone.

Goldingay offers an insightful analysis of Yhwh's love as seen in His fatherly dedication (2:108-10). The references and implications increase the reader's awareness of the pervasive concept of God as Father in the OT. In yet another analysis, the author guides the reader through a balanced and careful consideration of Yhwh's hostility or wrath (2:135-56). Several such topical studies in the second volume of *Old Testament Theology* represent a fairly comprehensive description drawn from the OT. For example, Goldingay provides a descriptive catalog of consequences resulting from sin (2:278-310). He even has a brief (though somewhat anemic) examination of the millennium and its possible significance to the OT (2:513-14). Occasional pleasant surprises occur, like his strong defense of "spattering" ("sprinkling") in Isa 52:15 (2:745) and his mention of the necessity of the reparation offering (*āšām*) for the servant of Yhwh in Isa 53:10 (2:414). However, his detailed examination of the OT's teaching on death depicts an unnecessarily hopeless situation for OT saints (2:631-44).

With regard to creation, Goldingay holds to the concept of intelligent design (1:49), but is crystal clear in his rejection of the historical accuracy of all creation references throughout the OT. He considers the OT creation accounts "divinely inspired but humanly created imaginative parables" (1:879) without foundation in actual historical fact. "God did not actually create the world over a six-day period. . . . God did not create the first human being by taking some dirt and shaping it into something that had the external form of a man" (1:877).

Goldingay's view of God Himself is somewhat unclear and a matter of concern for the reader with a Bible-based theology. For example, a divine plan for His creation appears to be a "scary" thought to the author (1:60). He is unsurprised that God should desire "a day off" at the end of creation because of the struggle and risk involved in that work (1:62; later, he appears to contradict this observation, 1:128). Declaring that "In the beginning, God defeated other dynamic forces in bringing the world into being" (1:64), Goldingay implies some form of eternal dualism. He repeatedly indicates that God exercised victorious power at creation over some anti-God entities (1:67-69). As to the process of creation, he is firmly committed to the evolutionary hypothesis: "God did not bring the animal world into being by a series of transcendent, supernatural acts but by an immanent process involving trial and error. Species came into being and became extinct through 'chance' mutations and the survival of the fittest" (1:115). Consistent with such an approach, the author states that both OT and NT present "the world as by its nature subject to decay and death from the beginning" (1:147-48) apart from the Fall. By placing the writing of Genesis 1 after the events of 721 and 587 B.C. (1:88),

Goldingay reveals an affinity for the documentary hypothesis that partitions the Pentateuch into various documents by a variety of editors rather than adhering to Mosaic authorship (cf. 1:381-82; 2:461).

Bibliographies and author indexes reveal much about the company a man keeps and the books he allows to influence his thinking. Very rarely do evangelicals grace Goldingay's bibliography (1:884-905; 2:835-52), and he virtually ignores them in the body of his writing as represented in the author indexes (1:906-9; 2:853-57). Liberal and higher critical theologians dominate his references. With such limited exposure, the result is practically guaranteed to be non-evangelical. Diligent readers with a sound theological foundation may read these massive volumes with some benefit from their wealth of OT information, but they will need to be alert to the presence of theological error that can be both disappointing and frustrating.

John Goldingay. *Psalms: Volume 2, Psalms 42–89*. Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007. 744 pp. \$44.99 (cloth). Reviewed by William D. Barrick, Professor of Old Testament.

Baker published the first Psalms volume in 2006 (see review in *TMSJ* 18/2 [Fall 2007]:251-54). A number of determinative stances commend these volumes to the evangelical pastor and seminarian. Goldingay focuses on individual psalms rather than attempting to develop any supposed theological implications from the order and arrangement of the Book of Psalms and finds redactional matters too speculative to merit inclusion (11). In the text-critical realm he notes modern proposals for emending the Hebrew text, but rarely follows them (12). Each psalm's commentary includes Goldingay's own translation (with technical matters limited to footnotes), interpretation (footnoted for sources and technical matters), and theological implications.

This volume commences by treating Psalms 42 and 43 as essentially one psalm (19-34)—a view supported by the refrain repeated through both psalms. Besides the refrain, Goldingay identifies the presence and the significance of a variety of literary devices: repetition, rhetorical question, parallelism, hyperbole, metaphor, imagery, tricolon, and balancing clauses. Throughout the commentary he makes similar observations when they impact interpretation (e.g., 245, 271).

Everywhere Goldingay displays a knack for making helpful associations for the modern reader. For example, he compares the theme of God's presence in Jerusalem in Psalms 42–43 to the movie *James' Journey to Jerusalem* about "the decision of a Zulu village to send their prospective pastor on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to prepare him for his ministry" (34). Employing such contemporary associations helps him explain the implications of the biblical text to the present. In his interpretation of Ps 44:12 ("You sell your people for no value") he explains that the concept is like putting them up for sale "on eBay for a few cents, with no reserve" (43). The analogy with which this reviewer identifies is the description of

the psalmist's throat in 69:3 being "dry like that of a professor who has just given a two-hour lecture" (340).

Goldingay also remains alert to examples that help the reader avoid misusing a psalm's text. For example, he points out that the lectionary of his own church obscures the significance of 44:1-8 by prescribing the use of these versions in isolation certain occasions (41).

Hebrew verbs provide a challenge for both the translator and the interpreter. Much debate surrounds the employment of the perfect (*qatal*) and imperfect (*yiqtol*) forms of the verb. Goldingay is aware of the debate and seeks to provide a principled treatment of each verb form in an attempt to preserve any particular significance in their distinction. For 44:9-16 he contrasts his treatment of the verbs with ancient and modern translations that fail to alternate their translations "without obvious principle" (42). Such comments aid the reader who is aware of the Hebrew and desires to wrestle with the grammatical issues of the text (see also 184 and 197).

This reviewer noted in his review of Goldingay's first volume on Psalms that the imprecatory psalms suffered neglect. In this second volume the commentary offers more explanation of this type of psalm. The "Theological Implications" for Psalm 54 deal briefly with the concept of imprecation (162), but at Psalm 58 (another imprecatory psalm) he describes how to pray for justice on behalf of the saints. Indeed, the psalm awakens readers to the wickedness that exists in the world and "challenges us to look for the terminating of that wickedness with passion, not (e.g.) to be unfeeling about the necessity for evil to be put down" (209; cf. 223). With insightfulness he comments that Christ might pray Psalm 58 on behalf of oppressed people (*ibid.*).

From time to time the author's commentary is weak and malnourished. Only a dozen full lines of text explain 45:14-17 (62). The same psalm's "Theological Implications" are equally lacking (63) and the same section concluding Psalm 52 consists of only eight lines (148; cp. 253, 263). Disconcertingly, Goldingay's comments sometimes reflect unbiblical concepts—such as his declaration that the misinterpretation and misapplication of 46:10 (Heb. 46:11) "may be inspired by the Holy Spirit, even though it does make the words mean something the psalmist did not say" (73). By changing "a brother" (Hebrew *āh*) to "Huh!" in 49:6 (Heb. 49:7), Goldingay obscures the real issue of the entire psalm (that one person cannot redeem another). In addition, he believes that the "idea of an afterlife (beyond the boring one lived in Sheol) is a nice idea, but until Jesus died and rose again, it was an idea that lacked a basis" (107).

With little foundation in the text of Psalm 55 itself, Goldingay imagines the psalm as "the lament of a woman who has been raped" (166; cf. 179-80). He shows a propensity for the documentary hypothesis in his introduction to Psalm 78 (483) and fails to mention any association with the concept of new birth or regeneration in Psalm 87 (640-41).

