

WHO SURPRISED WHOM? THE HOLY SPIRIT OR JACK DEERE?¹⁶

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Dr. Jack Deere, a former professor at Dallas Theological Seminary and a highly visible convert from the cessationist to the noncessationist position regarding miraculous acts of God through men, recounts his journey in Surprised by the Power of the Spirit. He reasons that cessationists have argued more from silence than from Scripture, have twisted Scripture, and have no one single Scripture passage that proves their point. In this brief analysis of his work, it is apparent that Deere, not cessationists, has made these interpretive errors in coming to his biblically unfounded conclusion that the miraculous acts of God have continued beyond the apostolic age—but with lesser quality and frequency.

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In three places in his volume *Surprised by the Power of the Spirit*,¹⁷ Dr. Jack Deere sets forth something like the following hypothetical

¹⁶Jack Deere, *Surprised by the Power of the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993). A subsequent volume, *Surprised by the Voice of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994) should be released in late fall 1994, according to *Surprised by the Power*, "Epilogue: Hearing God speak Today" 209-15. The goal of this review is not to be unabridged, but rather to comment representatively on major features of Deere's work. Concluding that Deere's position is biblically indefensible does not logically mean that the cessationist position is thereby *vindicated*. It too must rise or fall on what the Scriptures teach.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 54, 99, 114.

scenario. What is your reaction to it?

If you take a new convert, who prior to his conversion knew nothing about the history of Christianity or the New Testament, and you lock him in a room with a Bible for a week, he will come out believing that he is a member of a body that is passionately in love with the Lord Jesus Christ and a body that consistently experiences miracles. It would take a clever theologian with no experience of the miraculous to convince this convert differently.¹⁸

At first glance and without much thought, one might agree. But for this reviewer another look at the statement quickly causes it to become an *agree/disagree* situation. He *agrees* that a new convert who is totally unknowledgeable of history, who has no experience interpreting the Bible, and who has no study tools might conclude that the church today experiences miracles like the first-century church.

But he totally *disagrees*, along with you too probably, that the new convert would be correct. Since when is a new convert with nothing but a Bible an authority on the correct theological analysis of a subject so complex as miracles? Further, why would the theologian have to be "experienced" in the miraculous to be credible if the Scriptures are sufficient, without recourse to experience, to articulate clear doctrine (2 Tim 3:16-17)?

¹⁸Ibid., 114.

This raises an even bigger question about Deere and those like him: why do some trained theologians, who do have a knowledge of history and who do have the capabilities to use good Bible-study tools, come up with the same immature conclusion as a new believer who knows nothing? Could it be that they have used a combination of experience and a redetermined¹⁹ theology to override otherwise reasonable conclusions?

Not so according to several men whom the author and/or publisher solicited for endorsements. Wayne Grudem, professor of Biblical and Systematic Theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, writes, "This is the most persuasive answer I have ever read to the objections of people who say that miraculous gifts like healing and prophesy are not for today."²⁰ Since Grudem holds the highest of scholastic credentials, one can reasonably assume that he has read all the best volumes on this subject and finds Dr. Deere's book making the superlative contribution to this subject.

Other well-known men have offered equally glowing comments. "It is truly a landmark book!"²¹ C. Peter Wagner of Fuller Theological Seminary has written. R. T. Kendall, minister of Westminster Chapel in London, has enthusiastically suggested, "Simply written, brilliantly argued, Dr. Deere's thesis is, in my opinion, irrefutable."²²

Given Deere's well-publicized conversion to noncessationism and his highly visible relationship with John Wimber and Paul Cain, plus these exceptional recommendations, one who takes the ministry of the Holy Spirit seriously must read Deere's book, using the "Berean approach" of examining the Scriptures to see whether these things are so (Acts 17:11).²³ Does Deere's word correspond to God's Word?

¹⁹I have purposely used "redetermined" in contrast to "predetermined." When one changes his theology as radically as Deere has (from a cessationist to a non-cessationist persuasion), it does not free him altogether from predetermination; but he also bears the additional weight of a less than objective approach (by reaction) that fuels "redetermination." At best, he is now equally as subjective as he was as a cessationist, and at worst, more—not less—vulnerable to possible error.

²⁰Jack Deere, *Surprised by the Power*, endorsement page prior to page 1.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid., back dust cover.

²³Others who have reviewed Deere's work include Robert A. Pyne, *BSac* 151/602 (April-June, 1994):233-34; Larry L. Walker, *Mid-America Theological Journal* 18 (1994):126-27; R. Fowler White, "'For the Sparrow in the Hurricane,' A Review of Jack Deere's *Surprised by the*

AUTHOR'S BACKGROUND

Deere holds several degrees: an AB from Texas Christian University and a ThM and a ThD from Dallas Theological Seminary. He taught at Dallas Theological Seminary from 1976 until 1987 when the institution dismissed him because of his noncessationist views (37-38).

According to the author, he originally held strong cessationist views in line with his training and teaching experience at Dallas Theological Seminary. After a year's study leave in Germany (1984-1985), he returned to DTS for the 1985-1986 school year (15). While inviting Dr. John White, a British psychiatrist, to preach at a church conference, Deere had his life-changing, twenty-minute phone conversation with White in January 1986 (13, 22).

White had been worshipping at the Vineyard Fellowship of Anaheim pastored by John Wimber since mid-1985 (33). White came to Fort Worth in April 1986, to hold the conference Deere writes about in Chap. 2 (25-32). Several weeks later Deere attended a Wimber²⁴ meeting in Fort Worth (33). As a result, Deere and Wimber became good friends; Deere visited the Anaheim Vineyard Fellowship on several occasions during 1986-1987 (37).

After departing from DTS in fall of 1987, Deere also became acquainted with the Kansas City Fellowship pastored by Mike Bickle (38). He then made plans to move to Anaheim and become a full-time associate of John Wimber (38).

Deere remained with Wimber into the early 1990's, when he returned to the Dallas-Fort Worth area. According to the dust jacket, Deere now writes and lectures worldwide on the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

By Deere's own testimony, John Wimber, British psychiatrist John White, and Paul Cain have had a major influence on him (33-41).

Power of the Spirit" (unpublished paper presented at the 1994 ETS Eastern Regional Meeting).

²⁴To see what Deere has been exposed to in his relationship with John Wimber, read John Wimber and Kevin Springer, *Power Evangelism*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1992), and John Wimber and Kevin Springer, *Power Healing* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987). In this reviewer's opinion, the most substantial defense of John Wimber's thinking has come from Gary S. Greig and Kevin N. Springer, eds., *The Kingdom and the Power* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1993).

In addition, four months of intense Scripture study`January to April 1986 (22) and his experiences (13-41)`have combined to convince him that miraculous gifts still operate in the church as they did in the first century.

SYNOPSIS

Deere divides his presentation into three distinct sections with three appendixes:

1. Shocked and Surprised (13-41).
2. Shattered Misconceptions (45-159).
3. Seeking the Gifts and the Giver (163-215).

The appendixes address,

- A. Other Reasons Why God Heals and Works Miracles (219-27).
- B. Did Miraculous Gifts Cease With the Apostles? (229-52).
- C. Were There Only Three Periods of Miracles? (253-66).

In addition, he includes a helpful Scripture Index.²⁵

Shocked and Surprised

Deere begins with a three-chapter, twenty-nine page confession of how, in January 1986, his best cessationists arguments, accumulated over numerous years of pastoring, doctoral study, and postgraduate theological seminary experience did not hold up in a twenty-minute conversation with psychiatrist John White (16-22). Over the next four months of studying Scriptures, Deere became a noncessationist who believes that God heals today and speaks today (23). At some undesignated time in the past, Deere's wife, Lessa, had embraced the noncessationist position (15) and had been praying frequently for his conversion (15-16).

Chapter two recounts White's conference at Deere's church in Fort Worth (25-32). As a result of White's ministry and introduction of Deere to Wimber's ministry, Deere visited a Wimber meeting in Texas (33). As a result of the meeting, Deere became a close friend of Wimber (37) and subsequently met Paul Cain, then a Wimber associate

²⁵For correcting future reprints, the publisher should note that all references from Mark 9:40 to the end of Mark (16:20 in Deere's opinion) have been omitted (296). Citations from Luke 10:9 through 24:49 stand erroneously in their place.

(cf. 167).

This section, which autobiographically recounts Deere's odyssey, closes with a clearly stated purpose (41):

In the following pages I want to share with you some of the things I have learned over the last few years, both in the Scriptures and in practical experience, that may help you to learn how to pursue and experience the reality of the gifts of the Spirit without all the hype and abuses that have plagued others who have attempted to minister in the power of the Spirit. I also want to share with you the biblical and theological objections that I had to the present-day supernatural ministry of the Holy Spirit, and the answers that removed those objections for me. Finally, I want to discuss the fears and the hindrances I experienced in trying to minister in the power of the Holy Spirit, and how these have been and are being removed.

Shattered Misconceptions

Deere continues with his autobiographical narration through Chap. 4 "The Myth of Pure Biblical Objectivity" (45-56) when he concludes, "No cessationist writer that I am aware of tries to make his case on Scripture alone" (55).

Chapters 5-6 recount his three major reasons why Bible-believing Christians do not believe in the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit today:

1. They have not seen them (55, 57-71).
2. They cannot find New Testament-quality miracles in the history of the church (71-76).
3. They are confused by the misuse, or the perceived misuse, of the gifts in contemporary churches and healing movements (77-86).

Chapter 7, "Scared to Death by the Holy Ghost," argues from (1) the Azusa Street ministry, (2) John Wimber and Jonathan Edwards, (3) selected Scriptures, and (4) personal experience in an attempt to validate the theory that God is giving physical manifestations today.

The crux of Deere's case comes in Chaps. 8-10, "Were Miracles Meant to be Temporary?" "Why Does God Heal?" and "Why God Gives Miraculous Gifts?" Deere concludes, "Nor can we say that God did miracles to authenticate the Apostles, or to prove the authority of Scripture" (114). He adds, "In James 5:14-16, God commissioned the whole church to heal. . . ." (129). Further he says, "1 Corinthians 12-14

gives us six reasons that apply just as much today as they did in the first century . . ." (142).

In Chap. 11 "Why God Doesn't Heal" Deere stops short of denying that some good can come from sickness (155-57). He concludes that (1) apostasy, (2) legalism, (3) lukewarm faith, and (4) unbelief thwart God's plan to heal (147-55). He ends by appealing to 2 Chr 7:14 as a promise that he believes is valid for today (159).

Seeking the Gifts and the Giver

The final chapters deal with a Christian's passion and love for Christ. The section in which Deere warns against splitting churches over the issue of gifts (174-77) is commendable. Chapter 13, "A Passion for God," recounts Deere's lack of passion as a cessationist (184, 186-87) and how he regained his passion as a noncessationist (189-93). The final chapter "Developing Passion and Power" reasons that (1) passionate love for God is the key to power (201-2) and (2) cessationists have no power; therefore cessationists have no passionate love for God (184). He attempts to prove his point with a five-page illustration he received second hand (203-6). One wonders, then, why John the Baptist whom Jesus said was the greatest born of women (Luke 7:28) did no miracles in his ministry (John 10:41)?

In his epilogue "Hearing God Speak Today" (209-15) Deere defers this discussion to a forthcoming book. Those who want to know what and why the author believes in continuous revelation from God will have to wait for his sequel, *Surprised by the Voice of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994) reportedly ready for release in the fall of 1994.

In the three Appendixes, Deere argues against Benjamin B. Warfield,²⁶ John MacArthur, and Peter Masters, all of whom have written from a cessationist perspective. He reasons that supernatural gifts seen in the gospels and Acts were not limited to just a few (230-41) and that an apostleship of lesser quality than the original apostles still exists today (241-52). In Appendix C "Were There Only Three Periods of Miracles?" Deere takes issue with John MacArthur's understanding of miracles (253-66).

²⁶This reviewer will not attempt to defend Warfield against Deere's charges, other than to say that Deere does not adequately represent Warfield's position. Those interested may read Warfield in *Counterfeit Miracles* (reprint, London: Banner of Truth, 1972), especially Chap. 1, "The Cessation of the Charismata" (3-31).

HERMENEUTICS AND EXPERIENCE

By selective reading, one might perceive that Deere has reached his noncessationist conclusions primarily through a careful survey of Scripture (22-23, 75, 99, 101). Deere testifies, "This shift in my thinking was not the result of an experience with any kind of supernatural phenomenon. *It was the result of a patient and intense study of the Scriptures*" (23).

Yet, his own discussions cast serious doubt on the accuracy of this perception. For instance, in describing his conversion from a cessationist to a noncessationist position (13-41), he lists ten major experiences to bolster his testimony:

1. phone conversation with Dr. White (13-23)
2. his cessationist history (13-15)
3. his charismatic wife who prayed for him (15-16)
4. Dr. White's conference (25-30)
5. a demon possessed Christian (26-30)
6. a woman healed of an aneurysm (31-32)
7. his John Wimber relationship (33-37)
8. a woman healed of back problems (35-37)
9. his Paul Cain relationship (38-41)
10. the healing of Linda Tidwell (39-41)

In this twenty-nine page description of one experience after another, he does not discuss or explain a single Scripture passage. At best, he cites only eight texts:

1. Phil 2:25-27 (19)
2. 1 Tim 5:23 (19)
3. 2 Tim 4:20 (19)
4. Matt 18:3-4 (29)
5. Luke 8:26 (30)
6. James 5:14-16 (30)
7. 1 Cor 14:24-26 (35)
8. 1 Cor 14 (37).

He sets forth three premises in the section after this (45-86), in which he reasons that if cessationists meet these conditions, they will convert as he did:

1. If they see the authentic miraculous in real experience (55, 57-71).

2. If they find New Testament-quality miracles in church history (56, 71-76).
3. If they find a sane use of miraculous gifts in the church (56, 77-86).

Let the reviewer return to the hypothetical situation mentioned at the beginning of this article. Deere argues, "If you were to lock a brand new Christian in a room with a Bible and tell him to study what Scripture has to say about healing and miracles, he would never come out of the room a cessationist" (54). He follows in the very next sentence, "I know this from my own *experience*." That is shocking! The very thing he denies *experience* influencing his theology (22-23) he here admits. This is a very serious contradiction. Even more amazing, this was not originally "his *experience*." He testifies in the same paragraph that from the time of becoming Christian at age seventeen until his conversion, he remained a cessationist. Later he refers to "a clever theologian with no *experience* of the miraculous to convince this young convert differently" (114). He makes His unintended point quite well: Jack Deere believes that without *experience* one will not be a noncessationist. He writes, "My *experience* has brought me to the opposite conclusion than that of MacArthur and his researchers" (274).

Consider this conclusion in the very widely distributed review of Deere's work:

Certainly Deere's view of the role of the prophet and the "apostolic dimensions" of ministry (especially as manifested by Paul Cain) prompts significant questions about his reading of the New Testament: In laying aside Scofield's grid, has Deere replaced it with another that is equally or more manipulative in its use of God's Word?

Deere suggests that when *experience* and argument converge, people open themselves to a life of infinite surprises in engagement with the Holy Spirit. And his personal experiences punctuate each chapter. Indeed, there is almost a sense in which the book affirms that the power of the Spirit is real primarily because Deere experienced and saw it. He comes precariously close to using *experience* as a form of expanded translation of the biblical text.

Ultimately, *Surprised by the Power of the Spirit* is another contribution to a growing body of literature that unites the power of personal testimony with a hermeneutic that offers dispensational fundamentalists a fresh way of approaching the biblical text. But, although Deere offers a welcomed alternative to the Scofieldian reading of Scripture, he unfortunately leaves the reader with the

impression that it is the religious experience itself that validates what he argues.²⁷

Although for reasons outlined in the next section it is difficult to know with certainty, it is possible that Deere has *unintentionally* fallen into two major hermeneutical errors. The first is that of generalizing, i.e., believing the occurrence of a miracle in the past means that nothing prevents it from happening again, and therefore expecting its recurrence. The second is experientializing, i.e., accepting someone's claims to have a miraculous experience today of the kind that appeared in biblical history, then letting that experience prove that God is presently working the same kind of miracles. The first involves a biblically unwarranted hermeneutic that reasons, unless Scripture denies the continuance of an experience, that experience has continued and will do so. The second reads experience into Scripture so that experience validates Scripture rather than the reverse.

Deere never deals with the counterfeit miracles that have existed throughout church history. He does not deal with those who claimed to do great miracles but were rejected by Christ (Matt 7:21-23). Perhaps this is why he does not openly confront the obviously false teachers of noncessationist persuasion like Kenneth Hagin and Benny Hinn.

After reading the first five chapters, this reviewer concluded that Deere converted to a noncessationist position because of the logic of a British psychiatrist, the healings of John Wimber, and the prophecies of Paul Cain. Despite his pleas otherwise and because of his own carefully scripted testimony, it seems likely that Scripture took a back seat in the process of his change.

EXEGESIS AND EXPOSITION

If the above analysis relating to "Hermeneutics and Experience" is remotely correct, then as its corollary, Deere excels at selective proof-texting, but has done too little solid exegesis and exposition of key biblical texts. That is a serious charge neither reached hastily nor to be treated lightly. An illustration is in order.

²⁷Edith L. Blumhofer, "Dispensing with Scofield," *Christianity Today* 38/1 (January 10, 1994):57. Let the record show that dispensationalism is not a determining issue in this discussion. Many dispensationalists and non-dispensationalists strongly affirm a cessationist view of the miraculous gifts.

A purpose of a significant part of Deere's work is to deal with healing.²⁸ The subtitle of the book, "A Former Dallas Seminary Professor Discovers That God Speaks and Heals Today," gives the impression that the author intends to deal definitively with healing.

Anyone, new converts included, who desires to understand fully God's involvement in healing *must* interact with two major biblical texts—Isaiah 53 and James 5. Not to do so is unimaginable. So the lack of attention to Isaiah 53 is a great surprise to this reviewer. Only one paragraph in 299 pages mentions Isaiah 53. Nowhere does Deere attempt to explain this most significant text. Associated texts—Matt 8:14-17 and 1 Pet 2:24 likewise suffer from neglect.

Deere acknowledges Jas 5:13-20 more than he does Isaiah 53, but his approximately seven references do little more than cite the passage he never explains James 5. He recounts how the elders of his church called for the sick, supposedly in obedience to James 5 (30). Yet James 5 says, "Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church. . . ." That is just the opposite of Deere's practice. Further, Deere claims that in Jas 5:14-16 God commissioned the whole church to heal (129). Though 5:16 does involve "praying for one another," more as a preventative measure than a corrective one, the major point of the passage focuses on elders, *not* the congregation.

A work on healing cannot ignore James 5. However, it must not merely recognize the passage and then conform it to one's predetermined theology and/or experiences, as Deere has apparently done. Nowhere does the author attempt to deal with the text in order to answer probing questions such as, "Is the passage limited to the first century or is it applicable today? Does it apply to all humanity or just Christians? Does it extend to all Christians or just some? Is its purpose to prepare people to die or to restore people to quality living? Does it refer to physical, emotional, or spiritual problems? Is the practice to be done in a public service or privately? Does the intent involve medicinal or symbolic anointing? Is the healing miraculous or providential? Is the promise absolute or conditional?"

Deere uses obscure texts such as those found in Jer 32:20 or Gal 3:5 to establish his own thesis and to discredit those with whom he disagrees. For instance, he cites Gal 3:5 on at least eight occasions to support the idea that miraculous gifts of healing were given to the church as a continuing ministry up to the present. Yet nowhere does

²⁸See the reviewer's recent release, *The Healing Promise* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1994), for a thorough discussion of what the Bible says about physical healing.

he inform the reader of interpretations of this passage that are at least equally credible (and possibly more so) and that do not involve the miraculous. Nor does he ever tell his readers that the word translated "miracle" can just as easily be translated "power" and refer to the power of God in salvation (Rom 1:16; 1 Cor 1:18; 2 Cor 6:7; 1 Thess 1:5; 2 Tim 1:8).

He cites Jer 32:20 to prove that miracles extended through Jeremiah's day. But he does not tell the reader that those skilled in the Hebrew language and specialists in OT studies do not agree on the correct interpretation of the passage.²⁹ The same characteristic applies to his comments on 2 Cor 12:7 (288) and Mark 16:9-20 (277).

Deere suggests that Rom 11:29 "For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" teaches that the miraculous gifts of the Spirit did not cease with the apostles, but continue on to this very day because they are irrevocable (289). However, the context of Romans 11 requires that the subject matter refer to Israel and her spiritual heritage, not to spiritual gifts in the church. The *charismata* ("gifts") of Romans 11:29 look back to God's grace gifts for Israel, recited in Romans 9:4-5. This is the clearest example of his inaccurate prooftexting.

In summary, Deere's treatment of Scripture leaves something to be desired. For example, he does not interpret major texts such as Isaiah 53 and James 5. He makes much out of passages that contribute little because their interpretation has several legitimate, non-miraculous alternatives e.g., Jer 32:20 and Gal 3:5 and resorts at times to inappropriate prooftexting. He majors on passages that are obscure and minors on passages that are definitive of the issue, while giving neither category the kind of detailed attention he gives to experiences.

ON HEALING

Deere looks to 1 Corinthians 12 as a major biblical text to explain healing for today (64-68). He reasons that since (1) the apostles were the most gifted of all people in the church, (2) spiritual gifts range in strength and intensity, and (3) miraculous gifts were not limited to

²⁹Compare C. F. Keil, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.) 8:54, who supports Deere's treatment of Jeremiah 32:20, with Charles L. Feinberg, *Jeremiah* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982) 228, and J. A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah* in *NICOT* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 591, who both limit the comment on "signs & wonders" to Moses' time.

the apostles but distributed throughout the church, then (1) there is a distinction between signs/wonders and "gifts of healings," and (2) it is wrong to insist that apostolic miracles set the standard by which to measure today's healings. He concludes (1) that healings today will not be as spectacular as Paul's or Peter's, (2) that healings might not be as abundant as in the apostolic era, and (3) that this allows for some failure in attempted healings.³⁰

The reviewer's response is that Deere has developed a theory more from what Scripture *does not* say than from what it *clearly* says. His theory fails for several reasons:

1. The phrase "gifts of healings" is so ambiguous in its context that no one can really know for sure what it means (1 Cor 12:9, 28, 30). Certainly something as important as a theology of physical healing should not rest on such a treacherous foundation.
2. His theory does not explain the decline in quality and quantity of even the apostolic healings as the apostolic age drew to a conclusion.
3. His theory does not adequately account for "gifts of healings" appearing only in the 1 Corinthians 12 gift list.
4. His theory does not anticipate the total lack of instruction in the epistles on the matter of healing, with the exception of what is found in James 5. The reviewer's suggestion is that James 5 and 1 Corinthians 12 have no connection in their contexts through exegesis or by logic.
5. His theory assumes throughout that if Scripture does not prohibit healing or does not speak directly about a cessation of apostolic healing, then implicitly the Scriptures teach healing for today (18-19, 99-115). Since it is impossible to interpret the white spaces of the Bible, this is inadmissible in the discussion.
6. He seems to contradict his own theory when he writes, "I believe that God is doing New Testament-quality miracles in the church today, and I believe He has done them throughout the history of the church" (58). The only quality of miracles we know of from Acts are those of the quality of the ones done by the apostles. Yet Deere later theorizes that the

³⁰For an in-depth analysis of Deere's theory that the miraculous continued beyond the apostles but at some sub-standard level, read Thomas R. Edgar, "An Analysis of Jack Deere on a Less Efficient Order of Miraculous Gifts" (unpublished paper presented at the 1991 ETS Eastern Regional Meeting).

miracles of the church were substandard compared to those of the apostles (66-67). Both cannot be true.

7. Given the well-documented biblical history of miracles in Scripture, Deere never explains why "lesser" periods did not come after Moses, Elijah, or Christ. He just asserts that a continuing, substandard period of miracles follows the apostles and continues to this day. His argument from silence falls short of good interpretation and makes him the perpetrator of the exegetical fallacy of which he accuses cessationists (19).

ON MIRACLES

In general, Deere's discussion of major theological themes lacks a logical, systematic, and categorical quality. Take miracles for instance. About one-half of his discussion comes in the Appendixes, which by definition involve "subsidiary matters at the end of a book." But let the reader decide whether discussions of the following questions are primary or subsidiary in regard to miracles: "Did Miraculous Gifts Cease With The Apostles?" and "Were There Only Three Periods of Miracles?" Discussion of both issues is in the Appendixes. In contrast, Chap. 5 where Deere gives his opinion about "The Real Reason Christians Do Not Believe in the Miraculous Gifts" is clearly a subsidiary issue that should have been an Appendix.

Deere states this about cessationists' major tenet that miracles ceased with the conclusion of the apostolic age:

Yet here they faced not only a formidable obstacle but an insurmountable obstacle, for they could not produce one specific text of Scripture that taught that miracles or the spiritual gifts were confined to the New Testament period. Nor has anyone else since then been able to do that (101).

In light of the above assertion, one would assume that Deere is about to produce one or more specific texts of Scripture to teach that miracles and spiritual gifts were to continue throughout the church age in the same manner as seen in Acts. However, Deere *cannot* produce that verse because it does not exist. Neither side wins or loses the cessationist/noncessationist debate based on a single passage, but on deductive conclusions from numerous passages. By using Deere's logic with the doctrine God's triunity, blasphemous conclusions regarding that doctrine could result that Deere would not tolerate.

This reviewer will not tolerate his conclusion regarding miracles because of his skewed logic.

Deere claims, "No cessationist writer that I am aware of tries to make his case on Scripture alone" (55). In fact, just the opposite is true.

Deere builds his case for current-day miracles primarily on experience (13-41). Cessationists are willing to build their case and stand on it with Scripture alone. The appeal to history is not to establish their theology, but rather to test it.³¹

This reviewer would have expected to see Deere thoroughly interact with the well-known work, *Perspective on Pentecost*, by Richard Gaffin, especially Chap. 5, "The Question of Cessation" (89-116). However, Deere makes no significant comment on Gaffin's reasoning.

He does interact with John MacArthur's *Charismatic Chaos* in Appendix C (253-66). He begins with this observation: "John MacArthur is a modern-day proponent of the view that there were only three periods of miracles in the biblical record" (253). Later he derisively writes, "But most ludicrous of all, on MacArthur's view we could not call the resurrection of Jesus Christ a miracle" (263).

Earlier in the book Deere tells of leading a doctoral-program applicant through questioning about miracles, which Deere would have the reader believe characterizes the supposed sophomoric logic of cessationists (47-52). In Appendix C, he charts seven pages of miracles in the OT (255-61) in an attempt to prove that MacArthur has seriously underestimated the miraculous element of the OT.

Several brief comments on Deere's discussion are in order:

1. MacArthur would affirm every supernatural event cited by Deere and so would all other conservative cessationist Bible teachers.
2. Deere mistakenly accuses MacArthur of saying that all miracles in the Bible were limited to three periods (253). Amazingly, Deere undermines his own charge by correctly quoting MacArthur as saying, "*Most* biblical miracles . . ." (253).
3. What MacArthur and other cessationists want to establish is the biblical fact that God's supernatural work, mediated through men, occurred primarily, not exclusively, in three

³¹When someone reads Deere's discussion of miracles in post-biblical history (73-76) and compares it to the historical citations provided by Walter J. Chantry, *Signs of the Apostles*, 2nd ed. (London: Banner of Truth, 1976) 140-46, he wonders what history books Deere has read.

- periods. Deere even admits this (263).³²
4. Deere can quibble over definitions related to the supernatural and the miraculous (263); nonetheless, everyone recognizes the difference between the supernatural enacted directly by God and the supernatural mediated by God through men, which is the element of the supernatural that Deere tries to establish as normative.
 5. Deere writes, "MacArthur does not want to accept as normative any of the supernatural events from the previous table" (264). One might ask Deere the same question, "Do you want to accept creation, the flood and Babel as normative? Do you want to accept the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah as normal? Do you want to accept the plagues of Egypt as normative?" Certainly not! Just because a specific act occurred once, does not necessarily demand that God must repeat it.
 6. Deere asserts that "*you cannot find any period in Israel's history when supernatural events were not common among the people of God*" (263). To correct this statement, during at least two periods supernatural events were uncommon: (1) the almost 300-year gap between Gen 50:26 and Exod 2:1 and (2) the over 400-year gap between Mal 4:6 and Matt 1:1 in which one finds no evidence of God working supernaturally. This is not to mention the thousands of years that Genesis 1-12 represents, most of which the record does not cover.

ATTITUDES AND MISREPRESENTATIONS

Seemingly, Deere structured his work to sound and flow more like an emotionally charged testimony or debate than a well-reasoned, biblically based discussion of miracles.

Attitudes

Sprinkled throughout the book are overdone, self-deprecating remarks made by the noncessationist Jack Deere about the former cessationist Jack Deere. He implies that what he once was, all cessationists still remain. Here's a sample:

1. ignorantly prejudiced against charismatics and Pentecostals

³²As do most theologians. Compare J. Oliver Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962) 1:177: "The great majority of miracles recorded in the Bible fall into three great epochs."

- (267)
2. arrogant (28, 46-46)
 3. damaging the church (28)
 4. deceiving, manipulating, playing at church (29)
 5. deceived into thinking his theology is exceptionally good, even flawless (15, 35)
 6. spiritually anemic (184)
 7. rationalistic (184)

Yet Deere would have the reader believe that after he converted to the noncessationist position, he had a dramatic turn around in attitude and approach to Scripture. He suddenly became an open-minded, patient, and intent student of Scripture (22-23, 47, 75). The apparent implication is that Deere had not been this way as a cessationist nor can any other cessationist.

He criticizes cessationist scholars for not being able to read the original, historical writings of the church fathers in Greek and Latin (273). Is he suggesting that most noncessationists can? If they could, would it help their exegesis/exposition of the biblical text? When he predicts that in his own lifetime a majority of the church is going to believe in and practice the miraculous gift of the Spirit, does he expect people to believe this on his word alone (173)?

He would have the reader believe that to the sincere open-minded seeker of truth, Scripture, history and experience all point to a noncessationist position (56). His assertions, however strongly made or frequently repeated, do not prove the point. Perhaps he reflects his attitude toward the whole issue when he compares the cessationist's case to the noncessationist's position as having the strength of a sparrow in a hurricane (102).

Misrepresentations

Former cessationist Jack Deere, now a leading spokesman for the noncessationist side, portrays the cessationist more in caricature fashion than accurately. The following points illustrate this:

1. Deere would intimate that all cessationists believe that spiritual gifts are not operating today (135).
2. Deere would paint cessationists as so spiritually anemic that they are quite vulnerable to gross sexual improprieties such as pornography (80-81, 133, 184) and homosexuality (82).
3. Deere would contend that cessationist seminary professors are close-minded and arrogant (22-23, 45-46). Thus their students, even those approaching the doctoral level of study,

are stumbling and backwards when it comes to good theological thinking (47-52).

A FINAL QUESTION

If Deere, as he admits, was so prejudiced, so close-minded, so arrogant, so spiritually anemic, and so theologically off-base as a cessationist, what reason is there to believe that he is now humble, unprejudiced, open-minded, spiritually dynamic, and theologically correct? Is it because he now embraces a noncessationist theology? Does he give such compelling evidence of a real, dramatic turnaround that everyone else should abandon what they believe the Scriptures teach, to embrace the conclusions that Deere found at the end of his spiritual odyssey?

Is it because he relies on Scripture rather than experience to develop his beliefs? Is it because he fairly and accurately represents those who differ with him? Is it because he displays exemplary hermeneutical style and exegetical skills in coming to biblical conclusions? Is it because he does not engage in debate technique to make his point, but rather relies on well-reasoned dialogue with full disclosure of the facts? Is it because his case is biblically convincing?

As have others, this reviewer believes that Jack Deere's work, in the main, is theologically defective. Rather than resembling a careful study by an open-minded, trained theologian, it is more like the product of an immature new convert who, after reading the gospels and Acts for the first time, concludes that what took place in the first century will continue throughout the church age.

So I ask, "Who surprised whom?" Did the Holy Spirit surprise Jack Deere, or was it vice versa?

FREEMASONRY AND THE CHRISTIAN

Eddy D. Field II and Eddy D. Field III¹

Recently the largest Protestant denomination has ruled that membership in the Lodge is up to one's individual conscience. This position is contrary to a traditional Christian view of Freemasonry. Freemasonry is a fraternal order that advocates development of virtue and character among its members, as the authors can attest through their own past membership in it. The soteriology of Freemasonry is strongly antibiblical, as several of its teachings indicate—teachings associated with the Lambskin Apron, how to prepare for heaven, the Perfect Ashlar, the Common Gavel, and how to live a worthwhile life. Christian membership in the Lodge is, therefore, impossible to justify in light of Scriptural teachings.

* * * * *

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

In 1992, Southern Baptist James Holly requested that the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) conduct an investigation of Freemasonry. The SBC agreed and in June of 1993 approved a study of Freemasonry² which, though stating that some of Freemasonry is

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²*A Study of Freemasonry* (Atlanta: Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1993). See also *A Report on Freemasonry* (Atlanta: Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1993).

incompatible with Christianity, concluded that membership in the Lodge is a matter of individual conscience.³ This evaluation by the SBC has served as an endorsement of the Lodge.⁴ In *The Scottish Rite Journal*, a Masonic periodical, one Mason has written,

³Report 6.

⁴Joe Maxwell, "Baptist Battle over Freemasonry Erupts Anew," *Christian Research Journal* 16/2 (Fall 1993):41; John Weldon, "The Masonic Lodge and the Christian Conscience," *Christian Research Journal* 16/3 (Winter 1994):21.

Because of your support, the vote of the Southern Baptist Convention is a historic and positive turning point for Freemasonry. Basically, it is a vitalization of our Fraternity by America's largest Protestant denomination after nearly a year of thorough, scholarly study. At the same time, it is a call to renewed effort on the part of all Freemasons today to re-energize our Fraternity and move forward to fulfilling its mission as the world's foremost proponent of the Brotherhood of Man under the Fatherhood of God.⁵

The conclusion of the SBC surprised many who believe that the essential tenets of Freemasonry are contrary to those of Christianity. An overwhelming number of Christian denominations have condemned Freemasonry, including the Roman Catholic Church, the Methodist Church of England, the Wesleyan Methodist Church, the Russian Orthodox Church, the Synod Anglican Church of England, the Assemblies of God, the Church of the Nazarene, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Reformed Presbyterian Church, the Christian Reformed Church in America, the Evangelical Mennonite Church, the Church of Scotland, the Free Church of Scotland, General Association of Regular Baptist Churches, Grace Brethren, Independent Fundamentalist Churches of America, The Evangelical Lutheran Synod, the Baptist Union of Scotland, The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, and the Presbyterian Church in America.⁶ Also, many prominent Christians have denounced the Lodge, including D. L. Moody, Jonathan Blanchard, Charles Blanchard, Alva McClain, Walter Martin, and Charles Finney.⁷ So the Southern Baptist Convention is not in agreement with other Christians concerning the teachings of Masonry and Christian participation in it.⁸ Christian membership in the Masonic Lodge is an issue that many churches must face and one that

⁵*The Scottish Rite Journal* (August 1993), cited by Weldon, "Masonic Lodge" 21.

⁶Maxwell, "Baptist Battle" 42; Dale A. Byers, *I Left the Lodge* (Schaumburg, IL: Regular Baptist Press, 1988) 114-18.

⁷Jack Harris, *Freemasonry: The Invisible Cult In Our Midst* (Chattanooga, TN: Global Publishers, 1983) 111-12; Maxwell, "Masonic Lodge" 41; Alva J. McClain, *Freemasonry and Christianity* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1951) 32.

⁸This disagreement is possibly traceable to the great number of Masons in the SBC (see Weldon, "Masonic Lodge" 39). Holly estimates the number to be between 500,000 and 1.3 million (Maxwell, "Baptist Battle" 42).

the SBC's *Report* has clouded.⁹

This essay will explain the Lodge, tell of the authors' involvement in it, and their reasons for leaving it.

AN OVERVIEW OF FREEMASONRY

No formal definition of Freemasonry exists in its official literature,¹⁰ but several descriptions are available elsewhere. For example, the *Monitor* says this of Freemasonry: "It is an institution having for its foundation the practice of the social and moral virtues."¹¹ It also makes the following statement:

By speculative Masonry we learn to subdue the passions, act upon the Square, keep a tongue of good report, maintain secrecy, and practice charity. It is so far interwoven with religion as to lay us under obligations to pay that rational homage to the Deity which at once constitutes our duty and our happiness.¹²

Another statement reveals more about the nature of Freemasonry:

Masonry is a progressive moral science, divided into different degrees; and, as its principles and mystic ceremonies are regularly developed and illustrated, it is intended and hoped that they will make a deep and lasting impression upon your mind.¹³

⁹Weldon, "Masonic Lodge" 22.

¹⁰*The Monitor and Officers' Manual* is the official textbook of the Lodge (*The Monitor and Officers' Manual*, rev. ed. [n.p.: Grand Lodge of California, 1985] 35). It contains *verbatim* extractions of teachings from the secret degree work (i.e., initiation ceremonies). The extractions printed in the *Monitor* become non-secret in the process of being so reproduced. This is important because a Mason will not discuss secret teachings with non-Masons. For this reason this analysis in most cases refers to the *Monitor*. Some Masons refuse to discuss the teachings of even the *Monitor*, considering them to be secret. They are not, however. The teachings published in the *Monitor* are open for discussion by any Mason.

Each candidate learns these doctrines at the initiation ceremonies. He receives a copy of the *Monitor* and must memorize selections.

The present discussion refers to the California *Monitor*, and though it is typical of those in other jurisdictions, the content of the *Monitor* may vary slightly from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. The essential doctrine remains the same, however.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 15.

¹²*Ibid.*, 20.

¹³*Ibid.*, 27.

The *Monitor* also says,

The Trowel is an instrument made use of by operative Masons to spread the cement which unites the building into one common mass; but we, as Free and Accepted Masons, are taught to make free use of it for the more noble and glorious purpose of spreading the cement of brotherly love and affection; that cement which unites us into one sacred band or society of friends and brothers, among whom no contention should exist, but that noble contention, or rather emulation, of who can work and best agree.¹⁴

The Lodge is a fraternal order or brotherhood that teaches its members to develop virtue and character. It distinguishes between the "operative" and the "speculative" mason. The operative mason is the literal mason who builds with stone and brick.¹⁵ The speculative Mason is a member of the Masonic Lodge. The Lodge has adopted the symbols of stonemasonry related to temple-building because speculative Masons are also building a temple.¹⁶ The teaching given to Masons is that they are building a spiritual temple in heaven. It instructs each Mason regardless of his religion and by his own efforts to fashion himself into a perfect living stone to fit into the spiritual temple being constructed in heaven. An explanation of this will come below.

Masons also refer to the Masonic Lodge as "the Blue Lodge." Individual Lodges are governed by a Grand Lodge. Nearly every state in the United States has a Grand Lodge, with many others existing throughout the world.

Requisite to being a Mason is belief in a deity. This may be any deity, meaning that a Mason may adhere to any religion. The details of a Mason's religious faith are irrelevant as pertains to membership in the Lodge. It is only necessary that he affirm a deity. So the Lodge includes Christians, Muslims, Hindus, and followers of other religions.

Upon approval of the application of a candidate for Masonic membership (i.e., an "initiate"), he must participate in three secret initiation ceremonies, called "degrees." After completion of the First Degree, the candidate becomes an "Entered Apprentice Mason." After completion of the Second Degree, he is a "Fellow Craft Mason." With

¹⁴Ibid., 30-31.

¹⁵Ibid., 19-20.

¹⁶Ibid., 20.

completion of the third degree, he is a "Master Mason." This makes him a full member worldwide. The Master Mason can join other Masonic organizations such as Scottish Rite, York Rite, and the Shrine. Many Masons do not join these organizations and may know little about them.

THE AUTHORS' BACKGROUNDS IN FREEMASONRY

Eddy D. Field II (hereafter Mr. Field) was a member of the Blue Lodge and related organizations for twenty-five years. He was an officer of the Lodge for two of those years. He was a 32° Mason, a Royal Arch Mason, and an officer in his chapter. He held office in the Cryptic Council and was a Knight Templar and a Shriner. He also held membership in Eastern Star, Grotto, High 12, Amaranth, and White Shrine of Jerusalem.

Mr. Field's grandfather and father are both past Masters of the Lodge, with many of his family members being leaders of the various Masonic organizations. Mr. Field's son, co-author of this article, was a member of the Order of DeMolay, a fraternity for males aged 13-21, founded and supervised by Masons.

For Mr. Field, the main appeal of the Lodge was a strong family tradition. This tradition helped bind his family together and instill in it a sense of pride. Another attraction to Masonry was a practical one. At the time, Freemasons exerted great social, political, and business influence.¹⁷ Many politicians and businessmen were Masons. Since Masons tend to favor each other, it was sometimes easier for a man to advance his career if he was a Masonic "brother." A third feature that attracted Mr. Field to the Lodge was the mystique associated with it. The Lodge claims to be an ancient brotherhood that holds many secrets. This "gnostic" quality also drew him to Masonry.

After his conversion to Christ, Mr. Field carefully examined the origin and nature of the Lodge and discovered many grave problems with it. He compared the religious teachings of Freemasonry with those of Christianity and found them to be opposite. Therefore, he felt compelled to leave the Lodge. The following discussion will detail some results of his comparison.

THE SOTERIOLOGY OF FREEMASONRY

¹⁷Recently, though, membership in the Lodge has declined by two to three percent annually (Maxwell, "Baptist Battle" 41-44).

It is unnecessary and beyond the scope of this investigation to probe whether or not Masonry is a religion; most Masons deny that it is. Yet the Lodge explicitly teaches, "It is so far interwoven with religion as to lay us under obligations to pay that rational homage to the Deity which at once constitutes our duty and our happiness."¹⁸ Religion or not, a comparison of the Lodge's religious teachings with Scripture is inevitable. The results of such a comparison make it clear that Freemasonry denies the teachings of Christianity. A theologian, who caused quite a stir with his critique of Freemasonry,¹⁹ offered this evaluation:

The actual secrets *are* for the most part trivial, and the esoteric moral symbolisms of geometry, astronomy, architecture, and the working tools of the operative stone-mason, seem to the brethren to be in no way incompatible with, but rather supplementary to (though all too often they are substitutes for), a belief in the Christian Gospel. It is not difficult to show, however, that Freemasonry, in so far as it has a consistent teaching, is formally heretical.²⁰

The Lodge teaches that every Mason should learn and obey its teachings, including its soteriology, though the Lodge does not necessarily discipline anyone who does not. In the Third Degree, under "The Charge," the *Monitor* states,

Duty and honor now alike bind you to be faithful to every trust; to support the dignity of your character on all occasions; and strenuously to enforce, by precept and example, a steady obedience to the tenets of Freemasonry.²¹

This applies to a Christian Mason as much as anyone.

Masonry teaches on many religious subjects, but of particular relevance to the present discussion is its soteriology. What follows is an analysis of five statements selected from the *Monitor* that expound the soteriology of the Lodge.

¹⁸*Monitor* 20.

¹⁹The opinion of Paul M. Bretscher, "The Masonic Apostasy from Christ," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 26 (February 1955):97.

²⁰Walton Hannah, "Should a Christian be a Mason?" *Theology* 54 (January 1951):4.

²¹*Monitor* 36.

The Lambskin Apron

The First Degree includes a discussion of "The Lambskin Apron." As the Lambskin Apron is the most important emblem in the Freemasonry,²² it is in order to discuss it first. Each candidate receives an apron in the First Degree. The *Monitor* says this about the apron:

The Lamb, in all ages has been deemed an emblem of innocence. He, therefore, who wears the lambskin as the badge of a Mason, is continually reminded of that purity of life and conduct so essentially necessary to his gaining admission into the Celestial Lodge above, where the Supreme Architect of the Universe presides.²³

The "Celestial Lodge above" refers, of course, to heaven, and "the Supreme Architect of the Universe" is one of the names Masonry has for its god. The statement speaks of "gaining" admission into the Celestial Lodge. By the use of "gaining," the Lodge teaches that one earns or merits entrance into heaven on his own. That is, it is a matter of human effort. The statement also says that a person gains entrance into heaven by "purity of life and conduct." With this the Lodge teaches the achievement of salvation on the basis of human good works. This selection from the *Monitor* clearly states, then, that a person earns admission into heaven by living a pure life. As Masonry accepts any theist, the teaching on the Lambskin Apron holds true for anyone, regardless of that person's god or religion.

The statement about the Lambskin Apron creates several problems. It says that "purity of life and conduct" is necessary for admittance into heaven. If this means absolute purity, no one can in reality qualify. If it means relative purity, then what is the basis of measurement and how can one know if he has qualified? In fact, Christ is the Lamb of God who, by virtue of his purity, qualified as the sacrifice for the sins of the world (cf. John 1:29). In 1 Pet 1:18-19, the apostle writes to believers,

You were not redeemed with perishable things like silver and gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.²⁴

The Masonic teaching contradicts the gospel of Jesus Christ which says

²²Ibid., 4.

²³Ibid., 5.

²⁴All biblical quotations are from the New American Standard Bible.

that salvation is through God's grace, being received through faith in Jesus Christ.²⁵ The *locus classicus* in this regard is Eph 2:8-9: "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast."²⁶

Thus, the lesson taught with the most important symbol in the Lodge directly opposes the Christian gospel.

Preparation for Heaven

From the Third Degree of the *Monitor* comes another statement delineating the soteriology of the Lodge:

Hence, my brother, how important it is that we should endeavor to imitate *** in his truly exalted and exemplary character, in his unfeigned piety to God, and in his inflexible fidelity to his trust, that we may be prepared to welcome death, not as a grim tyrant, but as a kind of messenger sent to translate us from this imperfect to that all perfect, glorious, and celestial Lodge above, where the Supreme Grand Master of the Universe forever presides.²⁷

The three asterisks in the quotation stand in place of the words "the Grand Master Hiram Abiff." This is the chief character in Masonic lore. The exhortation to the candidate is to imitate three virtues of Hiram Abiff: his character, his devotion to god, and his trustworthiness. The reason that this imitation is so important is that it enables the Mason to be translated to heaven. As with the previous example of the Lambskin Apron, this excerpt demonstrates the Lodge's teaching that one attains entrance into heaven by living a virtuous life, regardless of religious orientation.

The Scriptures do not teach that a person goes to heaven by imitating even Christ Himself, much less anyone else. Salvation is a gift of God's grace. Paul writes in 2 Tim 1:9-10 that God

has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted

²⁵John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *The Secret Teachings of the Masonic Lodge* (Chicago: Moody, 1989, 1990) 78-79; Jim Shaw and Tom McKinney, *The Deadly Deception* (Lafayette, LA: Huntington House, 1988) 132; L. James Rongstad, *How to Respond to the Lodge* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1977) 11, 18; Ron Carlson and Ed Decker, *Fast Facts on False Teachings* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1994) 85; Harris, *Freemasonry* 22-23.

²⁶Cf. Rom 4:5; 6:23; 10:9-10; Tit 3:5-7.

²⁷*Monitor* 35-36.

us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

Unlike a Mason, a Christian does not fear death because Christ has overcome it (1 Cor 15:54-57).

The Perfect Ashlar

Part of the First Degree in the *Monitor* has a statement about "The Perfect Ashlar." Masonry calls a perfect stone a "Perfect Ashlar." The following describes the teaching symbolized by the Ashlar:

The Rough Ashlar is a stone as taken from the quarry in its rude and natural state. The Perfect Ashlar is a stone made ready by the hands of the workman, to be adjusted by the working tools of the Fellow Craft. By the Rough Ashlar, we are reminded of our rude and imperfect state by nature; by the Perfect Ashlar, of that state of perfection at which we hope to arrive by a virtuous education, our own endeavors, and the blessing of God.²⁸

As explained below under a discussion of "The Common Gavel," a Mason intends to fashion himself from a rough stone to a perfect stone, for the purpose of fitting himself into the spiritual temple in heaven. The statement here means that the Mason can take himself from an imperfect state to a state of perfection by satisfying three requirements. First, he must obtain a virtuous education, which the Lodge claims to give. Second, he must apply in his life the knowledge gained. He accomplishes this by his own endeavors. Third, he must receive the blessing of his god, whatever that god may be. This statement plainly teaches that the Mason strives to achieve perfection by his own efforts.²⁹ By doing this he fits himself into the temple in heaven.