Despite examples of dubious exegesis and exposition, seminarians and pastors alike will benefit substantially from Goldingay's commentary on Psalms. No commentary is perfect and more good than bad is found in these volumes on an OT

book that will not be exhausted by a dozen more exegetical commentaries should they be written and published in the years ahead.

Richard S. Hess. *Song of Songs*. Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005. 285 pp. \$29.99 (cloth). Reviewed by William D. Barrick, Professor of Old Testament.

The commentary series of which this volume is a part targets primarily the needs of “scholars, ministers, seminary students, and Bible study leaders” with clergy and seminary students most in mind (8). It is confined to Psalms (3 vols. by John Goldingay), Proverbs (by Tremper Longman III), Song of Songs (by Richard S. Hess), Job, and Ecclesiastes. Hess is Earl S. Kalland Professor of Old Testament and Semitic Studies at Denver Seminary (1997-present).

Preachers characteristically ignore or avoid one Bible book in the pulpit—the Song of Songs (also known as the Song of Solomon or Canticles). The number of good commentaries available today should encourage more attention for this unique and beautiful poetic book. Like the other volumes in this series, Hess’s commentary is purposely more exegetical than expositional. Compared with other good commentaries, this one is generally lengthier, more up-to-date, and more detailed and scholarly. An exception would be Tremper Longman’s commentary in the New International Commentary on the OT (Eerdmans 2001), which excels in the area of literary analysis. G. Lloyd Carr’s commentary in the Tyndale OT Commentaries series (IVP 1984) tends to be more evangelical, but is less detailed. Duane A. Garrett’s well-written commentary in the New American Commentary series (Broadman, 1993) inclines to the expositional rather than exegetical, though founded on solid exegetical grounds. One of this reviewer’s favorite evangelical treatments of the Song of Songs is *A Song for Lovers: Lessons for Lovers in the Song of Solomon* by S. Craig Glickman (IVP, 1976), whose exegesis rivals Carr’s and whose treatment of implications goes beyond Hess’s. Pastors and seminarians alike have many good commentaries on the Song from which to choose. The current commentary should be considered among the best on the text, even though Hess is weak on Solomonic authorship, overly enamored with liberal scholarship on the Song, and his theological implications normally fall short of sound application.

Hess opens his commentary by declaring that “this song offers the hope that couples today . . . may see in their love that which is beautiful and good, from the good God” (11). In his brief introduction (17-36) to the Song of Songs, he refrains from identifying Solomon as its author. As he discusses the contents and nature of the book, he observes that “the female voice in the Song accounts for 53 percent of the text, while the male voice accounts for 34 percent” (19). This statistic indicates a stronger feminine element in the Song of Songs than in any other biblical book, placing it in a class with Ruth and Esther, which contain smaller amounts of text in a female voice. As far as Hess is concerned, the Song consists of two primary

characters, refusing to take the three character view that depicts a love triangle (24). Aware of many abuses of this book, he includes two helpful pages about “How (Not) to Read the Song” (34-35).

Following his seven-part outline of the song (35-36), the author separates the commentary into seven sections. Each section commences with his English translation from the Hebrew text with technical footnotes dealing with matters of Hebrew grammar, text, and translation. Next, he explains the interpretation of the text. Lastly, he engages in a brief presentation of theological implications. In this third section the author attempts to find some sort of spiritual lesson connected to the NT’s depiction of the relationship between Christ and the church. For 5:10-16 Hess associates the male’s strength with protection and security, using it as an analogy for the love of Christ for His church in Rom 5:6-8 (191). At the same time, the author relates the mutual respect of the two lovers in the text to the marriage relationship between two Christians (*ibid.*).

The author’s reluctance to identify Solomon as the author of this song fits with his treatment of the direct reference to Solomon in 3:6-11, which he takes as a common bride and groom envisioning themselves as king and queen on their wedding day (123-24). Hess does not avoid the sexual connotations in the text, but he refuses to associate sexual overtones with parts of the text that other commentators make into more explicit references. Such texts include 5:4 (161 n. i, 172) where he disagrees with Longman and 5:14 (164 n. f, 185) where he disagrees with Longman and Goulder. Likewise, Hess emphatically denies that the two lovers in the Song engaged in erotic sexual encounters outside of marriage (237). On 8:6 (“Its flames are flames of fire, / A flame of the LORD”), he concludes that “flame” is a compound with “Yah,” the shortened form of “Yahweh,” placing its single occurrence in the Song at the climax of the book (240).

This volume concludes with a substantial bibliography (253-69) and indexes (subject, 271; author, 273-76; and Scripture and other ancient writings, 277-85). The target audience will appreciate these aids that make the book user-friendly.

Steve Jeffery, Michael Ovey, and Andrew Sach. *Pierced for Our Transgressions: Rediscovering the Glory of Penal Substitution*. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2007. 373 pp. \$19.99 (paper). Reviewed by William D. Barrick, Professor of Old Testament.

All three authors of *Pierced for Our Transgressions* are associated with Oak Hill Theological College (London). Jeffery is a student preparing for ministry, Ovey is Principal and Lecturer in Doctrine and Apologetics, and Sach is a graduate. Disturbed at criticism of penal substitution by avowed evangelicals, these three men collaborated on this book with the goal of presenting the biblical teaching. In their first chapter (“Introduction,” 21-32), they identify both the opponents and the advocates of the doctrine. This section provides a treasure trove of resources and

describes their role in the debate over the atonement.

This two-part volume first lays out the biblical case for penal substitution and then outlines every available objection, confronting the claims head on. Chapter 2 (“Searching the Scriptures: The Biblical Foundations of Penal Substitution,” 33-99) establishes the biblical basis for penal substitution. Key OT passages examined include Exodus 12 (the Passover), Leviticus 16 (the Day of Atonement), and Isa 52:13–53:12. The treatment consists of careful interpretation with an eye on the Hebrew text. For the NT, texts in Mark, John, and Romans precede the handling of Gal 3:10-13, 1 Pet 2:21-25 and 3:18. The authors even interact with the New Perspective viewpoint regarding the Galatian texts (90-93).

Chapter 3 (“Assembling the Pieces: The Theological Framework for Penal Substitution,” 100-48) sets the doctrine within the framework of Christian theology, tying it to major biblical themes and demonstrating its centrality. Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach commence with creation and its implications for the doctrine of penal substitution (105-10). Then they develop the implications from “decreation,” especially in regard to the denial of divine goodness and truthfulness (110-17). That topic leads logically into a discussion of the consequences of sin (118-24), including the nature of death, the “second death,” and God’s wrath. Following a brief examination of the implications of truth, goodness, justice, and salvation (124-26), the authors explore the implications of the relationships within the Trinity (126-32), then wrap up the chapter with a presentation of the issues of redemption itself (132-48) as unfolded in the gift of the incarnate Son, His victory, the doctrines of reconciliation and ransom, and the believer’s union with Christ. Throughout this chapter, penal substitution coheres perfectly with the various biblical topics and doctrines.

Next, the authors focus on pastoral application of the doctrine and its implications for key issues in Christian living (Chapter 4, “Exploring the Implications: The Pastoral Importance of Penal Substitution,” 149-60). God’s love, truthfulness, and justice, as revealed in penal substitution, produce assurance, confidence, and passion in the believer’s life. In addition, a proper biblical understanding of the doctrine creates honesty and realism with regard to sin’s character and danger.

The final chapter in Part One (“Surveying the Heritage: The Historical Pedigree of Penal Substitution,” 161-204) develops documented evidence of adherence to the doctrine by key figures throughout the history of the church. Twenty different individuals, from Justin Martyr (ca. A.D. 100-165) to J. I. Packer (b. 1926), reveal the broad acceptance and fervent defense of penal substitution by prominent church leaders and theologians. The survey concludes with brief statements about the stances of the UCCF (Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship) and the Evangelical Alliance (200-203).

Part Two proceeds to answer the objections of the critics of penal substitution. A brief “Introduction to the Debate” occupies Chapter 6 (205-7). Chapters 7 through 12 classify the various objections under six headings: “Penal Substitution and the Bible” (208-17), “Penal Substitution and Culture” (218-25),

“Penal Substitution and Violence” (226-39), “Penal Substitution and Justice” (240-78), “Penal Substitution and Our Understanding of God” (279-306), and “Penal Substitution and the Christian Life” (307-24). Insofar as possible, the authors present these objections in the words of their various spokespersons. They refrain from caricaturing these opponents of penal substitution, exercising fairness and accuracy in their representations. Recent critics are given priority of place in stating the objections. Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach have succeeded admirably in being objective and avoiding *ad hominem* argumentation. Yet, they have not shirked honest confrontation. In Chapter 13 (“A Final Word,” 325-28), the authors challenge what they term “The Vague Objection” and “The Emotional Objection.”

An appendix (“A Personal Note to Preachers,” 329-36), an informative bibliography (337-51), and helpful indexes (351-73) conclude the volume. The appendix pleads with preachers to select their illustrations with care, being diligent not to extend them beyond the biblical truth regarding penal substitution. The authors list seven wisdom-filled guidelines for the choice and use of illustrations (334-35).

Pierced for Our Transgressions deserves the attentive reading of every pastor, preacher, teacher, and seminarian. In the present debate it belongs at the top of everyone’s reading list.

Timothy Paul Jones. *Misquoting Truth: A Guide to the Fallacies of Bart Ehrman’s Misquoting Jesus*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2007. 175 pp. \$15.00 (paper). Reviewed by Kelly Osborne, Associate Professor of New Testament.

Timothy Jones (hereafter, TJ), senior pastor at First Baptist Church of Rolling Hills, Tulsa, OK, has written a book which, as the title states, responds directly and specifically to Bart D. Ehrman’s (hereafter BE) New York Times Bestseller, *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why* (New York: Harper-Collins, 2005). BE chairs the Department of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina, and his book gives the impression that very early on in church history scribes introduced wholesale and major changes into Christian theology as they copied manuscripts of the NT text. He claims that such changes, along with the disappearance of the autograph manuscripts of NT writings, make it impossible for a thinking person to accept the idea that the original texts were ever inerrant or even inspired by God. Furthermore, BE relates enough of his own journey to and then away from what he calls “a bona fide born-again experience” (3), that he thinks he can justify, at least to his own satisfaction, a view of NT texts which treats them as not a whit more authoritative or divine than any other piece of literature in the world (BE, 14-15, 216-18). The misleading impressions and conclusions set forth in BE’s book manifest his hostility to biblical Christianity. TJ has therefore done the reading public in general and Bible-believing Christians in particular a real service by grappling with the issues raised thereby.

After a short introduction in which TJ sets the stage for the reader with important background information concerning BE and his published works, the main section of the book is divided into two parts, the first entitled "Why the [New Testament] Texts Can Be Trusted" (27-77), the second "Why the Lost Christianities Were Lost" (79-137). TJ's Concluding Reflections (138-46) are followed by an appendix on the value of Papias's testimony (147-48), personal acknowledgments and autobiographical details (149-52), as well as endnotes (153-69), subject, name, and scripture indexes (170-76).

In the four chapters comprising Part One, TJ focuses on how the text of the NT was preserved and transmitted up until the time of the earliest printed editions. His style makes a technical subject readily understandable. A number of text boxes use bold print and offer brief but helpful definitions of terms like "codex" or "uncial" (e.g., 32, 36, 45). Relevant historical background, such as perceptions of Christian practice from both a pagan and a Christian writer of the 2nd century (38), are interspersed in the discussion (21, 35, 46, 47). These text boxes catch the eye and pique the curiosity.

Where it is appropriate, TJ agrees with BE (31), but he also notes clearly the inconsistency or inadequacy of the latter's argument (e.g., 32, 43, 44, 47, 72-73, 77). The strength of TJ's discussion lies in chapters 3 and 4 (55-76), where he examines in detail numerous passages in the NT where significant textual variants occur. Contrary to misleading impressions and faulty conclusions given by BE, TJ offers more convincing explanations which give due weight to a broader spectrum of evidence, and he thus shows that no basic doctrine is affected by such scribal changes (54, 70).

At times TJ's language softens the impact of the conclusions he draws. At key points, he writes "from my perspective," "[p]ersonally, I suspect," "[u]nless I miss my guess," "[n]ot that I can tell" (e.g., 54, 62, 64, 77). Of course, TJ seeks to write irenically and in an informal style, but the kind of deliberate hostility to and tendentious argument against biblical Christianity consistently demonstrated by BE require a clarity that identifies the latter's position for what it truly is: distortion of the evidence.

Part Two (79-137) outlines why the early church came to regard the books of the NT, and not other writings, as canonical. TJ reviews the material well in many respects, but unfortunately falls into line with much contemporary evangelical scholarship on the Synoptic Gospels, accepting Markan priority and allowing for a dating of Luke as late as A.D. 85 (85, 112). This does not vitiate his entire argument, but TJ leaves open the possibility that "the *focus* of certain stories about Jesus changed from one context to another" (94, emphasis in the original). Although TJ maintains that "a shift in focus of a story because of a change in context, historical circumstances or eschatological expectation is very different ... from ... disregarding the actual historical events," he eventually concedes that BE is "unarguably correct that traditions were molded and remolded in light of varying cultural and contextual circumstances" (162 n. 27). On this matter of the origin, transmission and final version of the Synoptic Gospels, then, the difference between the position

proposed by TJ and that of BE suddenly becomes one of degree not kind, thus undercutting the critique of BE's position.

TJ's treatment of how the NT canon came to be (chapter 8), including the early church's rejection of the Gospel of Peter and other apocryphal writings (127-37), should be helpful to those who may know little or nothing about the process. But his Concluding Reflections disappoint, because he declares that the message of the good news concerning the person and work of Jesus Christ, i.e., the gospel, is to be accepted for pragmatic reasons ("it simply works," (138-39). But surely it should be accepted primarily because it is true (Eph 1:13; 1 Thess 2:3-5; John 20:30-31, 21:24)!

Furthermore, it seems to this reviewer that TJ is far too gentle, saying that BE "poses no ultimate threat to Christian faith," but rather "an opportunity for us [believers in Christ] to ask difficult questions—questions like, What do I really mean when I say that the Bible is God's Word?" (143) True enough, BE's twisting of the evidence, whether textual or historical, will not overturn biblical Christianity. Even if only some believers are misled by the views BE propounds, however, are not such views to be shown for what they really are, namely, deception, and then vigorously opposed like any false teaching (cf. Titus 1:7-16, in connection with Judaizing heresy)?

For those who do not wish to wade through another item in BE's growing list of publications hostile to biblical Christianity, TJ's book should prove beneficial, if read with cautions like those noted here.