First Pet 2:5 teaches the opposite regarding Christians when it says that Christians "as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." God, not believers themselves, is the builder of believers, of course.³⁰

²⁸Ibid., 9-10.

²⁹Harris, *Freemasonry* 45-46.

³⁰The context indicates that *okodomesue* (*oikodomeisthe*, "you are being built up") is passive indicative with God as the implied agent (cf. v. 9; see D. Edmond Hiebert, *1 Peter*

The Common Gavel

A fourth statement in the First Degree portion of the *Monitor* reveals more of the Lodge's plan of salvation. As stated previously, Masons are building a spiritual temple in heaven. The instruction to each Mason is to fashion himself into a perfect living stone to fit into the spiritual temple in heaven. "The Common Gavel" symbolizes this concept:

The common gavel is an instrument used by operative Masons to break off the rough and superfluous parts of stones, the better to fit them for the builder's use. But we, as Free and Accepted Masons, are taught to make use of it for the more noble and glorious purpose of divesting our hearts and consciences of all the vices and superfluities of life: thereby fitting our minds as living stones for that spiritual building, that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.³¹

For the operative mason, a gavel is a hammer used to shape stones. The speculative Mason is figuratively an imperfect stone with rough edges that he strives to break off with the gavel. This paragraph just quoted is quite clear in stating that the Mason makes himself fit for heaven by bettering himself through eliminating unwanted qualities.³² This holds true for any Mason, regardless of his god or religious persuasion.

As the Common Gavel closely relates to the Perfect Ashlar, the criticism of the Perfect Ashlar applies to it. No one can make himself fit for heaven; only God can do this through Christ.³³

The Well-spent Life

A final example will aid in explaining the soteriology of the Lodge:

In youth, as Entered Apprentices, we ought industriously to occupy our minds in the attainments of useful knowledge; in manhood, as Fellow Crafts, we should apply our knowledge to the discharge of our respective duties to God, our neighbor, and ourselves; that so, in age, as

[Chicago: Moody, 1984, 1992] 132; J. N. D. Kelly, *The Epistles of Peter and Jude* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1969] 89).

³¹*Monitor* 5.

³²Harris, *Freemasonry* 17-18.

³³McClain, *Freemasonry* 31-32.

Master Masons, we may enjoy the happy reflection consequent on a well-spent life, and die in the hope of a glorious immortality.³⁴

The "attainments of useful knowledge" here include the virtuous education to which the above discussion of "The Perfect Ashlar" referred. The "discharge of our respective duties" relates to applying that knowledge by one's own endeavors, as also indicated under "The Perfect Ashlar." This extraction indicates that the Mason's hope of eternal life hinges upon having lived a worthy life.

This contrasts directly with Christian teaching, according to which the hope of eternal life is Christ. In Col 1:27, Paul writes that God has made known to Christians "what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." The Lodge offers hope of eternal life apart from Christ. This hope for immortality is false, though, and a false hope for immortality is a false gospel.

CHRISTIAN MEMBERSHIP IN THE LODGE

The above five statements from the *Monitor* suffice to show the soteriology of the Lodge. A serious conflict exists between this soteriology and that of Christianity. The two are, in fact, contradictory. Freemasonry teaches that one may gain entrance into heaven through his good works, no matter who is his god and what is his religious affiliation. Christianity teaches that one gains entrance into heaven through Christ's work on the cross, appropriated by faith.

From this analysis of the five statements, the god of Masonry, often called "The Great Architect of the Universe," is identifiable. This god is one that will accept someone into heaven on the basis of works, regardless of religion. This is a false god, not the God of the Bible.³⁵

A Biblical Appraisal of Masonic Soteriology

Paul was unequivocal in responding to anyone proclaiming a "gospel" contrary to³⁶ the true gospel:

³⁴*Monitor* 38.

³⁵Ankerberg, *Secret Teachings* 176; McClain, *Freemasonry* 18-19. See Ankerberg, *Secret Teachings*, chap. 8, for a further development of this point.

³⁶Though it is preferable to render *par'* (*par' ho*) as "besides that which" or "in addition to that which" (see J. B. Lightfoot, *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1957] 75), the adopted rendering—"contrary to"—is the more common

But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed (Gal 1:8, 9).

Paul petitions that anyone distorting the gospel of Christ (v. 7) be cursed, that is, left outside of God's grace and subject to his disfavor.³⁷ This imprecation against anyone compromising the gospel is extremely strong.

As documented above, Freemasonry advocates a plan of salvation contrary to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul's curse would apply to proponents of the soteriology of Freemasonry.³⁸

A Biblical Appraisal of Masonic Membership

In light of the foregoing, a Christian's participation in the Lodge is a significant issue. Masons consider themselves "one sacred band or society of friends and brothers."³⁹ In the First, Second, and Third Degrees, a Mason swears oaths to God, under penalty of death, to fulfill certain obligations.⁴⁰ He swears to this oath on a book considered by his Grand Lodge to be sacred. Thus, the book varies depending on the dominant religion of the area. So, it may be the Bible, the Koran, or the Bhagavad Gita, depending on where it occurs.

translation. The point is the same in either case, because the Masonic teaching on salvation fits either rendering. It is both "contrary to" and "in addition to" the Christian gospel.

³⁷Ernest De Witt Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians*, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, n.d.) 28.

³⁸Byers, *I Left* 81.

³⁹*Monitor* 30-31.

⁴⁰*King Solomon and His Followers*, rev. Calif. ed. (Richmond, VA: Allen, 1989) 22-23, 81-83, 135-38, respectively. This book contains the current secret ritual of the Lodge in code. The statements in this paper result from a decoding of the code-book. The earlier edition of the code-book is *King Solomon's Temple*. Those unable to use the code-book may consult Malcom C. Duncan, *Duncan's Masonic Ritual and Monitor*, 3rd ed. with add. and corr. (New York: David McKay, n.d.). This work contains the complete secret Masonic ritual (the three Degrees) in English. Because it is an older version it is somewhat different from the current edition, but the differences do not alter the present discussion.

The older code-books and older English-language ritual manuals containing all the secrets for the Lodge and related organizations are obtainable from Ezra A. Cook Publishers, 6604 West Irving Park Road, Chicago, IL 60634.

Also, candidates take their oaths at the altar of the Masonic god, the same altar at which they all kneel, regardless of their religious persuasions.

At the end of each oath, the Worshipful Master (the local Lodge head) informs the Mason that he is bound to all Masons. After the First Degree, the Worshipful Master says, "Brother Senior Warden, release the candidate from the cable-tow, his being now bound to us by a stronger tie."⁴¹ After the Second Degree, the Worshipful Master says, "Brother Senior Warden, release the candidate from the cable-tow, it being twice around his naked right arm, is to signify to him that he is now bound to the fraternity by a two fold tie."⁴² After the Third Degree, the Worshipful Master says, "Brother Senior Warden, release the candidate from the cable-tow, it being thrice around his naked body, is to signify to him that he is now bound to the fraternity by a threefold tie."⁴³ These three statements illustrate the serious bond between Masons. As a further example of the extent of this bond, in the Third Degree each Mason swears to keep secret, if asked, the crimes committed by a fellow-Mason. Murder and treason are the only exceptions. The oath reads, "Furthermore, that I will keep the secrets of a Master Mason as my own, when given to me in charge as such, murder and treason excepted."⁴⁴ Thus, by solemn oath the Mason binds himself as a brother to every other Mason, regardless of his god or religion.

Beyond this, though, in the Second Degree the candidate bows in reverence to the god of Freemasonry, called G.A.O.T.U.⁴⁵ He does this after the Worshipful Master utters the following call:

I will again call your attention to the letter G for a more important purpose: *** (*Right hand, uncovers.*) It is the initial of the name of the Supreme Being, before whom all Masons, from the youngest Entered Apprentice in the north-east corner of the Lodge to the Worshipful Master in the east, should with reverence bow. (All bow.)^{*46}

⁴¹Ibid., 23.

⁴²Ibid., 83.

⁴³Ibid., 138.

⁴⁴Ibid., 136.

⁴⁵This is an acronym for "Great Architect of the Universe."

⁴⁶*King Solomon* 100-101. The asterisks represent raps of the gavel by the Worshipful Master. The first three raps instruct all present to rise, the last tells all to be seated.

After this, all present bow toward the letter "G" suspended above the Worshipful Master in the East. Masons thereby pay homage to the false god of the Masonic Lodge. For a Christian to conceive that he is bowing to the true God does not mitigate this act of homage to a false god, because he is bowing to god as defined by the Lodge. One scholar has written the following to soften the offense of such worship:

The uninstructed layman may in all good faith be unable to draw this distinction; to him God is God, whether addressed as the Great Architect or Grand Geometrician of the Universe, or as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. But the position of the Masonic priest or bishop appears to be far less defensible.⁴⁷

He means that a Christian Mason uninstructed in Freemasonry may not realize he is bowing to a false god. Yet an informed Christian Mason has no excuse. The only explanation is that a Mason bows before and pays homage to the Masonic idol.

In 2 Cor 6:14-18, Paul discussed the relationship of believers to unbelievers.⁴⁸ In 6:14-16a he wrote,

Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols?

Though it is not clear precisely what relationship to unbelievers Paul referred to in this context, it is apparently some intimate association with them and their false gods.⁴⁹ Webb summarizes,

⁴⁷Hannah, "Should a Christian" 5.

⁴⁸The interpretation of *πίστοι* (*apistoi*) as "unbelievers" is debatable, but has the best support (see William J. Webb, "Who Are the Unbelievers [*apistoi*] in 2 Corinthians 6:14?" *BSac* 149 [January-March 1992]:27-44).

⁴⁹Webb offers three reasons why 2 Cor 6:16 refers to literal, rather than metaphorical, idolatry: "That Paul intended literal idols in 2 Corinthians 6:16 is more likely in light of the living God—idols contrast, his pattern of clarifying metaphorical intent when referring to idolatry, and the major problem at Corinth with literal idols. Any references related to metaphorical idolatry, therefore, should probably be rejected" (William J. Webb, "What is the Unequal Yoke [*terozygontew*] in 2 Corinthians 6:14?" *BSac* 149 [April-June 1992]:170-71).

In conclusion, 2 Corinthians 6:14 prohibits believers from joining in any activity that forms a covenantlike [*sic*] bond with pagans and their idols (either through literal-physical or metonymical idolatry) and seriously violates the believer's covenant with God.⁵⁰

Paul's counsel in such a situation was to abandon the relationship. In 6:14, the command "do not be bound together" calls for the readers to cease initiating relationships.⁵¹ That such relationships already existed is confirmed by 2 Cor 6:17 where Paul counsels, "come out from their midst and be separate." The injunction of 2 Cor 7:1 also proves the pre-existence of these relationships: "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."⁵² Paul taught that a believer must not join himself to any unbeliever so as to associate himself with the unbeliever's idolatry. If he already had such a relationship, Paul insisted that he sever it. This has a direct application to Christian membership in the Lodge.⁵³

INCOMPATIBILITY OF CHRISTIANITY AND FREEMASONRY

The Lodge teaches clearly that one may earn admittance into heaven on the basis of works, regardless of religion. This is a false gospel, which places those who advocate such a doctrine under Paul's imprecation. If this is not enough to convince a Christian not to involve himself in Masonry, it should be enough that a Christian Mason binds himself by oath to all other Masons in a way that associates him with their idolatry. In 2 Cor 6:14 Paul forbids such a relationship. The activity of a Christian Mason is even more unbiblical, though, when he kneels at the altar of the false god of the Lodge and pays homage to its deity. These facts demonstrate that Christian participation in the Lodge is more than a matter of individual Christian conscience. It is imperative that Christians not

⁵⁰Ibid., 179.

⁵¹A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1931) 4:236.

⁵²Webb, "Unequal Yoke" 170-71.

⁵³Ankerberg, *Secret Teachings* 91-92, 191; Byers, *I Left* 81; Harris, *Freemasonry* 36; McClain, *Freemasonry* 36; R. A. Torrey, *Practical and Perplexing Questions Answered* (Chicago: Revell, 1908, 1909) 112.

participate in this organization.⁵⁴

One writer summarizes the church's appropriate response to Christian Masons:

[The church can] make painstaking efforts when dealing with lodge members to have them realize the incompatibility of membership in a society which ignores or even denies Jesus Christ and in a society which confesses and worships Him as the Savior of lost mankind and as the King of kings and Lord of lords.⁵⁵

This entails telling Masons that they cannot be at once members of the Lodge which denies Christ and members of the church which confesses him as Lord.⁵⁶ The authors of this essay wish to communicate this message in the hope that Christian Masons will "come out from their midst and be separate."

⁵⁴Weldon, "Masonic Lodge" 39.

⁵⁵Bretscher, "Masonic Apostasy" 114.

⁵⁶R. A. Torrey said, "The name of Jesus Christ is cut out of passages in which it occurs in the Bible so as not to offend Jews and other non-Christians. How a Christian can retain membership in a society that thus handles deceitfully the Word of God, and above all cuts out the name of his Lord and Master, I cannot understand" (*Perplexing Questions* 112).

THE HERMENEUTICS OF EVANGELICAL FEMINISM

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An evangelical feminist is one who has a high view of Scripture and believes the Bible teaches the full equality of men and women without role distinctions between the two. Their principles for interpreting Scripture differ markedly from those of the advocates of role differences for men and women. A comparison of evangelical feminists' principles with the grammatico-historical method of interpretation clarifies what and how great they deviate from traditional views of a woman's role in church and at home. The disputed principles include the issues of ad hoc documents, interpretive centers, the analogy of faith, slavery as a model for the role of women, culturally biased interpretation, cultural relativity, and patriarchal and sexist texts. An examination of these issues shows evangelical feminist hermeneutics to fall short of the grammatico-historical method of interpretation.

* * * * *

DEFINITIONS AND DIFFERENCES

The significant changes for women in society that began about thirty years ago have not bypassed the church. The changes have meant a challenge to the Christian community to consider afresh the role of women in their relationship to men in the church and in the home. The instigators of this challenge call themselves "feminists."

"Feminist" is a broad term that includes several groups. "Secular feminists" are those who do not accept the Bible as authoritative.² "Religious feminists" are "individuals who do not identify with Christianity, but whose beliefs nevertheless include a religious worldview."³ "Christian feminists" work from the standpoint of a commitment to the Christian faith but accept the authority of

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²Thomas J. Fricke, "What is the Feminist Hermeneutic? An Analysis of Feminist Interpretation of the Bible," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 91 (Winter 1994):45.

³R. Letham, "The Hermeneutics of Feminism," *Themelios* 17 (April/May 1992):4.

Scripture in only a limited way.⁴ A final classification of feminists includes those identified as "evangelical feminists." An evangelical feminist has a high view of Scripture and is "one who believes that the Bible teaches the full equality of men and women without role distinctions based on gender."⁵ The focus of this essay is on this last group.

⁴Ibid., 4. Fricke refers to this category as "liberal feminists" ("Feminist Hermeneutic" 45).

⁵Daniel G. Lundy, "A Hermeneutical Framework for the Role of Women," *The Baptist Review of Theology* 2 (Fall 1992):57. Other labels that coincide with "evangelical feminists" are biblical feminists, conservative Christian feminists, and evangelical egalitarians.

A group that best represents the position of evangelical feminism is Christians for Biblical Equality, organized in the latter part of 1987. A position paper "Men, Women, and Biblical Equality" published in 1989 stated the beliefs of this organization. The paper contained twelve "Biblical Truths" and five points of "Application."⁶ Groothuis expresses the goal of this organization and of evangelical feminism well:

The goal of evangelical feminism is that men and women be allowed to serve God as individuals, according to their own unique gifts rather than according to a culturally predetermined personality slot called "Christian manhood" or "Christian womanhood."⁷

The individuals primarily responsible for laying the foundation of evangelical feminism are Nancy Hardesty, Letha Scanzoni, Paul Jewett, Virginia Mollenkott, and Dorothy Pape. Prominent names currently associated with the movement are Gilbert Bilezikian, Mary Evans, W. Ward Gasque, Kevin Giles, Patricia Gundry, E. Margaret Howe, Gretchen Gaebelien Hull, Craig Keener, Catherine Clark Kroeger and Richard Kroeger, Walter Liefeld, Alvera Mickelsen, David Scholer, Aida Besan_on Spencer, and Ruth Tucker.

The purpose of this paper is to examine certain hermeneutical principles being implemented among those who are evangelical feminists.⁸ As much as possible, the evaluation of these principles will

⁶See "Men, Women, & Biblical Equality," *Journal for Biblical Equality* 3 (1991):1-3; also cited in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, ed. by John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1991):469-72, but without approval in this latter work.

⁷Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, *Women Caught in the Conflict* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994) 110.

⁸Groothuis recently identified the following eight strategies as part of the biblical feminist hermeneutic: (1) Biblical interpretation is to endeavor to be faithful to the biblical author's intent in writing the specific passage in question. (2) It is important to know the accurate translation of the passages traditionally used to silence and subjugate women. (3) It is crucial to maintain interpretive consistency with the rest of a biblical author's writings as well as the whole of Scripture. (4) Texts couched in a context of culturally specific instructions are not to be taken a priori as normative for the present day. (5) Culturally specific instructions are to be interpreted not only in light of biblical doctrine and principle, but also in light of the culture to which they were written and the author's reason for writing them. (6) Events recorded in the Bible should be understood in light of the culture of that time. (7) In light of the progressive nature of God's revelation in the Bible, NT texts concerning women should be considered

use the standard of the grammatico-historical method of exegesis. The scope of this study necessitates focusing only on principles that differ from the hermeneutics of those called "hierarchicalists,"⁹ the ones frequently used in the Pauline "hard passages."¹⁰

There are two primary reasons why the role of women and their relationship to men in the church and the family is one of the "great divides" among Christians today. The first reason is a difference of opinion with regards to the exegesis of the relevant Biblical texts.

The second reason is the role of hermeneutics in the debate. Johnston believes that this is what is behind the first reason. He

more accurate indicators of God's intent for women than those provided in the OT. (8) The need to guard against interpreting the Bible in conformity with one's own cultural pre-understanding or personal expectations (*Caught in the Conflict* 112-15).

⁹The hierarchialist position also has the labels "traditionalist" and "complementarian." Swartley sees the distinguishing marks of this view as: (1) Women are expected to be subordinate to men—in the home, church, and society. (2) Especially in the home, husbands are to exercise headship over wives, with roles prescribed in accord with this pattern. (3) Within the church, women are restricted from the preaching ministry and from teaching men. Other forms of leadership are to be exercised under the authority and leadership of men (Willard M. Swartley, *Slavery, Sabbath, War and Women* [Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 1983] 151).

Eight points summarize the "Danvers Statement" with its more detailed description of the traditionalist position: (1) both Adam and Eve were created in God's image, equal before God as persons and distinct in their manhood and womanhood; (2) distinctions in masculine and feminine roles are ordained by God as part of the created order, and should find an echo in every human heart; (3) Adam's headship in marriage was established by God before the Fall, and was not a result of sin; (4) the Fall introduced distortions into the relationships between men and women; (5) the OT, as well as the NT, manifests the equally high value and dignity which God attached to the roles of both men and women, with both testaments also affirming the principle of male headship in the family and in the covenant community; (6) redemption in Christ aims at removing the distortions introduced by the curse; (7) in all of life Christ is the supreme authority and guide for men and women, so that no earthly submission—domestic, religious, or civil—ever implies a mandate to follow a human authority into sin; (8) in both men and women a heartfelt sense of call to ministry should never be used to set aside biblical criteria for particular ministries, but rather biblical teaching should remain the authority for testing our subjective discernment of God's will.

¹⁰Pauline "hard passages" are those which speak against the equality of roles between men and women in the church and home: 1 Cor 11:2-16; 14:33b-36; 1 Tim 2:8-15; Eph 5:21-33; 1 Pet 3:1-7 (Robert K. Johnston, "The Role of Women in the Church and Family: The Issue of Biblical Hermeneutics," in *Evangelicals at an Impasse*, ed. by Robert K. Johnston [Atlanta: John Knox, 1979] 52).

comments,

For behind the apparent differences in approach and opinion regarding the women's issue are opposing principles for interpreting Scripture—i.e., different hermeneutics. Here is the real issue facing evangelical theology as it seeks to answer the women's question.¹¹

It is the purpose of this essay to examine and evaluate seven relevant principles of hermeneutics of evangelical feminists and thereby provide a heightened mutual understanding of the basic difference between the two sides. This will hopefully lessen the "great divide" that exists in Christendom concerning a woman's role in the church and the home.

¹¹Ibid., 50.

THE PRINCIPLE OF *AD HOC* DOCUMENTS

A prominent characteristic of evangelical feminism is its insistence that understanding the literary form of a passage plays a major role in adequate interpretation.¹² Sometimes the phrase describing this axiom is the "hermeneutics of *ad hoc* documents."¹³ The principle is prominent in the interpretive scheme of 1 Tim 2:8-15 by evangelical feminists.

The literary form of 1 Timothy closely relates to the purpose of the epistle. According to Scholer, Paul writes the letter to help Timothy handle the problem of false teachers in Ephesus: "The purpose of 1 Timothy is to combat the Ephesian heresy that Timothy faced."¹⁴

To some, a necessary corollary to this view of 1 Timothy's purpose is to perceive the epistle as an *ad hoc* letter.¹⁵ The implication of this *ad hoc* perspective is to restrict the teaching of 2:9-15 to the original audience. Concerning the instructions in 2:9-10 and 15, Fee writes,

All of these instructions, including 2:11-12, were *ad hoc* responses to the waywardness of the young widows in Ephesus who had already gone astray after Satan and were disrupting the church.

It simply cannot be demonstrated that Paul intended 1 Tim 3:11-12 [*sic*, 1 Tim 2:11-12] as a rule in all churches at all times. In fact the occasion and purpose of 1 Timothy as a whole, and these verses in particular, suggest

¹²Ibid., 70.

¹³Gordon D. Fee, "Reflections on Church Order in the Pastoral Epistles, With Further Reflection on the Hermeneutics of *Ad Hoc* Documents," *JETS* 28 (June 1985):141-51.

¹⁴David M. Scholer, "1 Timothy 2:9-15 and the Place of Women in the Church's Ministry," in *Women, Authority and the Bible*, ed. by Alvera Mickelsen (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986) 199. Others taking this position are Bruce Barron, "Putting Women in Their Place: 1 Timothy 2 and Evangelical Views of Women in Church Leadership," *JETS* 33 (December 1990):453; Gordon Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1984) xx; Alan Padgett, "Wealthy Women at Ephesus," *Int* 441 (January 1987):20.

¹⁵Fee is reputedly the commentator who originated and popularized this view. He writes, "It must be noted again that 1 Timothy is not intended to establish church order but to respond in a very *ad hoc* way to the Ephesian situation with its straying elders" (Fee, "Reflections on Church Order" 146). Also prominent in the discussion about the *ad hoc* nature of 1 Timothy is Scholer, "1 Timothy 2:9-15" 200.

otherwise.¹⁶

It is impossible to deny the *ad hoc* nature of 1 Timothy. The inroads of false teachers into the church under Timothy's leadership are the evident occasion for the epistle. What is questionable, however, is the *ad hoc* interpretation that limits the teaching of 2:11-15 based on an *ad hoc* literary style. Paul's epistle to the churches of Galatia is *ad hoc* in nature. Yet no one limits the teaching of Gal 2:16 to the original recipients.¹⁷ Also, Moo's observation is valid: "The isolation of local circumstances as the occasion for a particular teaching does not, by itself, indicate anything about the normative nature of that teaching."¹⁸

A further problem with the *ad hoc* interpretive principle is that it rests upon the assumption of 1 Timothy's sole purpose being to combat false doctrine. This purpose does find support in Paul's words in 1:4: "As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus in order that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines." Yet it ignores the other purpose statement in 1 Tim 3:14-15:

I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long; but in case I am delayed, I write so that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.