R. Albert Mohler, Jr. *Atheism Remix: A Christian Confronts the New Atheists*. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2008. 108 pp. \$15.99 (cloth). Reviewed by Richard L. Mayhue, Professor of Pastoral Ministry and Theology; Senior Vice President and Dean.

Dr. Mohler's primer on the "new atheism" originated with his four-part, W.H. Griffith-Thomas Lectures delivered at Dallas Theological Seminary in early 2008. The reviewer fully agrees with superlative endorsements offered by Drs. David S. Dockery, D.A. Carson, and Daniel Akin. Mohler presents his timely analysis concisely, clearly, and compellingly. This highly recommended work evidences wide reading and deep thinking by the current President of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.

Mohler's clear-cut proposition comes midway through the book (66). "Atheism is not a new challenge, but the New Atheists are perceived as presenting a new and powerful refutation of theism. Their challenge deserves and demands a cogent Christian response." His conclusion/challenge appears near the end: "Evangelical Christians simply cannot surrender biblical authority, propositional revelation, and biblical theism in order to meet the various challenges presented to us in the twenty-first century" (102).

This well-crafted volume progresses as it originated, i.e., in four parts/chapters. Chapter One explores the history of atheism from the Enlightenment period (18th century) through the twenty-first century. Two broad movements fill out this section, (1) atheism (15-28) and (2) secularism (28-37). The central chapter (Two) on new atheism follows. The author first identifies four chief proponents (R. Dawkins, 39-43; D. Dennet, 43-47; S. Harris, 48-52; and C. Hitchens, 52-54). He concludes by articulating eight principles that differentiate older forms of atheism from the “new atheism” (54-63).

Chapter Three unfolds with brief summaries of two responses/challenges to Richard Dawkins by well-respected thinkers from an evangelical perspective: first, Alister McGrath (65-77), and second, Alvin Plantinga (77-85). This section contrasts with the following chapter (Four) in which Mohler reacts to responses to “new atheism” from two liberal theologians, namely Tina Beattie (90-95) and John F. Haught (95-102).

The author concludes (102-8) with summary thoughts about new atheists and about liberal theologians who are, by their rejection of biblical authority, defined as “practical” atheists, although not self-confessed, practicing atheists. Mohler ends with this striking thought, “Atheists are certainly right about one very important thing—it’s atheism or biblical theism. There is nothing in between” (108).

Dr. Mohler provides the reader with a crucial reminder. “In the end, evangelical Christians must remember that the burden of our concern is not merely to refute atheism or to argue for the intellectual credibility of theism in any generic or minimal form. Instead, our task is to present, to teach, to explain, and to defend *Christian* theism” (84). *Atheism Remix* serves as an excellent introductory piece for a much larger, much needed volume which this reviewer challenges the author to undertake. That way, the God of the Bible will have both the first and the last word (cf. Pss 10:4; 14:1; 53:1).

Terry Mortensen and Thane H. Ury, eds. *Coming to Grips with Genesis: Biblical Authority and the Age of the Earth*. Green Forest, Ariz.: Master Books, 2008. 478 pp. \$16.99 (paper). Reviewed by Michael J. Vlach, Assistant Professor of Theology.

The early chapters of Genesis continue to be a battleground in the debate over the age of the earth. The case for six-day creation, a global flood, and a young earth finds a great ally with *Coming to Grips with Genesis: Biblical Authority and the Age of the Earth*. The editors, Terry Mortenson and Thane H. Ury, have assembled fourteen formidable theological scholars to defend a young-earth view and critique contemporary old-earth interpretations of the book of Genesis.

This defense of a literal view of Genesis 1–11, which is also a tribute to the life and ministry of early earth advocate, John C. Whitcomb, is not intended to be a scientific presentation for a young earth. Instead, this book admittedly comple-

ments young earth science books by focusing on a correct exegetical and theological understanding of Genesis. As such, it is intended to be a stand-alone text for seminary and Bible college professors and students, pastors, missionaries, and all interested in what the Bible really says about creation.

Readers should appreciate the two forewords. The first is by Henry M. Morris, who penned his words shortly before his death. This reviewer is glad that Dr. Morris was able to see the fruit of this outstanding book before he left this earth to enter the presence of His Lord. Both editors acknowledge the great influence of both Morris and Whitcomb on their views of Genesis. The second review is by John MacArthur, who also heartily commends this book.

Coming to Grips with Genesis consists of fourteen chapters followed by two appendices. The first appendix, by Paul J. Scharf, is a biographical tribute to John C. Whitcomb. In regard to the chapters, James R. Mook addresses what the early church fathers really believed about the six days of creation. In separate sections, Trevor C. Craigen and Terry Mortensen tackle the topic of deep time in Genesis. Richard L. Mayhue addresses why nature should not be considered the 67th book of the Bible. William D. Barrick discusses the geological implications of Noah's flood. Travis R. Freeman examines the issue of genealogical gaps in Genesis 5 and 11. Ron Minton shows the reader what the apostolic witness states regarding creation and the flood. David W. Hall, Todd S. Beall, Steven W. Boyd, Robert V. McCabe, James Stambaugh, and Thane H. Ury also offer helpful chapters on various exegetical, theological, and historical matters related to Genesis 1–11.

The message of the fourteen chapters is clear—Genesis and the rest of Scripture teaches a sudden, six-day creation of this earth, which is only thousands, not millions of years old. This position was the view of the apostolic witness and the church for nearly 1,800 years. The church of today, to its peril, has largely rejected the teaching of the Bible on creationism, caving in to Enlightenment thinking and dubious science. The solution is to go back to what Genesis actually teaches, with a boldness resting on the assurance that God's Word is true.

In addition to the excellent chapters, one of the most interesting sections of the book is the Epilogue. Here the editors express their appreciation for and concerns with the Intelligent Design Movement. For those who appreciate the IDM and movies like *Expelled* but still find something missing, this section is helpful and, in this reviewer's opinion, quite balanced.

The reader should also appreciate that *Coming to Grips with Genesis* also offers a Recommended Resources section that lists books, Web articles, DVDs, and periodicals that will allow further study of issues related to creation and the flood. Also, the work has an "Affirmations and Denials" document in the appendix. The reader may want to note that this document is also on-line with instructions at the end explaining how other theologically trained people around the world can "sign" the document as a testimony to the church and a call for the church to have a truly biblical worldview in this evolutionized world. The URL for that document is AnswersinGenesis.org/go/Affirmations.

This book is unparalleled in offering a compelling, scholarly, and recent

defense of young-earth creationism from a biblical perspective. The greatest strength of the book is its unapologetic commitment to what Genesis actually teaches about origins. As the editors declare, "The authors of this book are convinced that no properly interpreted scientific facts will ultimately contradict a straightforward reading of Genesis" (427).

For those interested in issues related to creation and Genesis 1–11, *Coming to Grips with Genesis* is a must have. Seminaries and Bible colleges would do well to get this book into the hands of their students quickly.

Roger E. Olson. *Arminian Theology: Myths and Realities*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2006). 250 pp. \$25.00 (cloth). Reviewed by Andrew V. Snider, Assistant Professor of Theology.

Calvinists and Arminians are not famous for having fair, balanced dialogue about the real issues that separate them. In light of this, Roger Olson perceives the need for a straightforward presentation of classical Arminianism's true distinctives, and has written this book to meet that need. In doing so he shows by example that cordial, even edifying, critical interaction is possible between these two traditions.

As the title suggests, Olson's strategy is to debunk key myths propagated by classical Arminianism's detractors. Each chapter is devoted to one of these myths. Olson begins each chapter by citing those who have popularized the myth; then he proceeds to show that it is not something that "true" Arminians would affirm. Olson's goal is to show that "true Arminianism," far from being outside the pale of Christian orthodoxy, is in fact located within the evangelical stream of Reformation theology.

Before addressing his list of ten myths, Olson provides a helpful and rather extensive introduction to Arminianism. After tracing the history of his tradition from Arminius to the present day, Olson sets out to define clearly what he will be defending in the book. He calls this "true" or "classical" Arminianism, which he distinguishes from liberalism, semi-Pelagianism, Socinianism, and open theism.

Olson deals with myths such as "The Heart of Arminianism is Free Will" (Myth 4) and "Arminians Do Not Believe in Predestination" (Myth 8) as he seeks to disprove thoroughly Myth 3, "Arminianism is Not an Orthodox Evangelical Option." In each chapter, to establish a consistent testimony that disproves the myth under consideration, Olson adduces evidence from the writings of Arminius himself, as well as luminaries of that tradition such as Simon Episcopius, John Wesley, Richard Watson, William Burt Pope, John Miley, J. Orton Wiley, and Thomas Oden. Olson does not shy away from key embarrassments to the Arminian tradition, such as the theological errors of Charles Finney. He rather admits these weaknesses and proceeds to demonstrate that they are not representative of the classical Arminian tradition as a whole.

Olson frequently expresses his frustration with how Calvinists have

misrepresented Arminian doctrinal formulations. But he generally keeps his tone cordial as he seeks to set an example for Calvinist-Arminian dialogue. He ends the book by suggesting ground rules for these polemics, emphasizing the responsibility of each side to listen to and understand the other carefully and charitably.

The book seems to hit most of the major distinctives of Arminian theology and does not seem to shy away from any of them save one—eternal security or perseverance of the saints. Olson skirts this issue a few times, but does not devote a chapter to it as might be expected.

Since this is not a highly technical book, it is valuable as a resource for almost anyone who wants to know what Arminians believe. However, the book will be limited as a polemical resource, since Olson does not engage in detailed argumentation against Calvinist doctrine. Olson's fairly consistent irenic tone and his call for cordiality and patience should be heeded by Calvinists and Arminians, and those particularly narrow Calvinists. Those who regard classical Arminianism as heresy should receive Olson's rebuke and acknowledge that Arminians are fellow members of the body of Christ. Overall, Olson's book is highly recommended for those who want to understand the Arminian-Calvinist controversy better.

Eric C. Redmond. *Where Are All the Brothers?* Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2008. 103 pp. \$9.99 (cloth). Reviewed by Gregory H. Harris, Professor of Bible Exposition.

Eric Redmond has written a purposely easy-to-read evangelistic and apologetic book in an attempt to reach people who are not saved and/or actively involved in a church. He has the chapters arranged so that each one can be read in a brief period of time; for instance, his introduction is entitled "What You Will Gain If You Give Me Ten Minutes a Day of Your Life for Each of The Next Nine Days" (13). His desire is to keep people from putting down the book with any such excuse that it would take too long in their busy schedules to read anything.

Although his target audience is predominantly the black male population (such as Day 5 "Doesn't Islam Offer More for Black Men?"), much within the book will be helpful to use with anyone who has legitimate questions about true Christianity. Redmond challenges the readers to investigate for themselves the claims of Christ and walks them through in simple but helpful language the key truths to consider. As before, the limited size of the chapters is purposeful; it is not an overkill of information but rather setting a forth the simple case of Jesus Christ as the Savior of those who will receive him.

Redmond sets up his chapter titles in the forms of a question that deals with common issues raised by many against Christianity (Day 1: "Isn't the Church Full of Hypocrites?") and, even more to the point, the person and work of Jesus Christ (Day 8: "Jesus Never Claimed to Be God, Did He?"). This will not be a book for those who have read deeper apologetics books since that is not the author's target

area. However, it may very well be a book that can be given to those who would not read a theology book; it is a good book “to continue the conversation” with the lost. In fact, this may be the best use of the book in that it can break the ice and lead to witnessing opportunities that may be awkward for some. The author’s hope is that once the reader begins to consider the biblical truths in the book, he will continue to read it instead of casting it away because he cannot understand it.

Each chapter concludes with follow-up questions entitled “Things to Consider,” to lead the reader to examine more deeply some of the material presented in that chapter. He also lists three books at the end of each chapter to point a reader to deeper sources if a longer and more profound answer is desired. *Where Are All the Brothers?* also contains two appendices: “The Fulfillment of the Old Testament Prophecies about Christ in the New Testament” (83) and an answer to the charge that “The Church Does Not Welcome Homosexuals” (89). Both appendices walk the reader through a biblical rationale on what the Bible says about such matters and why. Redmond does not duck or dodge the issues; he presents his argument in a straightforward and winsome manner.

For *The Master's Seminary Journal* audience, this may not be the book for you as a student of God’s Word; you are not the ones the author is after. However, this may be a small, “non-threatening” book to give an unsaved family member or associate who will not be put off by its size or presentation. As before, although Redmond targets the predominantly black, male, American audience, many of the same questions are asked by unbelievers of all ethnicities. Of course, because of the person and work of Jesus Christ, the same answers apply to all, regardless of “the people, tongue, tribe, and nation.”

Thomas A. Robinson. *Mastering New Testament Greek: Essential Tools for Students*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2007. ix + 230 pp. \$19.95 (paper with CD-ROM). Reviewed by Paul W. Felix, Assistant Professor of New Testament.

Thomas A. Robinson is Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Lethbridge in Alberta, British Columbia. Although he specializes in Judaism and Christianity in the Greco-Roman era, it is clear that he has a secondary interest in assisting students to become proficient in NT Greek. His previous contributions to this area have been *Greek Verb Endings: A Reverse Index* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen, 1989) and two editions of *Mastering Greek Vocabulary* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1990; 2d ed., 1991).

Robinson’s latest work is the “third edition” of the previous books which focused on Greek vocabulary. He seeks to broaden the scope in three ways. First, *Mastering New Testament Greek (MNTG)* includes a revision of the material from *Greek Verb Endings: A Reverse Index*. Second, “the section dealing with Prepositions and Cases, provides an intuitive visual model that illustrates the correlation between the various Greek prepositions and the cases these prepositions

employ in establishing relationships between nouns or pronouns” (3). Third, *MNTG* contains a Mini Greek/English Cognate Dictionary (4 double-column pages) that presents a list of sorted Greek roots which are related to English cognate words. The book also includes a CD-ROM entitled “Greek Tools,” which is formatted for Windows and Mac OS X.

After an Introduction and Instructions, Section 1, “Identical Greek/English Words,” provides a list of Greek words which have been transliterated to create words in the English language (i.e., ἀήρ, “air”). A large portion of the book is Section 2 (11-113), “Cognate Groups.” Instead of following the pattern of traditional vocabulary books which list words by their frequency of occurrence, the list provided in these pages is based on the frequency of the occurrence of the cognate root. Each cognate group provides the following general information: (1) the Greek root; (2) the frequency of that root in the NT; (3) the general meaning of the that root; (4) English words derived from (or suggestive of) the Greek root. The entry also lists words sharing the root and some aids for learning these words. Section 3, “Explanation of Greek Prefixes and Suffixes,” is designed to show how the meaning of a root can be altered by either a prefix or suffix. Section 3 is complemented by Section 4, “Identical Greek/English Prefixes and Suffixes.” A sample entry is ἀντι-, whose English equivalent is “anti-,” and has a general meaning of “against/opposition” as illustrated by the word “*Antichrist*.” “Derived English Words” is the subject of Section 5. The chapter offers a brief explanation of many of the “Memory Aid” words given in the cognate group entries in Section 3. The final two sections are Section 6, “Mini Greek/English Cognate Dictionary,” and Section 7, “Prepositions and Cases.”