These two verses support the view that Paul writes to his spiritual son to instruct him on how to order and direct the life of a Christian congregation. Hurley expresses this perspective:

It is universally accepted that 1 Timothy was intended to provide a clear statement concerning certain issues which its author, whom I take to be Paul, felt needed attention. The letter forms a 'spiritual will' from Paul to Timothy. In the letter Paul indicates that he hopes to be able to come soon to Timothy, but fears that he will be delayed (3:14-15a). He writes,

¹⁶Gordon D. Fee, "Issues in Evangelical Hermeneutics, Part III: The Great Watershed—Intentionality & Particularity/Eternality: 1 Timothy 2:8-15 as a Test Case," *Crux* 26 (December 1990):35.

¹⁷Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Women in the Church: A Biblical Study on the Role of Women in the Church* (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 1987) 146-47.

¹⁸Douglas J. Moo, "The Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:11-15: A Rejoinder," *Trinity Journal* 2 (Fall 1981):219.

I am writing you these instructions so that, if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God. . . .¹⁹

A "church manual" approach to 1 Timothy views the teaching of the epistle as normative.²⁰ Even if one agrees with this analysis of 1 Timothy, it does not follow that everything within the epistle is normative. Most agree that Paul's emphasis in 2:8 "I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension" is upon the manner of life of the one praying, not upon his posture.²¹

But neither of the above proposed purposes of 1 Timothy is preferable. It is best to understand 3:15 as the overarching purpose that embraces the purpose stated in 1:3.²²

THE PRINCIPLE OF AN INTERPRETIVE CENTER

One of the hermeneutical questions related to the ecclesiastical and domestic roles of women is whether or not there is a single text that determines the interpretation of all the other passages. Stated another way, is there a clear text,²³ an interpretive center,²⁴ a theologi-

¹⁹James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981) 196. Also agreeing with this viewpoint are Bacchiocchi, *Women* 115; Douglas Moo, "What Does it Mean Not to Teach or Have Authority Over Men?: 1 Timothy 2:11-15," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, ed. by John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1991) 180.

²⁰Hurley holds this position and summarizes it by saying, "Despite the obviously general intention of the author, a large number of recent writers on the subject of the role of women have suggested that the matters discussed and the instructions given in this letter ought to be seen as relevant only in its particular time period. Even a superficial reading of the letter shows, however, that its author would not accept such a view of it" (*Man and Woman* 196-97).

²¹E.g., *ibid.*, 198.

²²This is an improvement over the view of Gritz who sees a twofold purpose for writing given in 1:3 and 3:15 (Sharon Hodgkin Gritz, *Paul, Women Teachers, and the Mother Goddess at Ephesus* [Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1991] 107-8).

²³Scholer, "1 Timothy 2:9-15" 213.

²⁴C. Powell, "A Stalemate of Genders? Some Hermeneutical Reflections," *Themelios* 17 (April/May 1992):18.

cal and hermeneutical key,²⁵ a "*locus classicus*,"²⁶ a defining passage, a starting point that serves as a filter in analyzing the NT view regarding these female roles?²⁷

Most evangelical feminists affirm the existence of such a starting point when seeking God's will on the role of women. Yet they do not agree on what that starting point is. They do agree that the interpreter should not start with the Pauline "hard passages." The comment of Gasque is informative:

The Egalitarian View also takes these texts [I Cor. 11:2-16; 14:33-35; I Tim. 2:11-15; Eph. 5:22-33; I Pet. 3:1-7] seriously, but it does not begin with these. It points out that if you leave these texts to the side until the end of the discussion, you will come out with a different conclusion. If you look at these texts first, you have basically programmed yourself to come to the Traditional View; but if you put these texts aside for the time being and first study all else that the Bible has to teach theologically about the role of men and women—in society and in the created order, in the Old Testament people of God and the New Testament people of God, in the church and the home—then you come to a different position.²⁸

One recommended starting place has been Gal 3:28 where Paul declares to the Galatians that there is "neither male nor female." Some see this as the interpretive filter which determines the meaning of the other passages. Bruce represents this view when he writes,

Paul states the basic principle here; if restrictions on it are found elsewhere in the Pauline corpus, as in 1 Cor. 14:34f. or 1 Tim. 2:11f., they are to be understood in relation to Gal. 3:28, and not vice versa.²⁹

²⁵Grant R. Osborne, "Hermeneutics and Women in the Church," *JETS* 20 (December 1977):348.

²⁶Letha D. Scanzoni and Nancy A. Hardesty, *All We're Meant to Be* (Waco, TX: Word, 1974) 18-19.

²⁷Scott E. McClelland, "The New Reality in Christ: Perspectives From Biblical Studies," in *Gender Matters*, ed. by June Steffensen Hagen (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990) 67.

²⁸W. Ward Gasque, "The Role of Women in the Church, in Society, and in the Home," *Crux* 19 (September 1983):4.

²⁹F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) 190. See also Richard N. Longenecker, *New Testament Social Ethics for Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984) 74-75; McClelland, "New Reality" 65-67; Gasque, "Role of Women" 4.

Scanzoni and Hardesty concur with Bruce in stating,

The biblical theologian does not build on isolated proof texts but first seeks the *locus classicus*, the major biblical statement, on a given matter. (The doctrine of creation and fall, for example, is to be found most clearly spelled out in Gen. 1-3 and Rom. 5:12-21, not in 1 Cor. 11:2-16 or 1 Tim. 2:13-14.) Passages which deal with an issue systematically are used to help understand incidental references elsewhere. Passages which are theological and doctrinal in content are used to interpret those where the writer is dealing with practical local cultural problems. (Except for Gal. 3:28, all of the references to women in the New Testament are contained in passages dealing with practical concerns about personal relationships or behavior in worship services.)³⁰

Another recommended interpretive center is Creation-Redemption. Weber comments, "Egalitarians, then, organize their understanding of the sweep of redemption history in terms of creation and redemption and believe that the women's issue should be seen in that context."³¹

To illustrate the lack of agreement among feminist writers further, a third suggested theological key identifies the highest norms or standards taught in the Bible as the starting point, and begins there. The source of these norms is usually the lofty standards emphasized by Jesus, as well as the statements about the purpose of Christ's ministry and the purpose of the gospel.³²

Evangelical feminists have not listened to one of their own, David Scholer, on this subject. Scholer's says it is wrong to identify a controlling text regarding women's role and status in the church. His words are, "What I want to stress is that from a hermeneutical point of view the question of where one enters the discussion is really an open question to which no canonical text speaks with clarity."³³

³⁰Scanzoni and Hardesty, *All* 18-19. It is interesting that the authors remove this statement from their revised edition of this work (Letha Dawson Scanzoni and Nancy A. Hardesty, *All We're Meant To Be*, rev. ed. [Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1986] 25).

³¹Timothy P. Weber, "Evangelical Egalitarianism: Where We Are Now," *Journal for Biblical Equality* 1 (1987):80.

³²Alvera Mickelsen, "There is Neither Male nor Female in Christ," in *Women in Ministry*, ed. by Bonnidell and Robert G. Clouse (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1989) 177-79.

³³David M. Scholer, "Feminist Hermeneutics and Evangelical Biblical Interpretation," *JETS* 30 (December 1987):417-18. Scholer appears to ignore his own advice, however, when he writes in his conclusion, "Such limited texts need not be ignored, excluded or polemicalised

In essence, Scholer says that instead of attempting to identify an interpretive center, each text should have equal weight in developing a biblical theology of the role of women. Biblical theology should build upon all relevant texts. For several reasons, Scholer's proposal is the preferred solution to this hermeneutical issue. First, as already stated by Scholer, the NT does not specify a starting point for this or many other doctrines.³⁴ To choose a theological and hermeneutical key often reflects one's personal presuppositions.

Next, as Blomberg points out, the avoidance of an interpretive center is consistent with an evangelical doctrine of the plenary inspiration of Scripture. He comments,

I think that if we as evangelicals take seriously our doctrine of the plenary inspiration of Scripture, then it is hermeneutically impossible to set up one text as the interpretive grid through which everything else must be filtered.³⁵

A third reason why this view is favored is that it allows for the hermeneutical principle universally agreed upon among those with a high view of biblical inspiration: it is necessary for all relevant texts to harmonize with each other.³⁶ This allows for input from each text that touches on the subject, without excluding the unique contribution of each to the doctrine.

Finally, to use Gal 3:28 or any other starting-point as the interpretive grid through which other passages are understood, automatically colors the meaning emerging from other passages. As Thomas argues, "It is impossible to deal with literature accurately if one's mind is already preconditioned to discover something that the literature does not relate to."³⁷

against. Rather, they should be interpreted from a particular vantage point—the dual commitments to the equal dignity and equality of men and women and to Scriptural authority" (419).

³⁴Ibid., 418.

³⁵Craig Blomberg, "Response to Catherine Kroeger on I Timothy 2," *Journal of Biblical Equality* 1 (December 1989):44. Blomberg expresses agreement with Kroeger's proposal of evaluating and comparing all Scriptures to arrive at a proper position regarding women's role in the church (Catherine C. Kroeger, "Women in the Church: A Classicist's View of 1 Tim 2:11-15," *Journal of Biblical Equality* 1 [December 1989]:3).

³⁶Powell, "Stalemate" 18.

³⁷Robert L. Thomas, "Some Hermeneutical Ramifications of Contextualization and

THE PRINCIPLE OF THE ANALOGY OF FAITH

Closely related to the issue of a controlling text is the principle of "the analogy of faith." The principle of the analogy of faith says that Scripture cannot contradict Scripture.³⁸ In light of this internal agreement, no verse or passage can have a meaning isolated from the rest of Scripture.³⁹ Yet the role of the analogy of faith in the context of "clear" and "obscure" passages is debatable. The issue is how to handle "unclear" texts in light of the agreed upon truth that Scripture does not contradict Scripture. A resolving of this issue is key in the interpretation of women's place in the church and home.⁴⁰

Feminists of the evangelical persuasion advocate that the analogy of faith principle means the clearer passages should determine the interpretation of the less clear ones.⁴¹ They hold the "clear" text on women's roles to be Gal 3:28⁴² or one of other starting-points referred to in the previous section, and perceive 1 Cor 11:2-16, 14:34-35, and 1 Tim 2:11-12 to be the obscure passages.

Another way of applying the analogy of faith principle is to refrain from preferring one passage over another. The basic approach of this variation is to give equal attention to "obscure" or "disputed" texts.⁴³ This technique does not disregard the analogy of faith

Feminist Literature" (paper read at Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, Atlanta, November 1986) 18.

³⁸"The analogy of faith" is defined by Ramm as "the system of faith or doctrine found in Holy Scripture." He goes on to say, "The basic assumption here is that there is one system of truth or theology contained in Scripture, and therefore all doctrines must cohere or agree with each other. That means that the interpretation of specific passages must not contradict the total teaching of Scripture on a point. This is similar to saying that Scripture interprets Scripture" (Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1970] 107).

³⁹Susan T. Foh, *Women and the Word of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979) 27.

⁴⁰Johnston, "Role of Women" 73.

⁴¹Scholer, "Feminist Hermeneutics" 417; Powell, "Stalemate" 17; Gasque, "Role of Women" 6; Johnston, "Role of Women" 73.

⁴²Pierce states, "The clearer, more general proclamation of Gal 3:28 rightly serves as a foundation principle against which the more obscure text of 1 Tim 2:8-15 can be interpreted" (Ronald W. Pierce, "Evangelicals and Gender Roles in the 1990s: 1 Tim 2:8-15, a Test Case," *JETS* 36 [September 1993]:353-54).

⁴³John Piper and Wayne Grudem, "An Overview of Central Concerns: Questions and

principle, but instead employs it after completion of the exegetical procedure, as more or less of a "double check" on the results of one's exegetical investigation.⁴⁴

Two strong considerations make this second approach to the analogy-of-faith principle preferable. First, it keeps the influence of the interpreter's personal biases to a minimum. Piper and Grudem "hit the nail on the head" when they wrote, "We are all biased and would very likely use this principle of interpretation to justify neglecting the texts that do not suit our bias while insisting that the ones that suit our bias are crystal clear."⁴⁵

Second, interpreting a passage in this way forces the interpreter to consider seriously all relevant passages. This prevents exegetical laziness by requiring an exegetical accounting for all passages germane to the issue. The following recommendation is fitting: "Our procedure should be rather to continue to read Scripture carefully and prayerfully, seeking a position that dismisses no texts but interprets all the relevant texts of Scripture in a coherent way."⁴⁶

THE PRINCIPLE OF SLAVERY AS A MODEL FOR THE ROLE OF WOMEN

A predominant concept in the literature of evangelical feminism is that the relationship between slaves and masters parallels that between wives and husbands, thus impacting the issue of women and church leadership.⁴⁷ Proponents have offered two other justifications of the same principle. First, "Scriptural interpretation must allow for continuing actualization as necessary implications are drawn out."⁴⁸ A second justification is that "one is informed by the

Answers," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, ed. by John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1991) 90.

⁴⁴Robert L. Thomas, "Introduction to Exegesis" (unpublished class notes, Greek Exegesis I, The Master's Seminary, Sun Valley, CA, 1987) 17.

⁴⁵Piper and Grudem, "Overview" 90.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 91.

⁴⁷For a sampling, see Clarence Boomsma, *Male and Female, One in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993) 43-52; Kevin Giles, "The Biblical Argument for Slavery: Can the Bible Mislead? A Case Study in Hermeneutics," *Evangelical Quarterly* 66 (1994):3-17; Craig Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992) 184-224.

⁴⁸Johnston, "Role of Women" 74. This is not a claim of progressive revelation, but of

history of biblical interpretation, which may shed light on a passage at hand.⁴⁹

Keener states the rationale of the principle clearly:

Those who today will admit that slavery is wrong but still maintain that husbands must have authority over their wives are inconsistent. If they were consistent with their method of interpretation, which does not take enough account of cultural differences, it is likely that, had they lived one hundred fifty years ago, they would have had to have opposed the abolitionists as subverters of the moral order—as many Bible-quoting white slave owners and their allies did. Many of the traditions which today use Scripture to subordinate women once did the same for slavery before that idea was anathema in our culture. In contrast, the method of interpretation we favor in this book is closer to the methods favored by the abolitionists.⁵⁰

The basis for treating the male/female relationship like the master/slave relationship is the scriptural similarity between the two. Boomsma points this out when he says,

There are several comparable elements that suggest such a parallel. As we have seen, in Galatians 3:28 the distinctions between slave and free and male and female, although they continue to exist, are superseded by equality in Christ in the church. The instructions in Paul's letters prominently modify the relations between slaves and masters, and between husbands and wives, as in Ephesians 5:22-33. Similarly Paul places restrictions on both slaves and women by instructing slaves to obey their masters and women to be subservient to their husbands and to refrain exercising equality in the authoritative offices of the congregation.

What is of great significance is the parallelism between the grounds on which the apostle supports his instructions to both slaves and women. In 1 Timothy 6:1 he urges slaves to respect their masters "so that God's name and our teaching may not be slandered." In Titus 2:5 he requires women to be subject to their husbands "so that no one will malign the

progressive understanding. This progressive understanding has manifested itself in the church's doctrine of the Trinity and the Christian abolitionist movement. It also is worthy of consideration in determining theological truth for women *in our day*.

⁴⁹Gasque, "Role of Women" 9. The point is that the interpreter should be informed by the change in attitude among Christians toward slavery when considering the role of women.

⁵⁰Keener, *Paul* 207-8.

word of God."⁵¹

Despite these impressive parallels, one major setback confronts this principle: "The existence of slavery is not rooted in any creation ordinance, but the existence of marriage is."⁵² Additionally, Paul laid down principles in the book of Philemon that would ultimately destroy the institution of slavery. This is not true of the male/female relationship. Poythress is correct when he declares,

In the NT, there are too many passages that never "drop the second shoe." The passages say that women must submit to their husbands. But they never say explicitly that husbands must submit to their wives. They explicitly instruct Timothy and Titus about appointing men as elders, but they never explicitly mention the possibility of women elders.⁵³

Kassian states a final stumbling-block for the slavery analogy in several ways when she writes,

Biblical feminists view the Bible as open to alteration. One of the basic presuppositions of Biblical feminist theology is that the Bible is not absolute and that its meaning can "evolve" and "transform." Since the Bible presents no *absolute* standard of right and wrong, feminists maintain that they must decide this for themselves. This basic premise allows them to interpret the Bible in *any manner* appropriate to their immediate circumstances.⁵⁴

⁵¹Boomsma, *Male and Female* 48. In addition to these scriptural parallels, Giles cites a number of general similarities between the biblical arguments for slavery and the permanent subordination of women (Giles, "Biblical Argument for Slavery" 17).

⁵²Piper and Grudem, "Overview" 65. Contra Giles, who states, "The biblical case for slavery is the counterpart of the case for the subordination of women, the only difference being that the case for slavery has far more weighty biblical support" ("Biblical Case for Slavery" 16).

⁵³Vern Sheridan Poythress, "Two Hermeneutical Tensions in Evangelical Feminism" (paper presented at the Eastern Regional Evangelical Theological Society Conference, Philadelphia, April 5, 1991) 2.

⁵⁴Mary A. Kassian, *Women, Creation and the Fall* (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1990) 147. Kassian has overstated her case regarding some biblical feminists. She probably has in mind primarily liberal feminists, but her point is valid regarding some evangelical feminists as Fricke comments: "Evangelical feminists follow the notion of a kind of progressive revelation, an evolutionary development of doctrine in the Christian church" ("Feminist Hermeneutic" 55).

THE PRINCIPLE OF CULTURALLY BIASED INTERPRETATION

A recurring question in a quest to understand the biblical teaching on the role of women is, "Can there be an objective understanding of Scripture?" Is it possible for a person to set aside biases and prejudices for the purpose of ascertaining the meaning of the text?

"No" is the response of several in the evangelical feminist camp. Scholer illustrates the negative answer: "Now, however, I feel that I have come to understand for myself, along with many others, that in fact objective interpretation and objective hermeneutic is a myth."⁵⁵ One of the "many others" is Johnston. His conviction is that the reason for the continuing spate of evangelical literature on women's role in the church and family is the role of the reader/interpreter in determining the meaning of the text:

It is the reader who uses incomplete knowledge as the basis of judgment. It is the reader who chooses between equally valid possibilities based on personal preference. It is the reader who develops criteria for what is universal and what is culturally specific, what is translatable and what is transcultural. It is the reader who brings to a text a specific understanding of Scripture's overarching unity. It is the reader who finds it difficult to remain vulnerable to the text as it confronts Christian and pagan alike.⁵⁶

In light of this he concludes that evangelicals hide themselves behind "the veneer of objectivity."⁵⁷

The position that objectivity in interpretation is a false notion does not demand the abandonment of all attempts to determine the meaning of a text. What it does dictate is: (1) the exegete must recognize the impact of his biases upon both his hermeneutic and interpretation⁵⁸ and (2) a proper hermeneutical procedure.⁵⁹

⁵⁵Scholer, "Feminist Hermeneutics" 412.

⁵⁶Robert K. Johnston, "Biblical Authority and Interpretation: The Test Case of Women's Role in the Church and Home Updated," in *Women, Authority and the Bible*, ed. by Alvera Mickelsen (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986) 35.

⁵⁷Ibid., 35.

⁵⁸Powell, "Stalemate" 17.

The view of the mythological nature of objective interpretation is contrary to the traditional grammatico-historical method of interpretation. It is a standard corollary of the long-honored approach that one can investigate a passage in an unbiased manner. Kaiser's definition of interpretation clearly evidences this:

To interpret we must in every case reproduce the sense the Scriptural writer intended for his own words. The first step in the interpretive process is to link only those ideas with the author's language that he connected with them. The second step is to express these ideas understandably.⁶⁰

Dockery concurs:

The goal of biblical interpretation is to approach the text in terms of the objective ideal. This goal does not mean approaching the Bible without any presuppositions at all, for the Bible itself provides the interpreter with certain presuppositions. Yet, the interpreter is expected to strive as diligently as possible for objective understanding.⁶¹

Is it possible for the interpreter to exclude bias in the hermeneutical process, or is this simply a delusion of grandeur or a hiding behind the veneer of objectivity? However one may answer these questions, all agree that the interpreter has prejudices in approaching the Word of God. Yet the grammatico-historical method of interpretation advocates the possibility and necessity of excluding these prejudices. The Reformers were well aware of this and consequently geared their approach to exegesis along lines of the *tabula rasa* idea. Commenting on this, Sproul says,

The interpreter was expected to strive as hard as possible for an objective reading of the text through the grammatico-historical

⁵⁹It is beyond the scope of this paper to identify and evaluate what is the currently recommended hermeneutical procedure to remedy the problem of bias in interpretation. For detailed presentations, see Anthony Thiselton, *The Two Horizons* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), and Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991).

⁶⁰Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "Legitimate Hermeneutics," in *Inerrancy*, ed. by Norman Geisler (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979) 118.

⁶¹David S. Dockery, "The Role of Women in Worship and Ministry: Some Hermeneutical Questions," *Criswell Theological Review* 1 (1987):376.

approach. Though subjective influences always present a clear and present danger of distortion, the student of the Bible was expected to utilize every possible safeguard in the pursuit of the ideal, listening to the message of Scripture without mixing in his own prejudices.⁶²

What response can a person offer to the claim that objective interpretation is a myth?⁶³ What procedures will exclude personal background and culture from hindering an understanding of the intent of the authors of Scripture? Piper and Grudem offer five suggestions to provide interpreters with confidence that they have excluded their biases and prejudices from the hermeneutical process. (1) Search your motives and seek to empty yourself of all that would tarnish a true perception of reality. (2) Pray that God would give you humility, teachability, wisdom, insight, fairness, and honesty. (3) Make every effort to submit your mind to the unbending and unchanging grammatical and historical reality of the biblical texts in Greek and Hebrew, using the best methods of study available to get as close as possible to the intentions of the biblical writers. (4) Test your conclusions by the history of exegesis to reveal any chronological snobbery or cultural myopia. (5) Test your conclusions in the real world of contemporary ministry and look for resonance from mature and godly people.⁶⁴

To speak of objective interpretation is not to diminish the reality of the exegete's background and culture. As Thomas states,

It must be granted that twentieth century exegetes are outsiders to the cultures in which the Bible was written and for this reason can never achieve a complete understanding of the original meaning of the Bible in its historical setting. An undue emphasis upon this limitation, however, loses sight of the fact that all historical study is a weighing of probabilities. The more evidence we have, the higher degree of probability we can attain. The practice of exegesis, therefore, is a continued search for greater probability and a more refined understanding.⁶⁵

⁶²R. C. Sproul, *Knowing Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1977) 105.

⁶³As a proponent of the grammatico-historical hermeneutic, Thomas offers a ten-point response to those who insist on the impossibility of excluding the interpreter's biases in the hermeneutical process ("Hermeneutical Ramifications" 4-9).

⁶⁴Piper and Grudem, "Overview" 84.

⁶⁵Thomas, "Hermeneutical Ramifications" 10.

THE PRINCIPLE OF CULTURAL RELATIVITY
IN BIBLICAL REVELATION

The major hermeneutical issue in interpreting the Pauline "hard passages" 1 Tim 2:11-15 in particular is whether the teaching is cultural or normative. Quarrels about the meaning of the 1 Timothy passage are one issue, but even those who agree on its meaning disagree on how to apply it. Fee, who argues that the passage does not apply to the issue of women in ministry today, agrees with the interpretation of those who see it as restricting what women can do when the church meets for public worship. He writes,

My point is a simple one. It is hard to deny that *this* text prohibits women teaching men in the Ephesian church; but it is the unique text in the NT, and as we have seen, its reason for being is *not* to correct the rest of the New Testament, but to correct a very *ad hoc* problem in Ephesus.⁶⁶

The comment of Fee illustrates that the debate involving 1 Tim 2:11-15 consists not only of how to interpret this passage but also of how to apply it. The primary hindrance to discerning the application is the ascertaining of whether the text is culture-limited or transcultural. To state it another way, the concern is "discerning between the permanent, universal, normative teaching of Scripture on the one hand and, on the other hand, that which is transient, not applicable to every people in every culture, not intended to function as a mandate for normative behavior."⁶⁷ This is a major topic in contemporary studies of hermeneutics that is particularly relevant to determining women's roles in the home and the church.⁶⁸

Evangelical feminist hermeneutics advocate widespread distinctions between universal principles and localized applications. In fact, Weber identifies this as one of the three distinguishing marks in the egalitarian reading of the Bible.⁶⁹ The problem is not with the principle but with how extensive its implementation should be. How

⁶⁶Fee, "Issues in Evangelical Hermeneutics" 36.

⁶⁷J. Robertson McQuilkin, "Problems of Normativeness in Scripture: Cultural Versus Permanent," in *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy and the Bible*, ed. by Earl D. Radmacher and Robert D. Preus (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984) 222.

⁶⁸William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Dallas: Word, 1993) 409.

⁶⁹Weber, "Evangelical Egalitarianism" 77.

to determine what is "cultural" or "normative" requires further discussion.

Resolving this matter requires answers to two important questions: (1) Does Scripture convey universal principles or culture-limited application? (2) What methodology should be followed to distinguish what is normative from what is cultural in Scripture?

Three suggestions of how to answer the former question are conceivable. The first recommendation is to view Scripture as conveying what is normative for all believers at all times unless Scripture itself explicitly expresses the limitation. McQuilkin represents this view when he writes, "My thesis is that a fully authoritative Bible means that every teaching in Scripture is universal unless Scripture itself treats it as limited."⁷⁰ Identifying criteria for non-normativeness is the focus of this approach to distinguishing what is normative from what is cultural.⁷¹

The second recommendation is to see Scripture as conveying what is limited in application to its original context. Instead of Scripture relaying what is normative, it relays that which is culture-bound. The crucial question to be asked in discerning between the time-bound and the eternal is, "How can we locate and identify this permanent element or essence?"⁷² This view assumes that Scripture is time-bound, not that which conveys what is basically normative.

The third recommendation mediates between the first two. Instead of assuming that Scripture conveys either what is normative or what is culture-bound, it assumes neither. This view allows the criteria to make this decision. Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard write,

We detect problems, however, with both of these views. The former [Scripture conveys what is cultural] makes it difficult to establish the timelessness even of fundamental moral principles such as prohibitions against theft or murder; the latter [Scripture conveys what is normative] would seem to require us to greet one another with a holy kiss (1 Thes 5:26) or drink wine for upset stomachs (1 Tim 5:23).⁷³

All three recommendations take seriously the need to

⁷⁰McQuilkin, "Normativeness" 230.

⁷¹William J. Larkin, Jr., *Culture and Biblical Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988)

316.

⁷²Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983) 1:120.

⁷³Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, *Biblical Interpretation* 410.

distinguish between what is permanent and what is transient. Yet the suggestion that Scripture conveys what is culture-bound (recommendation two) does not harmonize with Paul's significant statement in 2 Tim 3:16. Recommendations one and three both recognize the importance of this verse in their view. Knight, who agrees with McQuilkin that Scripture relays what is normative, has this to say about the thesis set forth by McQuilkin:

In positing such a thesis, he is articulating the same absolute and universal language that the apostle Paul has used in asserting the Scripture's comprehensive didactic significance (2 Tim. 3:16). Since Christ's apostle indicates that this is true of *all* Scripture, then only it itself can teach us what it regards as limited and not universally normative.⁷⁴

Likewise, the third recommendation (that criteria determines what is normative or cultural) regards 2 Tim 3:16 as crucial to its formulation. Representatives of this position declare,

With 2 Tim 3:16 and related texts, we affirm that every passage (a meaningful unit of discourse that makes one or more points that can be restated, if necessary, in a proposition) has some normative value for believers in all times and places. But we presuppose nothing about whether the application for us today will come by preserving unchanged the specific elements of the passage or whether we will have to identify broader principles that suggest unique applications for new contexts. Instead we ask a series of questions of the text.⁷⁵

The caveat offered in the last portion of the above quotation is what distinguishes this view from the position that Scripture presents what is normative. The distinction is that those who take Scripture as normative suggest "both the form and meaning of Scripture are permanent revelation and normative,"⁷⁶ but those who let the criteria determine what is normative accept the meaning as normative, but not the form. Elaborating on this difference, Larkin provides insight into why taking both the form and meaning of Scripture as normative is

⁷⁴George W. Knight, III, "A Response to Problems of Normativeness in Scripture: Cultural Versus Permanent," in *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy and the Bible*, ed. by Earl D. Radmacher and Robert D. Preus (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984) 243.

⁷⁵Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, *Biblical Interpretation* 410-11.

⁷⁶McQuilkin, "Problems of Normativeness" 222.

the best position:

The obvious reason for adopting the more comprehensive position affirming both form and meaning is that it best upholds the full authority of Scripture and to the same extent that Scripture itself does.⁷⁷

The second question "What methodology should be followed to distinguish what is normative from what is cultural in Scripture?"⁷⁸ finds its answer in two primary methodologies that are foundational, but work from different perspectives, the ones proposed by McQuilkin⁷⁹ and Johnson.⁸⁰ Since the answer to the first question has ruled out Johnson's initial assumption that Scripture is culture-bound, it is unnecessary to review his proposal. Since Scripture conveys what is normative, McQuilkin's list is best in reflecting how to

⁷⁷Larkin, *Culture* 315.

⁷⁸The importance, as well as the difficulty, of the question is seen in the many suggested methodologies. The cited references are just a sample of what is available: Bacchiocchi, *Women* 147; Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982) 66-68; Alan F. Johnson, "A Response to Problems of Normativeness in Scripture: Cultural Versus Permanent," in *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy and the Bible*, ed. by Earl D. Radmacher and Robert D. Preus (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984) 279-80; Kaiser, "Legitimate" 142-44; Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, *Biblical Interpretation* 411-21; Larkin, *Culture* 354-356; McQuilkin, "Problems of Normativeness" 230-36; Grant R. Osborne, *Hermeneutical* 328-29; David M. Scholer, "Unseasonable Thoughts on the State of Biblical Hermeneutics: Reflections of a New Testament Exegete," *American Baptist Quarterly* 2 (June 1983):139-40; Robert C. Sproul, "Controversy at Culture Gap," *Eternity* (May 1976):14-15, 40; Michael F. Stitzinger, "Cultural Confusion and the Role of Women in the Church: A Study of 1 Timothy 2:8-14," *Calvary Baptist Theological Journal* 4 (Fall 1988):36-38; Terrance Tiessen, "Toward a Hermeneutic for Discerning Universal Moral Absolutes" *JETS* 36 (June 1993):192-203; David P. Kuske, "What in Scripture is Universally Applicable and What is Historically Conditioned?" *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 91 (Spring 1994):83-105.

⁷⁹McQuilkin, "Problem of Normativeness" 230-36. Knight is in substantial agreement with McQuilkin ("Response" 243-253; idem, "From Hermeneutics to Practice: Scriptural Normativity and Culture, Revisited," *Presbyterian: Covenant Seminary Review* 12 [Fall 1986]:93-104), as is Larkin (*Culture*, 354-56).

⁸⁰Johnson, "Response" 279-80. The cited article is a response to the list offered by McQuilkin. Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard state that their list shares important similarities with Johnson, but is by no means identical with it (*Biblical Interpretation* 411). For an evaluation of the two foundational methodologies, see Larkin, *Culture*, 114-25.

determine what is normative as opposed to cultural.⁸¹ To discern this, the interpreter must ask the following questions: (1) Does the context limit the recipient or application? (2) Does subsequent revelation limit the recipient or the application? (3) Is this specific teaching in conflict with other biblical teaching?⁸² (4) Is the reason for a norm given in Scripture, and is that reason treated as normative? (5) Is the specific teaching normative as well as the principle? (6) Does the Bible treat the historic context as normative? (7) Does the Bible treat the cultural context as limited?⁸³

THE PRINCIPLE OF PATRIARCHAL AND SEXIST TEXTS

Another hermeneutical mark of evangelical feminism is its detection of patriarchal and sexist texts in the Bible. The loudest advocate of this principle is Scholer, who writes, "Evangelical feminist hermeneutics must face patriarchal and sexist texts and assumptions within biblical passages and understand them precisely as limited texts and assumptions."⁸⁴

The sample texts that Scholer sees as reflecting patriarchy, androcentrism, and possibly misogyny are: Rev 14:1-5; 1 Tim 5:3-16; 1 Cor 11:2-16; Eph 5:24. Concerning Rev 14:1-5 he states:

I submit that most of us have never really noticed how dramatically androcentric the text is: the redeemed are men, explicitly men. Nor do I think that most of us have noticed the sexual or sexuality assumptions behind the text: men who have not defiled themselves with women. This is a view of sexuality that most of us would like to explain away or ignore. It is a view rooted in the reality of the ancient world that women

⁸¹The preference of McQuilkin's list is not to reject wholesale the lists provided by others, especially Tiessen, "Toward a Hermeneutic" 193-207; Larkin, *Culture* 354-56; Kuske, "What in Scripture" 99-105; and Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, *Biblical Interpretation* 411-21.

⁸²A caveat to this question would be to add the words "my understanding of," so that the questions reads "Is my understanding of this specific teaching in conflict with other Biblical teaching?" (Knight, "Response" 247).

⁸³For a complete discussion of this list, see McQuilkin, "Problem of Normativeness" 230-36.

⁸⁴David M. Scholer, "Contours of an Evangelical Feminist Hermeneutics," *Catalyst* 15 (April 1989):4. See also: idem, "Feminist Hermeneutics" 413-17; idem, "Participation in the Issues of Women and Ministry in the New Testament," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 15 (1988):103-4.

were always understood to be the one primarily to blame for sexual sin. This view has haunted the question of rape even to this day.⁸⁵

His comments on 1 Tim 5:3-16 are along the same lines.

I submit again that the assumption behind this view is a view of sexuality that probably none of us really share or would admit to sharing. Again, it is rooted in the assumption that women are sexually irresponsible. If a 59-year-old or younger widow does not remarry, the odds are very great that she will follow Satan.⁸⁶

The nature of these texts leads Scholer to the conclusion that they are limited texts and assumptions which reflect the historical-cultural realities from and in which Biblical texts arose.⁸⁷ In essence, this hermeneutical principle helps him to affirm evangelical feminism by limiting the passages that speak against it.

Such a perspective toward the identified texts has several problems. First, it implies that the Bible cannot be interpreted in a regular fashion because of its male authorship.⁸⁸

Second, it adds a further dimension to the historical aspect of the grammatico-historical method of interpretation, i.e., that the interpreter concern himself or herself with and know about the biases of the author. This is information that requires much guesswork on the part of the exegete.

A third reason to reject this principle as a valid hermeneutical rule is that it presents a writer of Scripture, such as Paul, in a contradictory light. On one hand, he advocates the full equality of men and women (cf. Gal 3:28), but on the other, he capitulates to societal norms and writes from a sexist position (cf. 1 Tim 5:3-16).

Furthermore, Scholer's stance assumes an evangelical feminist presuppositional perspective of the Old and New Testaments. He labels certain passages as sexist and patriarchal because an egalitarian position on the role of women in the church and home is a foregone conclusion.

Finally, a patriarchal culture does not necessarily mandate an improper view toward women. Poythress is helpful in this area when he states,

⁸⁵Scholer, "Feminist Hermeneutics" 414.

⁸⁶Ibid., 415.

⁸⁷Ibid., 419.

⁸⁸Kassian, *Women* 144.

Note also that the patriarchy of OT and NT cultures did not necessarily exclude women from ever occupying a role of social and religious prominence. Prov 31 illustrates the breadth of scope possible even in ordinary circumstances. Moreover, Esther was a queen. Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, and Isaiah's wife were prophetesses (Exod 15:20; Judges 4:4; 2 Kings 22:14; Isa 8:3). Deborah judged Israel (though this role functioned to rebuke the inadequate male leaders: Judges 4:8-9; Isa 3:12). Salome Alexandra, wife of Alexander Jannaeus, ruled over the Jews from 76 to 67 B.C. Women played an important role in Jesus' earthly ministry and as witnesses to his resurrection. Lydia, Priscilla, Phoebe, and others obviously had significant roles.⁸⁹

RESULTS OF THE EVALUATION

This completes the evaluation of seven major principles that distinguish the hermeneutics of evangelical feminism from those of hierarchialists and, in many cases, from the grammatico-historical approach to interpreting Scripture.⁹⁰ This evaluation has shown the weaknesses of the hermeneutics of evangelical feminism. An *ad hoc* hermeneutic that limits the teaching of 1 Tim 2:11-15 is inadequate, because it fails to consider both the purpose of 1 Timothy and the *ad hoc* nature of other Pauline epistles. Any attempt to establish one passage as the interpretive grid for all other passages is inconsistent with two standard tenets of the grammatico-historical method of interpretation: the plenary inspiration of Scripture and the necessary harmonization of texts. The principle of the analogy of faith is valid, but not when it is brought into the interpretation process too early, as evangelical feminists tend to do.

Furthermore, to parallel the role of women with the role of slaves is to assume that God ordained slavery, a teaching not found in Scripture. The role of women has its roots in the order of creation, however (Genesis 2). To argue that objective interpretation is a myth and that the Bible contains sexist and patriarchal texts is to differ again from the grammatico-historical method of exegesis. This preferred procedure for understanding Scripture has argued that objective interpretation is possible and that it is not necessary for the interpreter

⁸⁹Vern Sheridan Poythress, "Two Hermeneutical Tensions" 7.

⁹⁰The scope of this essay does not permit a consideration of other areas, such as the relationship between didactic and descriptive passages, Pauline use of the Old Testament, and the use of logic in understanding 1 Tim 2:8-15.

to be concerned with and knowledgeable of "the biases" of the author.

Finally, evangelical feminists are correct in observing that certain biblical texts are cultural. Yet their procedure for determining which ones is questionable. In light of 2 Tim 3:16-17, it is best to consider all Scripture as normative, unless answers to the above questions presented by McQuilkin prove otherwise.

Evangelical feminists must take a hard look at their hermeneutics in view of evident weaknesses in the system. Many of these shortcomings contradict the grammatico-historical method of interpretation. Since these defects are present, then the position of evangelical feminism on the role of men and women in the church and home rests on less than a solid biblical foundation.

THEONOMY AND THE DATING OF REVELATION

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In 1989, a well-known spokesman for the theonomist camp, Kenneth L. Gentry, published a work devoted to proving that John the Apostle wrote Revelation during the sixties of the first century A.D. Basing his position heavily on Rev 17:9-11 and 11:1-13, he used internal evidence within the book as his principal argument for the early date. His clever methods of persuasion partially shield his basic motive for his interpretive conclusions, which is a desire for an undiluted rationale to support Christian social and political involvement leading to long-term Christian cultural progress and dominion. If the prophecies of Revelation are yet to be fulfilled, no such progress will develop—a prospect the author cannot accept. Inconsistency marks Gentry's hermeneutical pattern. Predisposition keeps him from seeing the book's theme verse as a reference to Christ's second coming. His explanation of Rev 17:9-11 is fraught with weaknesses, as is his discussion of 11:1-2. Two major flaws mar Gentry's discussion of John's temporal expectation in writing the book. Besides these problems, five major questions regarding Gentry's position remain unanswered.

* * * * *

Theonomist¹ Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., makes evidence derived from exegetical data within the Apocalypse his major focus in building a case for dating the book prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.² Though acknowledging that other advocates of either a Neronian (i.e., in the 60's) and Domitianic date (i.e., in the 90's) for Revelation's composition find no such direct evidence within the book, he proceeds to find "inherently suggestive and positively compelling historical time-frame indicators in Revelation."³ He uses the contemporary reign

¹Theonomy—also known as "dominion theology" and "Christian reconstructionism"—is a worldview that foresees a progressive domination of world government and society by Christianity until God's kingdom on earth becomes a reality. Its eschatology is essentially that of the postmillennialism so popular around the beginning of the twentieth century.

²Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *Before Jerusalem Fell, Dating the Book of Revelation* (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989) 113, 116.

³*Ibid.*, 119.

of the sixth king in 17:9-11 and the integrity of the temple and Jerusalem in 11:1-13 to exemplify arguments that are "virtually certain" proof of a date some time in the sixties.⁴

Before a look at his exegesis of these two passages and several others, however, Gentry's general methodology deserves attention.

METHOD OF PRESENTATION

His first tactic is to create an environment of what may be called "virtual reality." This phenomenon is becoming very popular in this day of computer-generated illusionary data. I call Gentry's use of it an experience in "back-to-the-future" manipulation.

About a year ago, I went with one of my sons and two of my grandsons on what was then the new "Back to the Future" experience on the lot of Universal Studios in Burbank. I call it an "experience" for the lack of a better term. It was not a "ride" such as most attractions at Six Flags or Disneyland, because we never left a small room in which we originally sat down. We were in an automobile-type enclosure with a very complicated dashboard. We were enclosed on three sides in the dark room with only a three-dimensional screen in front of us. When our back-to-the-future experience began, all we could see was the screen with its images portraying our "movement" through time and near collisions with all kinds of objects including dinosaurs, cliffs, large buildings, vehicles, and the like. To enforce this, our auto-like enclosure was bumping around, pitching up and down, rolling side-to-side, and leaning in synchronization with what we saw on the screen. It was a very realistic experience, but it was not real. All the apparent movement made my son sick at his stomach. I attribute this to his right-brain orientation. It did not bother me at all, however, because I rested in the reality that I was still in a small room enclosed in a larger building and had never left that room. In fact, I experienced the attraction again later in the day, but this time at the request of and in the company of my two grandsons only.

⁴Ibid., 118-19.

Gentry like others of the reconstructionist movement is a master in using words to take his readers back to the future, i.e., in creating virtual reality that many will not distinguish from reality itself. He does this by stating his "correct" view first,⁵ then often following it up with a long list of writers to support that view.⁶ This has the effect of blinding the reader on three sides so that he can see only what Gentry wants him to see in front of him. Only after the reader's exposure to the positive evidence for his view does the author turn to evaluate some of the weaknesses of that viewpoint.⁷ By this time, the merits of other viewpoints have become lost in the shuffle.

Behind this exegetical methodology lies a preunderstanding that controls the whole process. In about the last thirty years it has become increasingly fashionable among some evangelicals to factor the step of preunderstanding or hermeneutical self-consciousness into the interpretive process,⁸ but to others, such as myself, to do so confuses the picture by making what has traditionally been known as application partially determinative of one's understanding of the historical-grammatical meaning of Scripture. Gentry tries to shield his preunderstanding from view most of the time, but it shows itself once early in the book and then in the book's concluding remarks.⁹ After quoting Ryrie's words about the inevitable misery that the future holds for the world, he writes, "If such is the case, why get involved?"¹⁰ He associates cultural defeatism and retreatist pietism with assigning a late date to Revelation and wants to date the book before A.D. 70 so as to have biblical support for the implementation of long-term Christian cultural progress and dominion.¹¹

This probably reflects his basic motivation for the early dating of Revelation: a desire for an undiluted rationale to support Christian social and political involvement. He is looking for an escape from the tension between the cultural mandate given to Christians and a

⁵E.g., *ibid.*, 153-54.

⁶E.g., *ibid.*, 30-38, 168, 200, 296 n. 50. Many citations in these lists are not from primary sources.

⁷E.g., *ibid.*, 203-12.

⁸E.g., Craig A. Blaising, "Dispensationalism: The Search for Definition," in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, ed. by Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992) 30.

⁹Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell* 5 n. 12, 336-37.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 5 n. 12.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 336-37.

realization that the prophecy of Revelation dictates that the culture will inevitably go downhill despite the best efforts of God's people to reverse the trend. No one can deny that Christians are to be good citizens by doing everything they can to make this world a better place, but the fact remains that evil will eventually prevail until the end of history when Christ returns. This is apparently a paradox with which Gentry cannot live, so his exegetical methodology moves in a direction that finds Revelation's prophecies of a decaying society fulfilled in the era up to and including the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

HERMENEUTICAL PATTERN

As Gentry weaves his case for Revelation's early date, the absence of a consistent set of hermeneutical principles is evident. It is most conspicuous in a number of inconsistencies that emerge in different parts of the treatment. He does not interpret the same passage in the same way from place to place, or within the same discussion differing principles take him in different directions regarding his mode of interpretation.

For instance, he accepts the principle of the symbolic use of numbers, but only for large, rounded numbers such as 1,000, 144,000, and 200,000,000. Smaller numbers, such as seven, are quite literal.¹²

Again, he rejects the equation of "kings = kingdoms" in 17:10,¹³ but in a later discussion of the *Nero Redivivus* myth in 17:11, he identifies one of the kings or heads of the beast in 17:10 as the Roman Empire revived under Vespasian.¹⁴ The latter is part of his strained attempt to explain the healing of the beast's death-wound.

When discussing the 144,000, Gentry is uncertain at one point whether they represent the saved of Jewish lineage or the church as a whole.¹⁵ Yet just ten pages later they are definitely Christians of Jewish extraction, because he needs evidence to tie the fulfillment of Revelation to the land of Judea.¹⁶ This provides another example of his lack of objective hermeneutical principles to guide interpretation.

The forty-two months of 11:2 is the period of the Roman siege of Jerusalem from early spring 67 till September 70, according to Gen-

¹²Ibid., 162-63.

¹³Ibid., 163-64.

¹⁴Ibid., 310-16.

¹⁵Ibid., 223-24.

¹⁶Ibid., 233.

try.¹⁷ A bit earlier he finds John, even while he is writing the book, already enmeshed in the great tribulation (1:9; 2:22), a period of equal length and apparently simultaneous with the Roman siege.¹⁸ In a discussion of 13:5-7, however, he separates the Neronian persecution of Christians which constituted "the great tribulation" (13:5-7) from the Roman siege of Jerusalem in both time and place, dating it from 64 to 68 and locating it in the Roman province of Asia.¹⁹ So which is it? Is John writing during "the great tribulation" of 64-68 or the one of 67-70? Later still, he assigns 65 or early 66 as the date of writing,²⁰ so John predicted a forty-two month period of persecution (13:5) that was already partially past when he wrote. This is indeed a puzzling picture.

Another puzzling discussion concerns the raising of the beast from his death-wound. At one point Gentry identifies Galba as the seventh king of 17:10, in strict compliance with the consecutive reigns of Roman emperors.²¹ But suddenly he skips Otho and Vitellius to get to Vespasian who is the eighth and shifts from counting kings with his identification of the healing of the beast's death-wound as Rome's survival from its civil war in the late sixties.²² This is enough to dash in pieces any effort to decipher a consistent pattern of hermeneutics, because such is nonexistent.

So much for preliminaries and generalities. The attention of the remainder of this essay will be on individual passages, with special attention to Gentry still, but with a few side glances at other reconstructionists.

INDIVIDUAL PASSAGES

The Theme Verse

All, including Gentry and Chilton,²³ agree that the theme verse of Revelation is Rev 1:7: "Behold, He comes with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him, and all the families of

¹⁷Ibid., 250-53.

¹⁸Ibid., 234.

¹⁹Ibid., 254-55.

²⁰Ibid., 336.

²¹Ibid., 158, 208.

²²Ibid., 310-16.

²³Ibid., 121-23; David Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance* (Fort Worth, TX: Dominion, 1987)

the earth will mourn over Him." But these two theonomists do not refer this to the second coming of Christ. Rather they see it as referring to the coming of Christ in judgment upon Israel, so as to make the church the new kingdom.²⁴ To reach this conclusion, they must implement special proposals regarding "those who pierced Him," "the tribes of the earth," and "the land."