MNTG has two appendices (Appendix 1, “Grimm’s Law”; Appendix 2, “Common Pronouns, Adjectives, and Adverbs”) and three indices (Index 1, “Words Occurring 10-19 Times”; Index 2, “Greek Word Endings”; Index 3, “Cognate Group Terms”). The material on the endings of Greek words is significant (151-93). Robinson has compiled this index to aid the reader of Greek to identify the ending of a puzzling word. The endings are listed in reverse alphabetical order.

“Greek Tools” consists of six programs: (1) Alphabet (several aids related to recognizing, pronouncing, and writing the Greek alphabet including diphthongs); (2) Greek Speak (pronounces selected Greek words); (3) Vocabulary (allows the user to learn the most common Greek words, which are also indexed to the lessons in three first-year grammars); (4) Verb Decoder (identifying and reviewing Greek verb forms); (5) Word Deconstruction (offers a quick guide to determine the ending of most Greek words); (6) GIG: Greek Internet Grammar (links to a basic first-year grammar that is still under construction). Several of these programs will be of benefit to beginning students of Greek. The software installs without any problems.

The majority of the material in *MNTG* can be found in Robinson’s earlier contributions on learning NT Greek. Readers of his work should be grateful he has combined his previous material, but it does not warrant the misleading title of the book. This volume does not provide the essential tools for the mastery of NT Greek. Yet, if one is convinced that the optimal way to learn the vocabulary of the NT is by

focusing on the frequency of the occurrence of the cognate root rather than on the frequency of the individual word, then *MNTG* is a valuable book. Robinson has demonstrated that more than one way exists to gain a working knowledge of the vocabulary of the NT and that his material can aid those who have learned words classified according to their frequency.

The major challenge of this helpful work is integrating it into the overall plan to make Greek a useful tool for interpreting the NT. Several of its features, especially the software, are designed for first-year Greek students. Typically, students who are just learning the language are not interested in acquiring large amounts of vocabulary. Other parts of the book (i.e., amassing vocabulary by learning words classified according to their root) are geared toward second-year students of Greek. Such individuals desire to learn large amounts of Greek vocabulary rapidly and are not interested in the elementary rudiments of the Greek language. In light of this challenge, purchasers of this reasonably priced book will have to determine how *MGNT* can best serve them in the goal of using Greek to interpret the NT.

Philip Satterthwaite and Gordon McConville. *Exploring the Old Testament, Volume 2: A Guide to the Historical Books*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2007. xvi + 295 pp. \$29.00 (cloth). Reviewed by Keith Essex, Associate Professor of Bible Exposition.

This is the fourth and final volume released in the *Exploring the Old Testament (EOT)* series edited by Gordon McConville. All of the volumes were written by British OT scholars "to help the beginning student understand the writings of the Old Testament" (xi). *EOT* is a companion series to *Exploring the New Testament* which was written by British NT scholars for the same purpose (see *TMSJ*, 2004, 132-34). As its NT counterpart, *EOT* seeks to engage the reader by interspersing interactive panels with the main narrative. *EOT* also incorporates canonical and rhetorical criticism along with the traditional historical interpretive approach to the OT text.

The second volume of *EOT, A Guide to the Historical Books* is a joint writing venture of Philip Satterthwaite and McConville. Satterthwaite, a professor of OT at the Biblical Graduate School of Theology in Singapore, planned the volume, wrote the first seven chapters, and edited all the chapters into their present form. McConville, Senior Lecturer in OT at the University of Gloucestershire, Cheltenham, England, wrote chapters 8-11 (xv). In the first chapter, Satterthwaite introduces the reader to the OT histories, the books which follow the Pentateuch in the English Bible (1-28). The main burden of the chapter is to describe the present approaches to the histories as literary texts and historical documents. Satterthwaite concludes, "Our interpretation of the Histories begin with the assumption of literary unity. . . . Usually, having investigated contrary viewpoints, we conclude that our

initial, working assumption of literary unity may be allowed to stand” (25). The author is also cautious of undo skepticism concerning the historical accuracy of the books, although he asks pointed questions of the critical approach (17) rather than declaring a beginning premise of inerrancy or even the general historical trustworthiness of the OT text. However, when the individual OT books are discussed, the authors usually conclude that they are historically based, except for Esther. The second chapter overviews the history of the Ancient Near East from 1550 to 63 B.C. since it is the context of the histories (29-40).

The central part of the volume is devoted to an introduction to the individual OT books (41-198, 220-90). The strength of chapters 3-6 and 8-11 is the discussion of the structure of each book. The authors clearly show the reader the literary unity of the texts. This discussion will be of immense help to exegetes and expositors of Scripture, not just the beginning reader. The two weaknesses of these chapters are both historical. First, Satterthwaite opts for a late dating for the conquest and about 160 years for the period of the Judges (101). Second, McConville expresses serious reservations concerning the historicity of the events recorded in Esther. He views the genre of the book as comedy, a fictional work that might get the local color right, and thus give an appearance of historical accuracy, but whose narration of its central events, a plot to kill all Jews, foiled by the actions of a queen, and the slaughter of 75,000 Jewish enemies, is improbable (239-42). In chapter seven, Satterthwaite introduces the reader to the contemporary discussion of the “Deuteronomistic History,” i.e., Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings (199-219). He questions the assumptions of a Deuteronomistic History, noting that the Former Prophets have significant echoes of all of the Pentateuch, not just Deuteronomy. He concludes, “The points in favour of our position are not necessarily stronger than those underlying the consensus position: all we claim is that they are no weaker” (217). The volume ends with a subject index (291-95).

In the estimation of the present reviewer, *A Guide to the Historical Books* is the most beneficial of the four volumes in *EOT*. Volume 1, *A Guide to the Pentateuch* (2003) by Gordon Wenham is a valuable roadmap to the structure of the Pentateuch, but doubts about the historicity of the text at points mar the presentation. Volume 3, *A Guide to the Psalms & Wisdom Literature* (2003) by Ernest Lucas, raises questions concerning the Solomonic authorship of Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs and gives the reader little support for the traditional position. In volume 4, *A Guide to the Prophets* (2002), McConville concedes much to the non-evangelical scholarship on these books, especially Isaiah and Daniel. As with their NT counterparts, *EOT* are valuable in orienting the beginning OT student to the issues he will face in his continuing studies. However, the answers supplied are not always reliable. Volume 2 comes the closest to giving the reader the best answers.

Kenton L. Sparks. *God's Word in Human Words*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008. 415 pp. \$26.99 (paper). Reviewed by Jason Sexton, TMS alumnus and Ph.D.

candidate at The University of St. Andrews, Scotland.

Kenton L. Sparks is Professor of Biblical Studies, Special Assistant to the Provost of Eastern University, and has written the latest book seeking to reframe the debate on biblical inerrancy. Because of its vastness in scope and broadness in scholarly engagement, Peter Enns referred to it as “*Inspiration and Incarnation on steroids*” (cf. opening remarks on recent debate on “Is the Bible Ever Wrong” at Duke Divinity School, 22 Oct 2008 [<http://socraticclubtwoviews.blogspot.com/2008/09/is-bible-ever-wrong-conversation-with.html>], accessed 17 Jan. 09]). Written by an evangelical to a scholarly evangelical audience, Sparks makes a case for believing historical-criticism that he hopes will benefit the church, giving it a “biblically informed worldview” (18-20, 328, 356).

With a strong aversion to “Cartesian” philosophies, Sparks moves to integrate faith and historical-criticism which, he asserts, offers the very best in Christian scholarship (170, 183, 366, 373). Accordingly, instead of being a case of disobedience, he suggests that the cause of Adam’s fall in Genesis was a misplaced desire for certain God-like knowledge (49, 52).

Favorably noting advances in critical scholarship, Sparks’s framework is arguing that historical-criticism will aid the study of the Bible through the academic expertise of intellectually gifted scholars (58, 70). Early in the book, while interacting with postmodern epistemology, Sparks identifies himself as a “practical realist” (42-44, 263), suggesting an appropriate definition of historical-criticism as “reading texts contextually” (72). He then makes a case for distancing himself from the standard evangelical view of inerrancy while still remaining theologically orthodox. He does this by seeking to uphold God’s inerrancy and that “God does not err in Scripture,” while yet paradoxically finding errors in the Bible attributed to the human authors (139, 227).

Sparks’s position seems very similar to that offered by John Goldingay (*Models for Scripture* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994] 282-83) who argues that the Bible can be “adequately factual” but not “inerrantly factual.” Cf. also Telford Work’s recent treatment of the subject (*Living and Active* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002] 81) along with that of John Webster, who gave a similar notion that the Bible’s authority “does not lie within itself, any more than the sacraments have inherent effectiveness, but in its testimony to the authority of the one who appoints Scripture as his servant” (“Scripture, Authority of,” in *Dictionary of Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005] 726). This notion would also be allowed by Denis O. Lamoureux (“Lessons from the Heavens: On Scripture, Science and Inerrancy” in *The Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation* 60/1 [June 2008]:13), who identifies “incidental statements” in the Bible regarding things such as the cosmology of the universe, to which “biblical inerrancy cannot extend.”

Serving in the broader academic arena can be good for evangelicals, breeding rigorous scholarship in an exacting context. But one wonders if Sparks himself is really willing to be tested there. Specifically, with serious engagement of

postmodern epistemological issues, the question begging to be posed to historical critics is whether or not their discipline can be performed with any confident relevancy at all (cf. S. M. Baugh's reference to Wayne Meeks's 2004 presidential address to the Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas, cited in Baugh's Aug. 2008 review of *God's Word in Human Words* [<http://www.reformation21.org/shelf-life/review-gods-word-in-human-words.php> (accessed 4 Nov. 2008)]). Can one really depend on critical scholarship, all the while seeking to be dislodged from constraints by modernist philosophy? And does a postmodern or nonfoundational historical-criticism really exist? Or is "reading texts contextually" from a tamed, practical realism (with little criteria to determine this and no description of how this might work) simply unrealistic? Furthermore, with seeming absence of little if any argumentation advanced from recent critical scholarship, this book easily could have been written ten years ago. This matter could have been improved on had he paused to consider the work of Francis Watson, *Text and Truth* (London: T & T Clark, 1997) and Christopher R. Seitz, *Figured Out* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001) in more than a meager footnote. What if historical-criticism becomes passé even in the broader academic arena as a modern, rationalistic, Cartesian edifice built by 19th- and 20th-century German scholarship? Does Sparks have a backup plan?

The latter portion of the book is spent trying to synthesize criticism with theology (203). This point is noteworthy, for theology seems to be the only means by which any sort of critical methodology might be redeemed for biblical studies (e.g., Daniel Treier, *Introducing Theological Interpretation of Scripture* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008]). Sparks observes that not all criticism is healthy and helpful when speaking of that which acknowledges Scripture's authority "in word but not in deed" (23, 356). However, he neither identifies unhealthy criticism nor seems to apply this observation in any practical way. This is seen in the critical comment he makes about conjectures of NT authors who purportedly viewed extracanonical works as "inspired Scripture" (125-26). And Sparks gives no merit whatever for what he calls "speculative" harmonizations from evangelical scholars (164). Whatever bearing these observations and others may have on one's ethical deeds escapes this reviewer.

Sparks employs "accommodation" for understanding differences between divine and human accounts in Scripture (202-3, 230), though never explaining how to determine which is which or what might identify an accommodation. It seems, however, that whenever normal interpretation yields something unexplainable or an error, "accommodation" is that "theological explanation for the presence of human errors in Scripture" (256). So then would a literal hermeneutic guide Sparks's process for determination? This is doubtful, but if so, then in the "inerrant" parts about the "inerrant God" (wherever they may be), does Scripture speak univocally of Him, allowing the reader to judge Him empirically to be either in error or sufficiently errorless? (327). If so, problems have quickly moved from the doctrine of Scripture to epistemology, theology proper, and the doctrines of man and sin that the spurious "practical realist" reading of Scripture cannot avoid. One also wonders what Sparks's "practical realist" reading of Scripture looks like, and what criteria

might be for determining where an error isn't? A better position seems to be that Scripture is both human and divine—where one ends and the other begins is impossible to discern, for they are inseparable.

This does not seem to be the last word of the third-wave of the inerrancy debate, the first response to which has been given by Greg Beale, professor of NT at Wheaton College (*The Erosion of Inerrancy in Evangelicalism: Responding to New Challenges to Biblical Authority* [Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2008]). Many of Sparks's challenges are countered by methodology employed in Beale's recent work. This reviewer is also aware of at least one other two-volume work forthcoming that will seek to offer a constructive evangelical Scripture principle in light of recent criticism against the standard evangelical view (i.e., that of the Evangelical Theological Society).

In conclusion, Sparks does not offer much for evangelicals to consider regarding how historical-criticism might be merged with an evangelical Scripture principle that does not balk at the Bible's inerrant authority throughout. And while seeking to integrate theology with historical-criticism, he pays little attention to new developments in the interdisciplinary engagement between Scripture and theology, which seems to be the most hopeful location for his agenda. Sparks offers no helpful interlocution for evangelical scholars and pastors, and his agenda barely endures on its own terms, contributing very little if anything helpful to the inerrancy discussion.

Alexander Strauch. *Love or Die: Christ's Wake-Up Call to the Church*. Littleton, Colo.: Lewis & Roth, 2008. 112 pp. \$9.99 (paper). Reviewed by Irvin A. Busenitz, Professor of Bible and Old Testament.

This small volume is another valuable contribution to the healthy function of ministry in the local church. Pastor of Littleton Bible Chapel for more than thirty years, Strauch has written widely on the topic of love, especially as it applies to fostering a church environment of loving leadership and loving community among the saints. This volume is a continuation of that theme, with the hope that "my efforts awaken Christians to the need for our personal lives and our local churches to be marked by the love of Jesus Christ" (2).

Beginning with the premise, "Love is essential to everything we do in Christian life and ministry" (2), Strauch divides the brief treatise into two sections. Part One, *The Problem of Lost Love*, is based on Revelation 2:4. Part Two, *How to Cultivate Love*, is born out of Hebrews 10:24. The book closes with a five-lesson Study Guide, a Scripture Index, and a list of the Fifty Key Texts on Love, providing a treasure-trove of practical resources for personal or group study and discussion.