"Those who pierced Him." Blame for the piercing of Jesus falls squarely and solely on the shoulders of the Jews, according to Gentry.²⁵ He cites a number of passages in the gospels, Acts, and Paul to prove this responsibility, but conspicuously omits from his list John 19:31 and Acts 4:27 which involve the Romans and Gentiles in this horrible act.²⁶ This determines for him that the book's theme is the coming of God's wrath against the Jews.²⁷

By limiting the blame for Christ's crucifixion to the Jews, Gentry excludes from the scope of the theme verse any reference to the Romans whom he elsewhere acknowledges to be the chief persecutors of Christians.²⁸ He also includes the Romans elsewhere as objects of this "cloud coming" of Christ,²⁹ and yet does not give the Romans a place in the theme verse of the book.

"The tribes of the earth." Without evaluating any other possibility, Gentry assigns *φύλη* (*phyl*) the meaning of "tribe" and sees in it a reference to the tribes of Israel.³⁰ This interpretation has merit because that is the meaning of the term in the source passage, Zech 12:10 ff., and in a parallel NT passage, John 19:37.³¹ The problem with

²⁴Chilton, *Days of Vengeance* 64; Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell* 131-32.

²⁵Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell* 123-27.

²⁶Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 1—7, An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1992) 77-78. Even Chilton allows a reference to Gentiles here (*Days of Vengeance* 66).

²⁷Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell* 127.

²⁸Ibid., 144.

²⁹Ibid., 143, 144.

³⁰Ibid., 127-28.

³¹William Lee, "The Revelation of St. John," in *The Holy Bible*, ed. by F. C. Cook (London: John Murray, 1881) 4:502; J. P. M. Sweet, *Revelation* (Philadelphia: Westminster, Pelican, 1979) 67; G. V. Caird, *A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine*, HNTC (New York: Harper and Row, 1966) 18; James Moffatt, "The Revelation of St. John the Divine," in *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, ed. by W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.) 5:339-40; J. B. Smith, *A Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 1961) 44.

the way Gentry construes it, however, is that if this refers to Israel, it is a mourning of repentance, as in Zechariah, not a mourning of despair as he makes it.

For this to be a mourning of despair as the context of Revelation requires (cf. 9:20-21; 16:9, 11, 21), *phyl* must be taken in the sense of "family" and must refer to peoples of all nations as it does so often in the Apocalypse (cf. 5:9; 7:9; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6).³² This is the only way to do justice to the worldwide scope of the book as required by such verses as 3:10, which even Gentry admits refers to the whole Roman world.³³ The sense of a mourning of despair throughout the whole earth is the sense Jesus attaches to the words in His use of the Zech 12:10 ff. passage in Matt 24:30.³⁴

"*The land.*" The reconstructionists actually take "the tribes of the earth" to be "the tribes of the land," i.e., the land of Palestine.³⁵ It is true that *g* (*g*) can carry such a restricted meaning, but special support in its context of usage is necessary for it to mean this. The acknowledged worldwide scope of Revelation already cited rules out this localized meaning of the term in 1:7.

So Gentry strikes out on the three pitches which he himself has chosen in the theme verse of Revelation. He also leaves other unanswered questions regarding this alleged "cloud coming" in the sixties. He identifies the cloud coming against the Jews as the judgment against Judea in 67-70.³⁶ Against the church that coming was the persecution by the Romans from 64 to 68.³⁷ The cloud coming for Rome was her internal strife in 68-69.³⁸ But nowhere does he tell what the promised deliverance of the church is (e.g., 3:11). It appears to be a question without a clear-cut answer as to how this "cloud coming" could be a promise of imminent deliverance for God's people. All he can see in it is judgment against them and the "privilege" of being clearly distinguished from Judaism forever. He finds covenantal and redemptive import for Christianity in the collapse of the Jewish

³²Alan F. Johnson, "Revelation," in *EBC*, ed. by Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981) 12:423.

³³Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell* 143 n. 27.

³⁴For a fuller discussion of this issue, see Thomas, *Revelation 1—778-79*.

³⁵Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell* 128-29; Chilton, *Days of Vengeance* 66.

³⁶Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell* 143.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 144.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 144-45.

order,³⁹ but this falls short of a personal appearance of Christ to take the faithful away from their persecution.

The Sixth King

As mentioned above, one of the two internal indicators that make the early date "virtually certain" is the identity of the sixth king in 17:9-11.⁴⁰ Gentry first uses the "seven hills" of 17:9 to indicate that Rome or the Roman Empire is in view.⁴¹ Then he concludes that the seven kings of 17:9 (Greek text; 17:10 in English) are seven consecutive Roman emperors.⁴² He lists ten kings, beginning with Julius Caesar (49`44 B.C.) and continuing with Augustus (31 B.C.`A.D. 14), Tiberius (14`37), Gaius or Caligula (37`41), Claudius (41`54), Nero (54`68), Galba (68`69), Otho (69), Vitellius (69), Vespasian (69`79).⁴³ The sixth in this series is Nero, so because 17:10 says "one is," he concludes that John must have written the book during Nero's reign.⁴⁴

Gentry faces four objections to his theory that the sixth king is Nero,⁴⁵ but except for the fourth one, to which this discussion will return shortly, bypasses the exegetical crux of the issue. Regarding the seven hills, he assumes without consideration of any contrary evidence that they tie the beast to the city of Rome, but is this a valid assumption? The formula introducing this explanation, "Here is the mind that has wisdom" (17:9a; cf. 13:18a), indicates a need for special theological and symbolic discernment to comprehend it. Gentry's proposal requires only a basic knowledge of geography and numbers, not a special God-given wisdom.⁴⁶ Further, it is hard to see any connection between the topography of Rome and seven of its emperors.⁴⁷ Vv. 9-10 refer to the scope and nature of the beast's power, not to the physical layout of a city.⁴⁸ No single historical city, particularly Rome,

³⁹Ibid., 144.

⁴⁰Ibid., 146.

⁴¹Ibid., 149-51.

⁴²Ibid., 151-52.

⁴³Ibid., 152-59.

⁴⁴Ibid., 158.

⁴⁵Ibid., 159-64.

⁴⁶Lee, "Revelation" 4:744; Johnson, "Revelation" 12:558.

⁴⁷George E. Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972) 227.

⁴⁸Martin Kiddle, *The Revelation of St. John* (New York: Harper, 1940) 349.

can meet all the characteristics John speaks of in Revelation 17`18.⁴⁹ The added expression, "They are seven kings," seems to require that an identification of the mountains or hills be of a political rather than a geographical nature. Strangest of all, though, is Gentry's unfulfilled obligation to explain what a reference to Rome is doing in the midst of a chapter dealing with Babylon, which he takes to represent Jerusalem.⁵⁰ The best he can do is theorize that the harlot's riding on the beast is an alliance between Jerusalem and Rome against Christianity.⁵¹ To support the existence of such an alleged alliance, he cites Matt 23:37 ff.; John 19:16-16 [sic]; Acts 17:7, none of which support his theory.⁵² Rome's prolonged siege and destruction of Jerusalem from the late 60's to 70 hardly gives the impression of any alliance.

The harlot sits upon or beside the seven mountains (17:9), just as she sits upon or beside "many waters" (17:1). Since the "many waters" are a symbol explained in 17:15, analogy would dictate that the seven mountains are also symbolic and not literal hills.⁵³ The very next clause in 17:9 explains the symbolism of the seven mountains: they are seven kings or kingdoms. As noted above, Gentry as part of his answer to the fourth objection to the Neronian identification rejects the equating of kings with the kingdoms they rule, but later he incorporates such an equation into his explanation of the identity of the eighth head.⁵⁴

Besides the tenuous nature of Gentry's use of the seven hills, his conclusion that Nero is the sixth or "the one [who] is" also faces serious obstacles. The greatest obstacle is his need to begin counting "kings" with Julius Caesar. He tries to defend this by citing several ancient sources,⁵⁵ but the fact is that Rome was a Republic, ruled by the First Triumvirate, in the days of Julius Caesar and became a Principate under Augustus and the emperors that followed him.⁵⁶ Neither does Gentry attempt to explain the thirteen-year gap between Julius Caesar's death and the beginning of Augustus' reign. They were not consecutive rulers as he makes them out to be. The exclusion of Julius

⁴⁹Ladd, *Revelation* 228.

⁵⁰Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell* 240-41 n. 26.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Lee, "Revelation" 4:744.

⁵⁴Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell* 163-64, 310-16.

⁵⁵Ibid., 154-58.

⁵⁶*Collier's Encyclopedia* 20:180, 190.

Caesar makes Nero the fifth instead of the sixth "king." Another good reason for not making Nero the sixth is that it eliminates the necessity of making Galba the seventh and seeing the eighth as the revived Roman Empire rather than an individual king. This scheme is fraught with hermeneutical difficulties.

Gentry's further use of 666 to prove that the first beast of chap. 13 is Nero, he admits, is only corroborative and cannot stand alone,⁵⁷ so the efficient course is to turn now to his second major item of internal evidence to prove an early date of writing.

The Contemporary Integrity of the Temple

Gentry finds indisputable evidence in Rev 11:1-2 that the temple was still standing and that the destruction of Jerusalem was still future when John wrote the book.⁵⁸ He goes to great lengths to prove that it was the Herodian temple of Jesus' day by locating it in Jerusalem, and to show that it does not serve as a symbolic representation of the church.⁵⁹ Yet he gives no attention to the possibility that this may be a future literal temple.

He is quite defensive of his hermeneutical methodology in handling these two verses, a method that involves a mixture of figurative-symbolic and literal-historical.⁶⁰ He takes the measuring to represent the preservation of the innermost aspects including the *nāw* (*naos*, "temple"), altar, and worshipers and the casting out (*kbale* [*ekbale*]) as indicative of the destruction of the external court of the temple complex. The former or inner spiritual idea speaks of the preservation of God's new temple, the church, while the latter or material temple of the old covenant era will come to destruction. In other words, v. 1 is figurative and v. 2 literal. In yet other terms, the *tn nan to ueo* (*ton naon tou theou*, "the temple of God") and *t uysiastrion* (*to*

⁵⁷Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell* 198. "Fanciful" is the best description of some of Gentry's hermeneutical methodology to prove that 666 refers to Nero. He concludes that the beast who is Nero, like Satan himself, is a serpent because in English and in Greek (*XJS* [*chxs*]) pronunciation of the number "sounds hauntingly like a serpent's chilling hiss" (215). He adds that the middle number-letter even has the appearance of a writhing serpent: *j* (*x*) (*ibid.*). Another means of identifying Nero as the beast is his red beard that matches the color of the beast (17:3) (217).

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 165-69.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 169-74.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 174-75.

thysiastrion, "the altar") are symbolic and *tn aln tn jvuen to nao* (*tn auln tn exthen tou naou*, "the court outside the temple") is literal.

Gentry justifies the radical switch in hermeneutical approaches by appealing to Walvoord and Mounce, whom he says combine literal and figurative in this passage also.⁶¹ He cites Walvoord's silence regarding John's literally climbing the walls of the temple to get his measurements and Mounce's reference to the necessity of a symbolic mixture in interpreting the passage. What Gentry does is drastically different from these two, however. He wants a figurative and literal meaning for essentially the same terminology. For example, he assigns the term *naos* both a literal and a symbolic meaning in consecutive verses. In fact, he refers the temple and the altar to literal structures earlier⁶² and to the spiritual temple of the church a few pages later.⁶³ This compares to changing the rules in the middle of the game. Any interpretation can win that way.

His response to objections to his interpretation of 11:1-2 includes an assigning of a pre-70 date to Clement of Rome's epistle to the Corinthians, though its accepted dating is in the 90's. He does this because Clement speaks as though the temple were still standing. Then Gentry has a lengthy discussion of the silence of the rest of the NT regarding the destruction of Jerusalem,⁶⁴ during which he apparently accepts dates prior to 70 for all four gospels, including the Gospel of John, and the rest of the NT canon.⁶⁵ This theory creates further problems for his case, with which he does not deal and so this discussion will not either.

Gentry does not venture an explanation of how John, isolated on the Island of Patmos so many miles from Jerusalem, can visit the literal city to carry out his symbolical task of measuring the temple. He seems oblivious to John's being in a prophetic trance (4:2) to receive this and other revelations in this visional portion of the book. His task in 11:1-2 is the first of his assigned duties to perform following his recommissioning at the end of chap. 10 (10:11). So he is not to transport himself physically across the Mediterranean Sea to Judea, but "in spirit" he is already there.

One cannot quarrel with the conclusion that John's visional

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Ibid., 169-70.

⁶³Ibid., 174.

⁶⁴Ibid., 181-92.

⁶⁵Ibid., 182-83.

responsibility of measuring points in its fulfillment to a literal temple, but it is not the Herodian temple of Jesus' day. It is a future temple to be rebuilt just before Christ's second advent (cf. Dan 9:27; 12:11; Matt 24:15; 2 Thess 2:4). It indeed will be a literal temple, but without symbolic meaning such as Gentry assigns. His idea that the temple and the altar of v. 1 represent the church leaves no room to identify the worshipers in the same verse. His approach to symbolism is inconsistent and self-contradictory. This aspect of the description as well as v. 2 shows that the entire description is on Jewish ground and is not part Jewish and part Christian.⁶⁶

John's measuring of the temple is clearly not for the purpose of obtaining dimensions, but for the sake of acquiring information necessary for his new prophetic task. That information comes in the sequel to the command to measure and cast out, in the description of the two witnesses in 11:3-14.⁶⁷ The two witnesses in association with the sanctuary, the altar, and the worshipers enjoy God's favor (11:5-6, 11-12), but their Gentile foes who oppose and kill them eventually experience a devastating earthquake because of God's disfavor (11:13). So the measuring is an object lesson of how entities favored by and opposed to God will fare during the period of Gentile oppression of Jerusalem that lies ahead during the period covered by the remainder of John's prophecies.

Temporal Expectation of the Author

One other temporal feature that Gentry magnifies is the emphasis of Revelation on the nearness of Christ's coming (Rev 1:1, 3, 19; 22:6, 7, 12, 20). He faults those who refer this to Christ's second advent, noting that the "shortly" or "soon" that characterizes the coming is hardly a suitable way to speak of the already 1900-year interval that separates that coming from the writing of Revelation.⁶⁸ His solution is to refer the book to the imminence of the events to come upon the Jews, the church, and the Roman Empire during the decade of the sixties, culminating in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.⁶⁹

At least two flaws mar his theory. The first is that his

⁶⁶J. A. Seiss, *The Apocalypse*, 3 vols. (New York: Charles C. Cook, 1909) 2:159; Ladd, *Revelation* 152.

⁶⁷Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament*, 4 vols. (London: Longmans, Green, 1903) 4:657.

⁶⁸Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell* 133-37.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 142-43.

placement of the coming of Christ to the church precedes his date for the writing of the book. The coming of Christ for the church, he says, is the Neronian persecution of A.D. 64-68,⁷⁰ but John did not write the book until 65 or early 66.⁷¹ This "coming" was not imminent; it was already in progress.

The other flaw is that of setting time limitations on how long "soon" must be. If the NT makes anything clear, it is that no one knows the day or hour of Christ's coming (e.g., Matt 24:42, 44; 25:13; Mark 13:32). That coming will be like a thief in the night (Rev 3:3) so as to catch everyone by surprise, but according to Gentry's scheme, it was quite predictable. Jesus' teaching about His coming occurring in "this generation" (Matt 24:34) is no exception to this rule,⁷² because He made that statement in the same context of confessing ignorance as to the time of His own coming.

The teaching of Christ's imminent return is not about setting a time limit on when He will come. It is about teaching an attitude of expectancy that provides motivation for a godly lifestyle. Paul expected Christ's return during his lifetime (1 Cor 15:51; 1 Thess 4:15, 17) and this was proper. Yet Paul did not lay down strict guidelines that Christ had to come before he died.

For Gentry, "soon" means already (i.e., Christ's coming for the church), in two years (i.e., Christ's coming for the Jews), and in four years (i.e., Christ's coming for the Roman Empire). If this were correct, in itself it illustrates that "soon" is a relative term with a good bit of elasticity. The Apocalypse computes time either relatively to the divine apprehension as here and in 22:10 or absolutely in itself as long or short (8:1; 20:2). God is not limited by the time constraints that are so binding on man (2 Pet 3:8), so man cannot be impatient in limiting the time span covered by "soon."⁷³

A GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE ISSUE

Gentry's book itemizes a number of other supposed supports for the early date, but admits in most cases that these are only corroborative of his main proofs and have no independent value.⁷⁴

⁷⁰Ibid., 144.

⁷¹Ibid., 336.

⁷²Contra *ibid.*, 131.

⁷³Cf. Thomas, *Revelation 1—7* 54-56.

⁷⁴E.g., Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell* 220-21, 246 n. 44.

Throughout most of the work he gives the impression that he uses two criteria of independent value in dating the book, Nero as the sixth king of 17:10 and the existence of the temple and Jerusalem contemporary to the writing of the book. Yet when he arrives near the end he speaks of the "wealth of internal considerations for an early date."⁷⁵ His wealth of considerations consists of only two, both of which are useless in demonstrating his case, as pointed out above.

This discussion of internal criteria for dating the book of Revelation would not be complete without posing some questions that Gentry does not answer satisfactorily in his book.

(1) How is it that the "cloud-coming" of A.D. 70 involves no personal coming of Christ (Matt 24:30; 26:64; Rev 1:7; 2:5, 16, 25; 3:3, 11, 20; 16:15; 22:7, 12, 20), but the "cloud-coming" at the end of history does (Acts 1:11; 1 Thess 4:13 ff.)?⁷⁶ In the first place, where did Christ distinguish between two such comings, and in the second place, where did He say that He would personally appear at one and not at the other? The answer to both questions is "nowhere." Such a distinguishing between two future comings is the product of a dominion-theological distortion of NT teaching, not of sound exegetical practice.

(2) How could John dwell on the prosperity of the church in Laodicea when the city had been completely destroyed by an earthquake only five years earlier? Gentry responds to this problem by suggesting that Laodicea's wealth was spiritual and not material, by supposing the possibility of a quick rebuilding, and by theorizing that the earthquake did not impact the sector of the city where the Christians were.⁷⁷ A careful exegesis of 3:17, however, shows that Christians in the city thought their material prosperity was equivalent to spiritual prosperity, not that they were spiritually rich while materially poor. The possibility of a quick rebuilding contradicts the facts. The rebuilding effort was still in progress as late as 79 when a gymnasium that was part of the rebuilding effort was completed.⁷⁸ Also an abrupt numismatic poverty marks this period in all the cities of the Lycus district of which Laodicea was a part. This too illustrates

⁷⁵Ibid., 329.

⁷⁶Cf. *ibid.*, 122-23.

⁷⁷Ibid., 319-22.

⁷⁸Colin J. Hemer, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Local Setting*, JSNT

the prolonged effect of the destructive earthquake.⁷⁹ As for Gentry's theory that part of the city was spared the devastation that affected the whole district, this is pure speculation that belies the available facts.

(3) Did the ministry of John overlap that of Paul in the churches of Asia? Gentry's reconstruction of the chronology of the period would require this. If John wrote in 65 or early 66, he must have been in Asia for at least five years prior to that to have unseated Paul as the authoritative apostle for the region and to have gained the respect of Christians throughout the whole province. It would have been necessary for him to have been there long enough to become a problem for Nero too, resulting in his exile to Patmos some time after 64. Paul visited Ephesus at least once after this (A.D. 65), following his release from his first Roman imprisonment (1 Tim 1:3). Yet after leaving the city, he left Timothy in charge of the church and made no reference to the presence of John the Apostle and his influence on the church. If John had been there and had taken charge, why would Paul return to Asia? The answer is that he would not have, but he did so John had not yet arrived in Asia.

(4) When did John arrive in Asia? According to the best tradition, John was part of a migration of Christians from Palestine to the province of Asia just before the outbreak of the Jewish rebellion in A.D. 66, so he did not arrive there before the late sixties.⁸⁰ A Neronian dating of the book would hardly have allowed time for him to settle in Asia, replace Paul as the respected leader of the Asian churches, and be exiled to Patmos before Nero's death in 68. Gentry does not respond to this problem, but his dating of the book in 65 or 66 renders its apostolic authorship impossible.

(5) What was the condition of the churches of Asia during the sixties, that portrayed in Paul's epistles to Ephesians (A.D. 61), Colossians (A.D. 61), and Timothy (A.D. 65 and 67) or that in John's seven messages of Revelation 2-3? Recognizing true apostles and prophets had become a problem in the latter (e.g., 2:2, 20), but the former epistles give no inkling of this kind of a problem. In Paul's epistles to this area, false teaching regarding the person of Christ was a crucial issue (e.g., Col 1:13-20), but not so in John's seven messages. A need in Paul's epistles was strong emphasis on Christian family roles (e.g., Eph 5:22-6:9; Col 3:18-4:1; 1 Tim 6:1-2), but John's messages do not touch this subject at all. A prominent danger in John's messages is the

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Thomas, *Revelation 1—722*.

Nicolaitan heresy (2:6, 15), but Paul's epistles say nothing about it. Differences of this type are almost limitless, the simple reason being that Paul's four epistles and John's seven messages belong to decades separated by twenty years. Gentry responds to this problem only superficially,⁸¹ and therefore ineffectively.

A FINAL REVIEW

It has been impossible to deal with all the peculiar interpretations of dominion theology in the Apocalypse, because the proposed topic has been the internal evidence for dating the book. Probably when Gentry completes his forthcoming commentary, *The Divorce of Israel: A Commentary on Revelation*,⁸² further works of refutation will have to deal with Babylon a symbolic title for Jerusalem,⁸³ why the seven last plagues are not final,⁸⁴ why 19:11-16 is not the second coming of Christ to earth,⁸⁵ why the state pictured in 21:9`22:5 is the church age and not the future eternal state,⁸⁶ and the like. This recently revived postmillennial movement is very aggressive and will continue its efforts to win converts from among both premillennialists and amillennialists.

Meeting its challenge will call for patient exegesis of the separate texts, the kind that requires much time. Yet it is vital to spend this time in the text if the truth of the Word of God is to prevail over propagated error. May this be a call to all to handle the Scriptures carefully in the face of this and many other threats that tend to disfigure the face of Christian doctrine here at the end of the twentieth century. Though human efforts are feeble, may God help His servants to do a good job in what He has put them here to do.

⁸¹Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell* 327-29.

⁸²Cf. *ibid.*, 241 n. 26.

⁸³Cf. Joseph R. Balyeat, *Babylon, The Great City of Revelation* (Sevierville, TN: Onward, 1991) 49-142.

⁸⁴Cf. Chilton, *Days of Vengeance* 383-84

⁸⁵Cf. *ibid.*, 481-89.

⁸⁶Cf. *ibid.*, 535-73.

PROV 23:7—"TO THINK" OR "TO SERVE FOOD"? AN EXEGETICAL NOTE

Kenneth L. Barker¹

"For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Prov 23:7, KJV). When a familiar Hebrew proverb has, in turn, become as proverbial in the English language as this one has (thanks to the KJV), one is reluctant to tamper with it. Yet the key word, the verb **רָאָה** (*ʾar*, "to think"), has long been a *crux interpretum*. What I wish to do in this note is delineate how lexicons, translations, and commentaries have analyzed and interpreted this passage, and then suggest some possible semantic light from the cognate language Ugaritic.

Lexicons

The Brown, Driver, and Briggs lexicon assigns the meaning "calculate, reckon" to *ʾar* in Prov 23:7 translating it, "as he has calculated in his soul, so is he" but hastens to add that this meaning is dubious.² The reason for the uncertainty is that this nuance is unattested elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. The suggested meaning is from late, post-biblical Hebrew (*Piel* stem) and Jewish Aramaic (*Pael* stem)

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²BDB 1045.

usage "put a valuation on, estimate" and from the late Aramaic noun (from the same root) meaning "interest, market price."³ The Arabic cognate to the latter is a loanword from Aramaic. BDB also indicates that the ostensibly related noun **ראַס** (*raʿas*) occurs in Gen 26:12 with the meaning "measure," supposedly developed from an original meaning of "reckoning." There "a hundredfold" renders the ultimate sense of "a hundred measures."