With his usual insightfulness, Strauch corrects a number of misconceptions about love. For example, noting that love does not require compromise or the equivocation of truth, he writes, "Churches today need to understand that hatred of evil and falsehood is not a contradiction of love, but an essential part of genuine

Christian love (1 Cor. 13:6). Love abhors ‘what is evil’ and clings ‘to what is good’ (Rom. 12:9)” (8).

Strauch lays a strong foundation for the love requirement: “The one quality ... that should beautify every believer and every church, regardless of giftedness or personality, is love” (11). He points out that the first and second great commandments are love for God and neighbor (Matt 22:37-39). He adds that true discipleship requires denying self and loving God above all others (Matt 10:37-38) and that God’s very nature and essence is love (1 John 4:8, 16). “Love for God and neighbor lies at the very heart of genuine spiritual life. Thus, Revelation 2:4 is a wake-up call to all churches: love or die!” (19).

Focusing on the remedy in the second half of the book, the author employs Heb 10:24 to launch a discussion of how to cultivate love. He advocates six things that will revive genuine love and renew spiritual health:

1. Study love—“By saturating your mind with biblical love, you will know what God requires of you and you will grow in love. You will also be able to guard yourself from the loss of love” (31; cf. his Fifty Key Texts on Love in Appendix B).
2. Pray for love—“If ever we are to love as Christ loved, we must pray for the Holy Spirit’s enablement” (33; cf. Eph 3:14-19; 1 Thess 3:12; Phil 1:9).
3. Teach love—“In an age of biblical illiteracy, believers need to know the truth about love.... Believers need to be taught that the Christian life is to be characterized by Christ’s total, self-giving love” (42, 43).
4. Model love—“Since imitating others is a fundamental way in which we learn, it is important that we not only teach what the Bible says about love but that we model it. This is why the apostles modeled Christ’s love and why Paul calls all believers to ‘be imitators of God’ and live a life of love like his Son, Jesus Christ (Eph. 5:1-2)” (51).
5. Guard love—“Cultivating love in the church must include the negative aspect of guarding against and warning about the dangers that threaten our love for God and our neighbor.... In this world, which is hostile to Christ, plenty of contenders vie for our love. That is why the Bible says ‘Keep yourselves in the love of God’ (Jude 21)” (57).
6. Practice love—“We must be practitioners of love, not theorists” (65; cf. 1 John 3:16b; Rom 12:9).

Jesus does not say that the Ephesian church had no love; rather, they had abandoned the love they once had—their first love. In *Love or Die*, Strauch not only calls on Christians to reexamine the true condition of our love for God but also provides helpful steps that will revive, nurture, and motivate both ourselves and others to love “in deed and in truth.”

Frank Thielman. *Theology of the New Testament: A Canonical and Synthetic Approach*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005. 798 pp. \$39.99 (cloth). Reviewed by Keith Essex, Associate Professor of Bible Exposition.

Frank Thielman, Presbyterian Professor of Divinity at Beeson Divinity School, Samford University, Birmingham, Alabama, has written the second of three major NT theologies that have been published so far in the first decade of the twenty-first century. The NT theology of I. Howard Marshall was published in 2004 (see *TMSJ*, 2007, 261-63). In 2008, the NT theology of Thomas Schreiner was released by Baker. Thielman's work lies in the middle of the three works both historically and methodologically. He does not begin with the theological story of each NT book before isolating the book's theological themes like Marshall, nor does he give as detailed a theological synthesis of the entire NT as Schreiner attempts. Therefore, Thielman's NT theology is a valuable bridge between Marshall and Schreiner while at the same time being an excellent work in its own right. Thielman expresses his desire for his volume: "I hope that the book will serve the needs of serious students of the New Testament for a brief theological orientation to each New Testament text. I also hope to make a persuasive argument that although each text is rooted in its own cultural world, all twenty-seven texts, when read sympathetically, are theologically unified" (9).

Before embarking on his theological description, the author poses and answers two basic questions in the study of the theology of the NT in his first chapter (19-42). The first problem posed is the blend of dogmatics and historical concerns. Thielman answers the attacks of Gabler, Wrede, and Raisanen and avers that one can be a Christian believer committed to the NT canon as God's revelation and at the same time successfully listen to the texts as a secular historian. The second problem arises from the diversity of the NT texts. Thielman argues that underlying the obvious diversity is a basic theological unity implicit in the nature of Scripture as God's Word. He states, "It is necessary for the diversity of the canon to stand as a witness both to the nearness and to the otherness of God, who, despite his infinite wisdom, has met us where we are through His Word" (40).

In chapters two through thirty-three, the writer describes his understanding of the theology of the NT (43-677). The NT canon is divided into three sections of material; the Gospels and Acts, the Pauline Letters, and the Non-Pauline Letters and the Revelation of John. Each major canonical part is approached in the same way. First, an introductory chapter orients the reader to the leading question that affects the theological description of the section, the problem of a fourfold gospel for the Gospels and Acts, the coherence and center of Paul's theology for the Pauline epistles, and "early Catholicism" for the rest of the NT. Second, the individual NT books in each section are discussed in a roughly chronological order for that part. Thus, Mark begins the first section, First Thessalonians the second, and James the third. Third, each section concludes with a synthetic chapter where the various texts are placed in conversation with each other so that the overall theological emphases might emerge. Finally, in chapter thirty-four, the volume concludes with the

author's delineation of the theological unity of the NT, which comes from his previous syntheses (679-725). A bibliography of works cited (727-62), a Scripture and Apocrypha index (763-86), an index of other ancient literature (787-90), and a subject index (791-98) bring the book to completion.

Thielman is to be commended for his thoroughly orthodox and evangelical contribution to the study of NT theology. He has produced a book that will not only introduce the reader to the discipline of NT theology, but also enhance his understanding of the NT text itself. His conclusion that Jesus Christ is central to the theological vision of the NT (725) is supported by the NT and heartily agreed to by all Christian believers. The one weakness in Thielman's NT theology is his insistence that the church is the restored Israel. He admits that the NT affirms that God will eventually prove faithful to his promises to ethnic Israel even though he believes it also teaches that the church is the restored Israel of prophetic expectation. He declares, "Paul never explains how these two understandings of the prophetic promises fit together, but his easy movement from one to the other shows that he does not believe them to be incompatible" (710). However, the NT never explicitly states that the church is the restored Israel even though there are many analogies in the NT between the church and Israel. Despite this weakness, *Theology of the New Testament* is a book well worth reading.

Richard Weikart, *From Darwin to Hitler, Evolutionary Ethics, Eugenics, and Racism in Germany*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. 312 pp. \$27.95.
Reviewed by F. David Farnell, Professor of New Testament.

Weikart's book is a must read under the main idea that "Ideas Have Consequences." Weickert traces the devastating impact that evolution had on the rise of evolutionary genetics (eugenics) that led to a virulent racism in Germany (and the United States) that eventually led to devastating devaluing of human life and the elimination of evolutionary "inferior" people in the Holocaust. The book is a well-documented, frightening exploration of how tenuous evolutionary thought became dogmatic presupposition in the scientific community in Europe, leading to the massive liquidation (killing) of millions based on evolutionary principles of what is inferior and what is superior. The book goes beyond Hitler's era to cast grave suspicions on the present scientific community throughout the world that so dogmatically holds to such principles. The future could be very dark if these ideas spawned by false science take hold as they once did in Germany. The fruition of this kind of thinking today is evolutionary biology and the relativization of ethics where right and wrong are merely culturally determined. No absolutes exist. What is right today could become passé tomorrow. The book's implications for the world's future are chilling.