³M. Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim . . .* (reprint, Brooklyn: P. Shalom, 1967) 2:1612-13.

The treatment of KB,⁴ TWOT,⁵ and Holladay⁶ is similar, though Holladay suggests that the text is corrupt.

Translations

It is helpful to note the renderings of the major ancient translations of Prov 23:7. Obviously, they too struggled with the meaning:

LXX: "For as if one should swallow a hair, so he eats and drinks" (apparently reading **ראב** [**se #ar**, "hair"] instead of **sa #ar**; similarly the Syriac Peshitta, "bristle").

Latin Vulgate: "For like a soothsayer or diviner he conjectures that of which he is ignorant" (a very free paraphrase indeed).

The renderings of Prov 23:7a by a number of English versions are as follows:

KJV: "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he."
 NKJV: "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he."
 ASV: "For as he thinketh within himself, so is he."
 NASB: "For as he thinks within himself, so he is."
 RSV: "for he is like one who is inwardly reckoning."
 Berkeley: "for as one who inwardly figures the cost, so is he."
 Amplified: "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he."
 JPS: "He is like one keeping accounts."
 GNB: "What he thinks is what he really is."
 JB: "It would be like a tempest in his throat."
 NAB: "For in his greed he is like a storm."
 NEB: "for they will stick in your throat like a hair."
 NIV: "for he is the kind of man who is always thinking about the cost."

As is very apparent, lexicons and most of the English versions essentially agree on the meaning "calculate, reckon, think (about the cost), figure, keep accounts." The NIV, however, provides an alternative in a footnote: "for as he *puts on a feast*, so is he" (emphasis added). An idea from the "Wisdom of Amenemope" stimulated the renderings in the JB and NAB. The LXX inspired the NEB translation.

⁴KBL 1001.

⁵TWOT2:946.

⁶W. L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971) 380.

Commentaries

In their interpretations, most of the commentaries follow the traditional understandings reflected in the lexicons and English versions:

Zöckler: "this meaning [stated above] of the expression gives a general sense so appropriate that we ought clearly to abide by it," though he acknowledges that "no support can be found for it anywhere in the Old Testament."⁷

Delitzsch revocalizes the perfect to make it a participle **רָעוּב** (**רָעוּב** #*er*) and translates, "For as one who calculates with himself, so is he."⁸

Deane and Taylor-Taswell: "The meaning is that this niggardly host watches every morsel which his guest eats, and grudges what he appears to offer so liberally."⁹

Fausset: "He estimates his meats, and the cost of the entertainment, more than he does you; and is ill at ease if you eat much of his food."¹⁰

Toy, in effect, gives up on the verse: "The Heb. of the first couplet (which has apparently lost some word or words) hardly admits of a satisfactory translation."¹¹

Cohen (Soncino series): "A generous host gives unstintingly to his guest and does not calculate what it costs him; but a miserly host resembles a man who estimates the amount involved in a transaction. Although he extends a cordial invitation to his guest to eat and drink, his heart is not in his words because he is worrying over the outlay."¹²

⁷O. Zöckler, "Proverbs," in *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures . . .*, ed. by J. P. Lange (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n.d.) 200.

⁸F. Delitzsch, "Biblical Commentary on the Proverbs of Solomon," in C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.) 2:108-10.

⁹W. J. Deane and S. T. Taylor-Taswell, "Proverbs," in *The Pulpit Commentary*, ed. by H. D. M. Spence and J. S. Exell (reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983) 9:441.

¹⁰A. R. Fausset, "Job-Isaiah," in R. Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and D. Brown, *A Commentary . . . on the Old and New Testaments* (reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967) 3:489.

¹¹C. H. Toy, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Proverbs*, ICC (reprint, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1970) 430.

¹²A. Cohen, "Proverbs," in *Soncino Books of the Bible*, ed. by A. Cohen (New York: Soncino, 1946) 153.

Whybray basically follows the LXX.¹³

The best and most complete treatment of this problematic clause is by McKane. After giving some assent to the common view, represented by most of the commentaries above, he proceeds to point out its weaknesses. He then notes that Dahood relates $\mathfrak{r};\mathfrak{v}$ ($\mathfrak{s}\#\mathfrak{r}$) to Ugaritic $t\#r$, which refers to serving food. Finally, he concludes by favoring the LXX reading, and then by translating it, "Eating and drinking (with him) is as if one should swallow a hair."¹⁴

It is possible to cite other commentaries, but the ones already noted are representative.

Lexical Light from Ugaritic

Perhaps the first observation should be that this perplexing verb and clause appear as part of the eighth saying in a section of Proverbs consisting of a total of thirty sayings (22:17-24:22; see particularly 22:20, where the correct translation is almost certainly, "Have I not written for you thirty [sayings] . . . ?"). Thus 22:17-24:22 is structurally identical with the Egyptian "Wisdom of Amenemope," which also contains thirty sections. Some of the wording is similar too, though the eighth saying in Proverbs has no close parallel. Since it is always important to interpret Scripture in the light of its context, the text of the entire eighth saying contributes light:

- 6 Do not eat the food of a stingy man,¹⁵
do not crave his delicacies;
- 7 for he is the kind of man
who is always thinking about the cost.
"Eat and drink," he says to you,
but his heart is not with you.
- 8 You will vomit up the little you have eaten
and will have wasted your compliments.¹⁶

¹³R. N. Whybray, "The Book of Proverbs," in *The Cambridge Bible Commentary*, ed. by P. R. Ackroyd, A. R. C. Leaney, and J. W. Packer (Cambridge: University Press, 1972) 135.

¹⁴W. McKane, *Proverbs*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975) 383-85.

¹⁵Lit., "an evil eye." As in 28:22, reference is to a stingy, miserly man. It is the opposite of "a good eye" (22:9), referring to a generous man, who will be blessed (enriched) because he shares his food with the poor.

¹⁶The translation is from the NIV.

I would change the above NIV rendering in v. 7a to the footnote alternative: "for as he puts on a feast, so he is." Even here, however, I would make a slight addition in order to bring out more clearly what I regard as the force of **ovfab** (*benap̄s̄θ*): "for as he puts on a feast within himself, so he is."

John Gray appears to be the first to make the connection between Ugaritic *t#r* and Hebrew *sa #ar* in Prov 23:7.¹⁷ Commenting on *Anat* 1:4-5, he writes, "*yt#r* is found in the same sense in GORDON *UH* 77, 35 and in Hebrew as *r;v*, e.g. Proverbs xxiii, 7."¹⁸ Again he notes, "The root *t#r* is used in the sense of 'arranging' seats and tables etc. in GORDON *UH #nt*, II, 20. It occurs possibly in Hebrew in the sense of 'arranging', 'disposing', e.g. Proverbs xxiii, 7."¹⁹ His most extensive remarks come still later. This is the lengthy quotation:

In Proverbs xxiii, 7 . . . the difficulty of the text was felt by Greek translators who rendered *r;v* by τριχα, 'a hair', obviously reading **rae** [sic]. The meaning would then be 'he is as a hair in the throat'. In the *Wisdom of Amenemope* . . . the same type of man is compared to a storm within one. This suggests that the reading of the Hebrew text may have originally been **ras** corrupted to **rae** during the dictation of the text and subsequently read as **raa**. The Massoretic reading, however, might be supported by the usage of *t#r* in the Ras Shamra texts. In GORDON *UH* 77, 35 in the payment of the dowry of *Nkl* 'her brothers arrange (*yt#r*) the weights of the balances'.²⁰

After citing two more occurrences of *t#r* in a context of putting on a feast or banquet, Gray concludes: "On lexical grounds then there is no reason why the Massoretic reading of Proverbs xxiii, 7 should not stand. . . . The reading of the Egyptian text, however, suggests that after all emendation is necessary in this case."²¹ In the light of all the evidence, I fail to see why "emendation is necessary in this case."

Dahood concurs with Gray's proposal (referring to the first edition of Gray's work): "J. Gray has correctly identified the roots *sa #r*

¹⁷That the phonemes *t* and *s* can legitimately be correlated is demonstrated by such etymological cognates as Hebrew **rov** and Ugaritic *tr*.

¹⁸J. Gray, *The Legacy of Canaan*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967) 38 n. 7.

¹⁹Ibid., 250 n. 1.

²⁰Ibid., 266.

²¹Ibid.

with Ugar. *t#r* 'to serve, arrange,' collocated with *lhm* in *#nt*: I: 4-5, *yt#r wyslhmnh*, 'He serves and feeds him.'²² Dahood mentions this again later in another work: "*t#r* 'to arrange, to serve (food)'. On Prov. 23:7, J Gray."²³

In his Glossary, Gordon (*UT*) defines *t#r* as follows: "*t#r* 'to arrange' (77:35; *#nt*: 20, 37). 'to serve (food)' (*#nt*: I: 4)."²⁴

The following are the texts where *t#r* occurs (the translations are original; the texts are from Gordon, *UT*). In the first passage someone is putting on a feast for Baal:

Anat 1 (V AB, A): 4-5:
qm yt#r He rises, he serves food
*wyslhmnh*²⁵ and he gives him to eat.

The same text (*Anat* 2 [V AB, B]: 20-22) describes the warrior goddess Anat as making banquet preparations:

tt#r ksát lmhr She sets up chairs for the soldiers,
*t#r*²⁶ *tlhant*²⁷ *lsbim* sets tables for the warriors,

²²M. Dahood, *Proverbs and Northwest Semitic Philology* (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1963) 47.

²³M. Dahood, *Ugaritic-Hebrew Philology* (also, Rome, 1965) 75.

²⁴C. H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Textbook* (UT; Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1965) 505, entry #2719.

²⁵*UT* 253; interestingly the latter two verbs appear in the eighth saying in Proverbs and, as in Ugaritic, they are in a context of offering a meal (*lhm* in v. 6 and *#r* in v. 7).

²⁶The form *t#r* is apparently the G inf. (*ta#aru*) and is consistent with Held's view that the Ugaritic (and Hebrew!) poets usually varied their verbal forms in parallel cola. They would often use the same verb but with a different stem or tense. For the sequence *tt#r* . . . *t#r*; then, see M. Held, "The *YQTL-QTL (QTL-YQTL)* Sequence of Identical Verbs in Biblical Hebrew and in Ugaritic," in *Studies and Essays in Honor of Abraham A. Neuman*, ed. by M. Ben-Horin, B. D. Weinryb, and S. Zeitlin (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1963) 281-90; cf. also his article, "The Action-Result (Factitive-Passive) Sequence of Identical Verbs in Biblical Hebrew and Ugaritic," *JBL* 84 (1965):272-82.

²⁷As I have indicated elsewhere ("The Value of Ugaritic for Old Testament Studies," *BSac* 133 [April 1976]:125), the Hebrew for "table" (, אִלּוּ [*sulhan*]) was said to be related to an Arabic verb, *salaha*, with the resultant meaning, "skin or leather mat spread on the ground" (BDB, 1020). Now Ugaritic provides the true etymology with its cognate noun, *tlhn*, "table." Since two of the phonemes differ from the

*hdmm lḡzrm*²⁸ footstools for the heroes.²⁹

As the lines following in that context make clear, Anat here resorts to deception, which is typical of her trickery and treachery. She is really "setting them up."

The reference in 77 (NK): 35³⁰ has already been dealt with in the quotation from Gray above. The one in *Anat 2* (V AB, B): 37 is uncertain.

Conclusion

First, it seems that Ugaritic *t#r* can mean "to arrange, set (up), offer, serve (food), put on a feast or banquet."

Second, Hebrew *ṣā #ar* in Prov 23:7 should probably have a new etymology, by relating it to Ugaritic *t#r*, and should mean "to serve food, put on a feast." The verb in both languages appears in the context of offering or hosting a meal.

Third, it is interesting that the ultimate sense of the passage in Proverbs is basically the same with either translation. If the meaning of Hebrew *ṣā #ar* is "to serve food," the point is still that it is *how* a host serves food *within himself* that reveals his character and motivation. Outwardly he may be serving a lavish feast, but inwardly he may be grudging every bite his guests take.

Thus the eighth saying is about a stingy, miserly host who, for whatever reason, desires to give the appearance of being a generous person when, in reality, he is a hypocrite. He is insincere "his heart is not with you" (v. 7). When his stinginess begins to become obvious from his attitude, mannerisms, facial expressions, speech, actions, etc.,

alleged Arabic cognate, Ugaritic proves such an etymology to be incorrect, and it must now be abandoned. The word simply means "table," with nothing said about its nature, structure, or material.

²⁸UT, 253. Based on Ugaritic, Held has argued (class notes) for I *ṛz*; (*#zr*, "to help, save, rescue") and II *ṛz*; (*#zr*, "to be strong") in Biblical Hebrew. I *#zr* = *#ṣr* (UT *#dr*) in Ugaritic, while II *#zr* = *ṣr* in Ugaritic. A few passages where II *#zr* may exist in the Hebrew Bible are 1 Chr 5:20; 12:1; 2 Chr 20:23; 26:15; Pss 28:7; 89:20 ("I have bestowed *strength*," NIV); Isa 41:10; Ezek 30:8; 32:21.

²⁹H. L. Ginsberg's translation (ANET 136) of these lines reads, "She *pictures* the chairs as heroes,/ *Pretending* a table is warriors,/ And that the footstools are troops." I can only assume that Ginsberg's rendering is based on the alleged connection between Biblical Hebrew *ṣā #ar* and the post-Biblical and Jewish Aramaic usage discussed above.

³⁰UT183.

it turns the stomachs of his guests, and in disgust they realize that they have wasted their compliments (v. 8).

The Bible commends generosity and unselfish sharing, and condemns avarice, hoarding, and miserliness. Even society in general frowns on the Silas Marners and Scrooges of this world, and praises good Samaritans. So "do not eat the food of a stingy man, . . . for *as he serves food within himself*, so he is. 'Eat and drink,' he says to you, but his heart is not with you." Let the wise show their wisdom by heeding this sage counsel.

BOOK REVIEWS

Donald A. Carson, ed. *Worship: Adoration and Action*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993. \$14.99 (paper). 256 pp. Reviewed by James E. Rosscup, Professor of Bible Exposition.

This is the fifth in a series by the Faith and Church Study Unit of the Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Fellowship. The other volumes dealt with biblical interpretation, the church, prayer, and justification by faith. A team of writers contributed the thirteen chapters, each addressing an area of his expertise.

Carson's emphasis in the opening chapter is on who is being worshiped and who is worshipping. Without undercutting techniques, traditions, and the activity of worship, he aims to see worship in its essence, whatever way it is expressed. It is God-centeredness, true godliness, whether through inward reverence or outward obedience in service to God (13). Carson sees God-centered living in every area of life in thought or in action and as an individual or in a congregation as adoration of God (17-18). Worship, then, is far more than corporate actions in a place during a "service" or *part* of a "service" such as before or after a sermon (14; cf. 189). David Peterson, author of Chap. 3 in this book, has another book looking at the essence of worship (*Engaging with God* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993]). In defining this essence, Peterson's work rates high among English works during this century.

Writers who favor different traditions of worship contribute chapters describing them in their most attractive form, in some cases offering critiques. They look at worship the Presbyterian, Anglican, charismatic, Reformed Dutch, and Lutheran ways. One wonders why he finds no Baptist, Methodist, or Bible-church chapters, or discussions of other missing groups. However, he does find "Charismatically-Orientated Worship" in a Baptist church (Chap. 11).

Other chapters address "Theology of Worship in the Old Testament" (Chap. 2), "Worship in the New Testament" (Chap. 3), "Patterns of Worship Among Students Worldwide" (Chap. 12), and "Worship as Adoration and Action" (Chap. 13). These chapters, along with Chap. 1, show how worship saturates different parts of Scripture.

The discussion of how worship relates to stages of OT history is insightful, well-organized, and carefully researched. Readers who relate Ezekiel 40-48 to the future millennial era will have difficulty

with the treatment of 43:10, however. The writer puts these details on holiness in the "final and ideal relationship" between God and his covenant people (46). He concludes that the "only adequate fulfillment is described by John in the closing chapters of the Apocalypse" i.e., Revelation 21-22. He should have explained his reasons for placing Ezekiel's description in the ultimate state. The chapters seem to describe conditions before the ultimate situation. Reasons for locating them earlier include the presence of death, the gathering of Israelites in their land with stated tribal boundaries, and exact measurements of a temple smaller than those for the new Jerusalem in Revelation 21. Nevertheless, the chapter on OT worship has a full description of the significance of worship.

Peterson's chapter on the NT is articulate and relates worship to every aspect of daily life, not just when congregations meet. It looks at key terms in some detail: *proskynein* (grateful submission to God), *latreusin* (service), and *leitourgein* (priestly service). It also discusses Jesus Christ's perfect worship, the way of worship He makes possible, Christ as the object of worship, sacrificial obedience as worship (Rom 12:1), and the relation of worship to Christian ministry. Later, the chapter examines congregational worship in Acts and the epistles (as in the Lord's Supper, 1 Corinthians 11), in Hebrews, and in Revelation. The writer maintains that wherever a Christian is, worship is "repeated self-surrender . . . in obedience of life" (83). It is constantly engaging with God in confession, thanksgiving, intercession, self-dedication, and praise (90). Worship, the chapter says, also involves keeping in view the responsibility for a priestly prophetic task in relation to the world (Rom 15:5-6; Phil 2:14-16; 1 Pet 2:9) (91).

Chapter 12 on "Patterns of Worship Among Students Worldwide" is provocative. Worship can be praising God in song, thanks, adoration (as in other listings, terms overlap one another), witness to non-Christians, attitude toward studies, the way of serving God on the job, personal relationships, and convictions on social and ethical issues. It is a whole lifestyle reflecting gratitude to God for His worthiness (189-90). "True worship acknowledges that every part of our life comes under God's control" (190).

The chapter also evaluates how aims and emphases in the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students relate to OT and NT worship (cf. Chaps. 2-3). Then it analyzes how worship habits reflect these aims. Finally, it discusses features of modern youth culture and campus life that are against biblical ideals. The writer candidly admits that sometimes people view worship as distinct from other phases of a meeting (e.g., Bible exposition, discussion, prayer), as though these were *not* also worship. This is not always the case, however (194).

Some of the many principles to stimulate readers are: (1) It can be worshipful to repeat lines when singing, as the psalmist sometimes does; (2) choruses such as "I love you, Lord . . ." can express devotion,

though it is good also to mingle hymns about God first loving us or read Scripture about this; (3) rather than an imbalanced use of choruses, it is healthy to balance a worship time with different aspects "that feed our understanding of who God is and what he has done for us in Christ" (194-95), to maintain doctrinal balance. One Christian songbook has virtually no reference to the cross, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and God the creator (195). One danger in choruses is that they tend to be man-centered. (4) Raised hands may gain such popularity that they in effect replace the bent knee; and what people share in a so-called "word of knowledge" may incite more interest than the reading of Scripture. (5) Practices of believers in other parts of the world can challenge those in the West, as when people in South Africa pray four times daily, an hour at a time (196). (6) It helps to keep oneself teachable and flexible, able to join in new ways to express worship. (7) Christians need to be on guard to see that it is not just a catchy song, but that the words of a song are biblical. Beyond these examples, the chapter has even further beneficial principles and dangers as cautions, if not as wake-up calls (197-200).

The book provides a wealth of thought to enhance worship privately or corporately. Many parts bear marks of thorough research (cf. the chapter footnotes at the end). Though often rewarding, at times it is lengthy, detailed, and requires high motivation. All in all, this reviewer recommends it as a book with definitive concepts of worship as God-centered discipleship.

Peter Cotterell and Max Turner. *Linguistics & Biblical Interpretation*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1989. 348 pp. \$19.95 (paper). Reviewed by David C. Deuel, Associate Professor of Old Testament.

The authors, Peter Cotterell and Max Turner, are senior lecturer in missiology and linguistics at London Bible College and teaching fellow in NT exegesis at the University of Aberdeen, respectively. Their primary purpose in writing is "to offer a measure of guidance to students as to how they can use linguistics to develop more nuanced approaches to exegesis" (33). In short, "Linguistics may afford further precision, system and breadth of analysis" (27) to biblical interpretation.

They draw from this sister discipline principles by which to interpret as well as correctives with which to prevent abuse. Within the broad range of language studies, they concentrate on three main areas:

First, the concept of *meaning* (semantics), and especially . . . the vexed question of lexical semantics, the meaning of words; second, the particular significance to be assigned to author, text, and reader in the

search for the meaning of any particular part of the Bible; and third, the significance of the recognition of the role of the discourse *as a whole* (a conversation, a parable, an anecdote, an epistle) in determining meaning (9-10).

A good example of a basic, yet commonly violated, principle of text interpretation comes from the book's discussion of meaning (semantics). The error commonly arises from the fact that individual words have multiple and sometimes diverse meanings or senses:

The attempt to give the words sharing a common lexical form a 'basic' sense which is then made to account for all the other senses of words with the same lexical form is to be resisted. In cases of homonyms there may be no shared component of meaning. In instances of polysemy there is usually *some* component of meaning shared between a number of senses, but it is not always the case that every sense of the word shares a single common component of meaning, far less that it is a *central* component of meaning (179).

From the authors' discussion of discourse, the area of language studies which looks at the structure of complete texts, comes another and perhaps better known set of errors committed by students of the Bible. Perhaps because of their theological commitment to the very words of Scripture, they have a tendency toward microanalysis at the word and sentence levels without considering the text as a unit of communication. To this the authors respond,

There has been a tendency to interpret the text of the Bible in terms of sentences rather than in terms of utterances, although all responsible commentators have taken some account of the socio-historical setting of the texts they expound (18).

Giving consideration to only a small textual unit and its immediate context does not see where the passage is going (80). Without an overarching understanding of a whole discourse, one should not feel confident that he has understood the individual sections (81). And how he understands the sense relations between sections considerably affects the sense of the paragraphs themselves (*ibid*). The authors explain the nature of texts, which requires giving more careful attention to the notion of structure:

Any address, any conversation, any book, any discourse, has structure. It would be absurd to attempt to impose any rigorous model of that structure on discourse, since it would be a matter of little difficulty to produce an example of discourse minus the structure. But discourse is not a random sequence of utterances, or an unrelated collection of sentences. In discourse we have sequences, words which are grammatically related and semantically connected, and this grammatical and

semantic relatedness extends across sentence and paragraph boundaries to embrace the entire discourse. We note also that there is not merely coherence; there is also progression: a discernible development leading to some kind of peak. There is, in simplistic terms, a beginning, a middle, and an end (247).

The interpreter can study the structure of a text more carefully by diagramming that text. Even the most accomplished exegetes, translators, and other text scholars resort to diagramming when the organization of a text necessitates it. Another type of corrective addressed by the authors focuses on methods for mapping out texts. Diagramming, be it line, block, phrase, structure diagramming, or other, if carefully executed may assist the Bible student in discovering and blueprinting one sort of structure in a text. The authors set forth their own method of diagramming which, not surprisingly, gives greater emphasis to meaning than to form; however, they are careful to acknowledge the inherent weaknesses of the method. In short, the diagram may codify visually the grammatical and syntactical relations a Bible student assumes are resident in a text, and in so doing, provides the grounds for considering other interpretive options. In essence, the diagram tells what the interpreter believes is there. It helps organize much detail in one's thinking. The shortcomings of this method lie not as much in the method itself as in the assumptions of those who choose to employ it:

The attempt to represent the thought structure in a diagrammatic form is usually liable to be fruitful, at least in helping the reader to explore the ranking of the subordination. But it is not yet a systematic and explicit statement of the relationship between the parts. A line on a piece of paper may suggest that a relationship between parts exists, but a line *does not specify the nature* of that relationship as such (203, emphasis added).

At times, the authors become skeptical about the exegetical process and its potential for recovering the messages of ancient texts. For example, "The fact is that because of the enormous complexity of human communication we are practically never in total control of the communication process" (15). Though it is true that language is complex and may lack a certain kind of precision, this statement may be unduly pessimistic. Whatever shortcomings human language may have, it has never stopped humans from communicating either in oral or written form. The fact of the matter is that human understanding of the process *is* less precise than the process itself. But at one time these texts communicated. With careful and prayerful research they can do so again.

So far as the impact of modern linguistics on biblical study is concerned, students of the Bible have already learned much regarding

abuses in exegesis. Even if the discipline does not yield as much assistance in the "how to's" of exegesis, students of the Bible who employ the time-tested aspects of linguistics may benefit greatly from this sister discipline. This reviewer highly recommends the book to those students willing to do the hard study to become acquainted with linguistics' challenging and, at times, daunting theoretical models and methods, while maintaining realistic expectations from the discipline like those of the authors: as with "historical study, the use of linguistics in biblical interpretation, is not so much to provide assured answers as to *clarify the important questions*" (32).

Everett Ferguson. *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*. 2nd Edition. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993. xx + 612 pp. \$29.95 (paper). Reviewed by Keith Essex, Assistant Professor of Bible Exposition.

Everett Ferguson, professor emeritus of Bible at Abilene Christian University, has revised this work first published in 1987. He intends it as a textbook that will help the reader grasp the political, social, cultural, religious, and philosophical realities that were present when the Christian Church was born. The main focus of the book is the three centuries from 100 B.C. to A.D. 200. Ferguson relates the thought and movements of these three centuries to the broader context of the Hellenistic-Roman world of 330 B.C. to A.D. 330. He designs this discussion to lay a foundation for the reader's study of the NT and early Church history.

A concise introduction to the political history of the Hellenistic-Roman era begins the text. Particularly valuable in this section are the ten results of the conquests of Alexander the Great (13-14) and the explanation of the administration of the Roman Empire (39-44). Ferguson then devotes 92 pages to a discussion of the social background of the Roman Empire in the first century. Though the discussion of each topic is brief, the broad contour of the Gentile social world emerges in this chapter.

Chapters 3 and 4 contain the central thrust of this volume. In these two chapters, he devotes 235 pages to a discussion of Greco-Roman religion and philosophy, leading the reader through many details in the process. But in the midst of the details, he has two excellent summaries. The first is a succinct statement of the twelve general characteristics of religion in Hellenistic-Roman times (161-165). The second states the general features of Hellenistic-Roman philosophy (300-305). These two are extremely valuable for the beginning student.

Ferguson considers Judaism the principal context of early Christianity, so his 174-page fifth chapter on Judaism is the longest in

the book. The discussion of Judaism follows the basic lines of standard NT histories in surveying the history, literature, and religion of Judaism. Though Judaism was the foundation for Christianity, in the NT and early Christian centuries, the church moved from its Jewish roots into the wider Greco-Roman world. Thus this book emphasizes both Judaism which most students know well and the wider Greco-Roman environment about which most students know little. The book concludes with a chapter showing how Christianity fared in the ancient world.

Backgrounds of Early Christianity has become a widely used textbook because of a number of strengths. First, it has an excellent survey of the political, social, literary, and religious background. The author says a little about many subjects that prepare the reader for more specialized works. Second, Ferguson, has intentionally presented the viewpoint of current scholarly consensus in his many discussions. Third, the bibliographies are excellent in pointing the reader to both primary and secondary sources for the topics discussed.

This work fulfills its purpose as an introductory textbook. The student would be well advised to master it before reading the more specialized works on NT history, archaeology, and sociology.

Peter Jones. *The Gnostic Empire Strikes Back, an Old Heresy for the New Age*. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1992. 112 pp. \$6.95 (paper). Reviewed by Robert L. Thomas, Professor of New Testament.

This work is a warning to the church from a Professor of New Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary, Escondido, CA. He sees a large-scale battle ahead and tries to arm believers for that battle when it arrives (x, 7-8). He furnishes information to give them a grasp of an emerging system of error and encourages a level of commitment necessary to withstand the enemy's onslaught. The current enemy is the New Age movement, which he sees as a largely secretive and worldwide religious network with a coherent agenda (5).

Jones goes about his task in a very straightforward and easily understood manner. He sees the New Age teachings as a re-emergence of ancient Gnostic heresy that the orthodox leaders of early Christianity were successful in thwarting (14). He selects six areas for comparing the two systems`cosmology, redemption, Christ, God, sexuality, and spiritual techniques`and concludes that the two resemble each other like "Siamese cats" (44). He first details the teaching of Christian Gnosticism in the six categories (21-34), then does the same with New Age positions (45-71). The degree of concurrence between the two is remarkable and the author does a creditable job of

showing this.

One example of this correspondence must suffice: Gnostics taught that the creation was never meant to be and owed its existence to a cosmic "goof" committed by the foolish Creator God (the Demiurge) of the Bible, thereby imprisoning mankind in evil matter (21-22). To New Agers, in comparison, "creation" is the sum of all created things, understood according to syncretistic pantheism. Physical existence is ultimately an illusion and so needs no creator to explain its existence (46-47). New Age proponent Shirley MacLaine holds to the superiority of spirit over matter, making it possible through mental and spiritual powers for her (or anyone) to dominate and escape the limitations of the physical creation and become a creator herself (46). Physical existence is merely an illusion (47). The two systems have similar ways of disposing of the biblical doctrine of God's creation of the world *ex nihilo*.

One can hardly speak highly enough of Jones' excellent documentation throughout a book of this type. The writing style is popular and readable, but notes at the end of each chapter provide opportunities for those who want to pursue any one of the points in further study. He is particularly conversant with scholarly developments regarding the Gnostic documents discovered at Nag Hammadi and developed through the efforts of James Robinson. He strongly objects to Robinson's attempts to grant these writings equal authority with the NT books (90-91) attempts that aim at legitimizing teachings which up until now have been considered blatant heresy, such as an androgynous view of Jesus (92).

Jones' book will be a valuable addition to anyone's Christian library, lay person or scholar. It sounds a needed warning, though it perhaps goes a bit too far in concluding that various strands of New Age teaching such as Earth Summit, homosexuality, feminism, mandated cultural and ethnic diversity are deeply related aspects of a coherent religious agenda (72). Plenty of heresy is latent in the movement, no doubt, but it appears to be coming from sources that are too varied and displaying too diverse a nature to conclude that it at this stage represents a conspiracy proceeding from a single source.

Nevertheless, *The Gnostic Empire Strikes Back* is a valuable addition to contemporary Christian resources.

William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr.
Introduction to Biblical Interpretation (Dallas: Word, 1993). xiii + 518 pp. \$28.99 (cloth). Reviewed by Robert L. Thomas, Professor of New Testament.

Three professors at Denver Seminary have collaborated to

produce this major work on biblical hermeneutics and interpretation. Klein and Blomberg serve in NT and Hubbard in OT. The book reflects a good sensitivity to most hermeneutical issues currently being discussed among evangelicals and others, and this is gratifying. Examples are the issues of cultural distance (14-15), feminist interpretation (363, 453 ff.), and interaction with missiological concerns (403-4, 417, 451 ff.).

These men have presented many fine emphases, some of which are lacking in other texts of this kind. One of them is their focus on the importance of the role of the Holy Spirit in interpretation (4, 84-85). Their view of interpretation as both a science and art is also commendable (5). They realize too that OT prophecy ceased after Ezra, Nehemiah, and the latest of the minor prophets (54-55, 58). They recognize the pitfalls of canon criticism when it dwells on its theory of contradictions (66). This reviewer also approves what they at one point present as the goal of hermeneutics: "the meaning of the biblical writers 'meant' to communicate at the time of the communication, at least to the extent that those intentions are recoverable in the texts they produced" (98; cf. 133). The point that normally biblical writers intended single, not multiple, meanings is also well-taken (123). They appropriately emphasize the importance of considering context, historical-cultural background, word meanings, and grammatical relationships in exegesis (156). Their discussion of English Bible translations rightly concludes that literal translations are superior to less literal ones for purposes of Bible study (205). These illustrate the many valuable features in the book.

Their definitions of biblical and systematic theology are helpful (384), though their view of the relative nature of the categories in systematic theology is open to challenge (384-86). The Appendix "Modern Approaches to Interpretation" also has valuable information (427 ff.).

The deficiencies of *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* are also multiple. The discussion surrounding preunderstanding is one weakness. In the first place, the authors do not advocate excluding it from the interpretive process as has the traditional grammatico-historical approach (115). Then they create confusion regarding the precise definition of preunderstanding. They endorse Ferguson's definition of preunderstanding: "a body of assumptions and attitudes which a person brings to the perception and interpretation of reality or any aspect of it" (99). Insisting that it is desirable and essential, they distinguish it from prejudice and make prejudice one element of preunderstanding (99 with n. 39). Yet they see presuppositions as differing from preunderstanding (xxii). Presuppositions include such things as the Bible being an inspired revelation, an authoritative and true document with unparalleled spiritual worth, characterized by unity and diversity, understandable, and composed of sixty-six books

(88-92). It is difficult to explain why these are not a part of if not identical with preunderstanding as defined by the authors. In fact, an illustration of preunderstanding at one point (100) is identical with that of presuppositions at another (94) a willingness or unwillingness to accept the supernatural.

Another illustration of apparent inconsistency relates to the book's argument for a hermeneutical approach that will eliminate variable and subjective human factors (8). Yet at a later stage, they make a case for "creative" meanings of passages that the original writers never intended (145). The four proposed controls for creative interpretations notwithstanding (149-50), this approach to hermeneutics "smacks" of subjectivity to its very core.

This Denver trio says the gospels do not have the actual words spoken by Jesus and that the gospel writers do not attribute words to Jesus that He never said (11) two properties hard to reconcile with one another. At the same time they cite as balanced studies of the gospels some works by scholars who say the gospels *do* attribute to Jesus words He never spoke (330 n. 22). This associates with their endorsement of redaction critical methodology (330). One wonders why they fail to notice a 1986 *JETS* article, "The Hermeneutics of Evangelical Redaction Criticism," which points out the incompatibility of redaction criticism with grammatico-historical hermeneutics (*JETS* 29/4 [December 1986]:447-59).

The work will be quite a disappointment to those of a dispensational orientation because of its handling of relevant hermeneutical principles. The foregone conclusion is that the church fulfills OT prophecies about Israel (309, 310, 328, 420, 421). Why then do they not deny that Israel still exists, but rather assign Israel a place of some sort in God's future program (310)?

They deny that the prophecy of the seventy weeks in Dan 9:24-27 has fixed chronological fulfillment, instead referring the weeks to undefined long and short periods of time (312). They eschew literal interpretation of the book of Revelation, largely because of the apocalyptic genre of the book (372). They cannot see 144,000 as a literal number or the millennium as 1,000 years (373). Their advice is to look for the major theological principles in the Apocalypse and avoid getting bogged down in details (374). Once again, one can but speculate on their reasons for not mentioning the article "Literary Genre and Hermeneutics of the Apocalypse" (*The Master's Seminary Journal* 2/1 [Spring 1991]:79-97) which defends a literal method of interpretation in Revelation.

The position regarding predictive prophecy is novel. The men contend that God in His sovereignty has the right to fulfill or not to fulfill prophecy, so readers must interpret such predictions tentatively (306). This unusual stance accompanies their insistence that one cannot depend on a literal fulfillment of prophecy (306-8). They see

God as a God of surprises who may still have some left (309). Their view of prophecy is quite out-of-step with a view of Scripture that provides for an ongoing program for national Israel based on a literal fulfillment of her prophecies.

One of the most surprising features of this book from a seminary faculty allied with a noncharismatic denomination (Conservative Baptists of America) is their openness to the "signs and wonders" phenomena associated most often with churches of Pentecostal orientation. They indicate that Christians today can repeat the miracles performed by Christ and described in the gospel accounts (341-42). A believer may risk quenching the Spirit by not praying for such to happen, they say (342).

One other inexplicable peculiarity lies in their "Annotated Bibliography" at the back of the volume. Among the English concordances they list the ones for the NASB, NIV, and NRSV as examples of exhaustive or unabridged concordances, including in their listing the editors for the NIV and NRSV concordances but omitting the editor of the NASB concordance. Perhaps this was an oversight.

In light of the weaknesses of this book and in spite of its points of value, the balance of judgment must favor not recommending it as a "rule book" for "playing the game" of hermeneutics. When someone looks for a statement of standards to follow in interpretation, that person wants a more dependable source than *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* provides. It contains too many quirks that could lead interpreters astray if they have no criteria for recognizing what is irregular and what is not. The volume will be helpful, however, for occasional reference and comparison.

John F. MacArthur, Jr., and Wayne A. Mack. *Introduction to Biblical Counseling*. Dallas: Word, 1994. 408 pp. \$24.99 (cloth). Reviewed by Richard L. Mayhue, Professor of Pastoral Ministries.

John MacArthur, Wayne Mack, and some of The Master's College faculty have combined their vision and expertise to produce a definitive statement on biblical counseling that will provide an alternative to both secular psychology and so-called Christian psychology. Biblical content saturates the volume, yet its conclusions reach all the way into the ministry of the local church with guidance principles for those whose lives need redirection/rebuilding.

The volume is divided into four sections: Part 1 "The Historical Background of Biblical Counseling"; Part 2 "The Theological Foundations of Biblical Counseling"; Part 3 "The Process of Biblical Counseling"; and Part 4 "The Practice of Biblical Counseling." In addition, the appendix provides a Personal Data Inventory which should be a

very helpful tool for those doing biblical counseling. Three indices—authors, Scriptures, and subjects—will make it easy for the reader to locate specifics in the book.

This volume presents a system of biblical truth that brings people and their problems together with the power of God to transform their lives. According to the authors, *Introduction to Biblical Counseling* rests on three convictions: (1) God's Word should be a Christian's counseling authority; (2) counseling should be a part of the basic discipling ministry of the local church; and (3) Christians can have training in how to counsel effectively. This book will be of equal value to pastors and laymen in the church. It will also serve well as a basic text at the seminary level, in a Bible college, or for counseling training in the local church.

Introduction to Biblical Counseling is rooted and grounded in a high view of God and Scripture, the sufficiency of Scripture, and a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. Part 1, "The Historical Background of Biblical Counseling," sets the stage for the remainder of the book. After a general introduction to the subject of "Rediscovering Biblical Counseling," which establishes the value of biblical counseling over any other kind of counseling, two more chapters follow. First, the approach to counseling used by the Puritans and, second, "Biblical Counseling in the 20th Century." This latter chapter provides helpful insights into understanding the "why's" for the writing of this volume.

Part 2, "The Theological Foundations of Biblical Counseling," encompasses six helpful chapters. "Counseling and the Sinfulness of Humanity" and "The Work of the Spirit and Biblical Counseling" stand out as perhaps the most significant contributions. Part 3, "The Process of Biblical Counseling," describes the day-by-day life of the biblical counselor. Mack, who has been involved in biblical counseling for over two decades, provides seven very helpful and practical chapters to deal with everything from developing a right relationship with counselees to implementing biblical instruction. If the potential reader has a vital interest in real life counseling, these chapters should be of immense help because they have been written out of the rich reservoir of one who not only has studied the subject extensively, but has been personally involved in counseling at the pastoral level for many years.

The concluding section, "The Practice of Biblical Counseling," deals with many helpful subjects such as "Spirit-Giftedness and Biblical Counseling" and "Preaching and Biblical Counseling." Readers will find "Resources for Biblical Counseling" to be of immense help as it lays out what the authors believe are the most helpful pieces of literature available today to complement *Introduction to Biblical Counseling*. As with most books of this nature, it is not possible to cover every subject evenly, so it has pulled together a number of issues in the final chapter, "Frequently Asked Questions about Biblical

Counseling."

Introduction to Biblical Counseling is thoroughly biblical, well written, theologically grounded, and immensely practical. Every church and every Christian school should consider using this volume as a basic text for their ongoing instruction in biblical counseling.

Dan McCartney and Charles Clayton. *Let the Reader Understand: A Guide to Interpreting and Applying the Bible*. Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1994. 360 pp. \$15.99 (paper). Reviewed by James E. Rosscup, Professor of Bible Exposition.

This well-researched book covers the main aspects of interpretation and is quite readable. Bruce Waltke on the back cover rates it as "the best introduction" to the subject. McCartney is Associate Professor of New Testament, Westminster Theological Seminary, and Clayton is Executive Director of World Vision in Great Britain.

The work has ten chapters: truth, language, and sin; presuppositions about the Bible and creation; presuppositions and interpretation (tradition and the church, and the Holy Spirit as the ultimate interpreter); main ways the church has interpreted the Bible during history; what the grammatical-historical method is; moving from what a passage means to how it applies now; how to study Scripture; biblical genres; the Bible in worship and witness; and Scripture and guidance. Two appendices are "Where is Meaning," dealing with authorial intent and reader response, and "The Historical-Critical Method." Copious chapter notes (293-346) add documentation, frequent valuable insights, and evidence of a broad scholarly awareness.

A good section discusses bad and good aspects of tradition in interpretation (73-74). Tradition is bad where it controls interpretation of Scripture, despite proper exegesis, but good as in "tradition" that Paul advocates (1 Cor 11:2; 2 Thess 2:15). Interpreters ought to evaluate tradition, not necessarily reject it (74). Helpful comments appear on the Holy Spirit as the ultimate interpreter (78-80).

A chapter on the history of interpretation cites clear examples of allegorism such as that by Origen on Ps 137:8-9. Origen labored to avoid literal ideas he construed as offensive, e.g., infants dashed against stones (89). The authors recognize that Origen also practiced much literal interpretation.

Sections on Luther and Calvin are brief but profitable. Luther practiced both literal and allegorical interpretation, in the latter case missing the true sense of texts (93-96). Calvin was literal more than Luther. He did not reject James as Luther did, but saw James'

emphasis on works and Paul's on faith as in harmony (97). The discussion about the time from Calvin to today is general, treating only Schleiermacher (1768-1834) and Bultmann (1884-1976). This does not provide an adequate picture of interpretation during that span (99-111). The book could have cited some wholesome examples of interpretation.

Chapter 5 on the grammatical-historical method focuses on uncovering the text's meaning for its writer and immediate recipients. Background (cultural, social, geographical, linguistic, historical), word study, cross-reference within that writer, and literary genre and context are avenues to obtain this meaning (112-13). This section has many benefits despite being quite general. One is the caution against seeing too much information in a word. Another is the need to see the basic unit of meaning such as the sentence, so that one interprets words in their setting, not in isolation (115-16). *Biblical* instead of nonbiblical examples would have strengthened several of the discussions.

Certain statements will appear arbitrary and unpersuasive. An example is the statement about Rev 3:20 where the authors see only a generalized reminder to Christians that Christ is ready to commune with and strengthen His people (119-20). This is not a general invitation to non-Christians to open their hearts to Christ. However, what about *other contextual* aspects that question whether all people in the churches have genuinely experienced salvation (e.g., 2:12-14; 2:24-25; 3:1-3 compared with 3:4)? A number of scholars see clues pointing to a mixed audience.

The point about accuracy in the choice of words is good. "Our rector is literally the father of every boy and girl in the village" sounds like the rector had had sexual escapades with every woman who became a mother there! A better wording would be, "Our rector is a kind of spiritual father to. . . ." The section on interpreting metaphors is well done (121-29). McCartney and Clayton are wise to recognize that some texts are ambiguous (132-36). Interpreters should not be dogmatic about the meaning, but have an openness to learn new factors and not leap to conclusions.

The work makes fine observations about the principle of context (141-50). The authors see context in various ways—textual, circumstantial, redemptive-historical, and cultural-linguistic. They have a healthy focus on finding a text's *overall* meaning so as to interpret a *part* of it rightly—a paragraph within its communicative unit/section/book or a word in relation to other uses of that word in the paragraph, chapter, or book (142).

Some points will not convince every reader. An example is in the reasoning drawn from a veil being over the minds of those who do not believe in Christ (2 Corinthians 3) so that they do not grasp the real meaning. This does not mean, as the authors seem to imply, that

Christians can detect meanings beyond the grammatical-historical interpretation of a passage (150). Also, the hardness of Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's immediate audience is not an indication that their prophecies were for a later audience who had liberty to see added meanings in their words. Rather, later readers would, presumably, see the meaning that Israelites *should* have seen, not something beyond it (150). The authors are more persuasive in citing 1 Cor 9:9-10 as extending the principle about muzzling the ox (Deut 25:4) to apply to *people*. Their overall point is good: NT passages sometimes show more of what God saw in OT passages. However, the book cites dangers of reading new meanings into the Word and stresses four ways to apply what a text teaches (151 ff.).

Some treatments do not convey the precise point in verses cited. An instance is, "The OT read by itself was a 'mystery,' but this mystery has now been made known" (153). The writers cite Eph 3:9 and Col 1:26. Actually, Ephesians speaks not of the OT in general, but particularly of the one point of Jews and Gentiles in one body. Colossians refers to Christ indwelling Jews and Gentiles, *that* specific matter. Much in the OT was not a mystery during the writing of the NT.

The initial definition of types (153) leaves out a vital aspect: that a type prefigures an antitype which is *greater*. The writers in time reveal their awareness of this aspect of elevation. They reflect it in such words as "greater deeds of God in the future," "Christ is the ultimate fulfillment of Israel's tradition-building process," and "a more perfect sacrifice" (Hebrews 8:10) (154). Finally, pages later they write that the antitype "must be greater" (158).

The book favors seeing more types than the NT expressly mentions. One example, on which opinions differ, is viewing Joseph as a type of Christ, the greater preserver/deliverer of God's people, in accord with Abrahamic promises. They also cite resemblances Joseph bore to Christ, "the ultimate Man of God" (158-59).

Chapter 8 on genres clarifies much on theological history, law, poetry, prophecy, and parables. But it is quite general about how to interpret such things as prophecy (only about 2 pages, 219-21) and parables (3 1/2 pages). Specific details would make a good book better.

Appendix A, "What is Meaning?," is very complex. The authors discuss views on whether a text's meaning is already there in its own horizon whether an interpreter grasps it correctly or not or is the one derived from both an original intended idea and a reader's response in a kind of fusion. They seem to reject the latter. The writers conclude that there is a distinct, determinate, objective meaning from an absolute God (283-84). Interpreters can perceive this by proper use of good hermeneutics and by having the guidance of the ultimate interpreter, the Holy Spirit (75-80).

The book has strengths and weaknesses. It is, by and large, quite worthwhile and up-to-date. Its main contributions will be as a basic seminary textbook and in helping pastors and other serious readers sharpen their awareness of interpretation.

John N. Oswalt. *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1—39*, in *NICOT*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986. 746 pp. \$29.95 (cloth). Reviewed by David C. Deuel, Associate Professor of Old Testament.

Dr. John Oswalt, Professor of Old Testament and Semitic Languages, formerly at Asbury Theological Seminary and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and now at Asbury, has released the first volume in his two-volume series on Isaiah.

Though Isaiah addresses his book to three different settings—chaps. 1–39 (739–701 B.C.), chaps. 40–55 (605–539 B.C.), and chaps. 56–66 (539–500 B.C.)—the author finds no concrete evidence that any part of the book ever existed without the others (18). So he concludes that "the original transmitters of the book intended it to be understood as a unit whose meaning was to be found solely by reference to the life and teachings of the prophet Isaiah" (4). Indeed, "continuation of recent trends to interpret small sections of the book without reference to their larger context must inevitably be self-destructive" (23).

One's understanding of the book's message results from his perspective of the book's unity. Because the author affirms the unity of Isaiah, he also traces a unified theme which answers the question, "How can a sinful, corrupt people become the servants of God?" (21).

This theme is developed in the following way: Chs. 1–6 set forth the problem (chs. 1–5, sinful yet called) and the solution (ch. 6, a vision of the Holy One). The rest of the book works out the ramifications and the implications of this introduction (21–22).

The author identifies four theological themes which, like threads, tie the book together: God, humanity and the world, sin, and redemption. These he develops in his commentary on the Hebrew text of Isaiah 1–39. Indices include subject, author, Scripture, and Hebrew words.

This commentary will help pastors, teachers, and others interested in a careful interpretation of Isaiah 1–39. This reviewer eagerly awaits the second volume to complete Oswalt's work on Isaiah.

Michael Pye, ed. *The Continuum Dictionary of Religion*. New York:

Continuum, 1994. 319 pp. \$34.95 (cloth). Reviewed by David C. Deuel, Associate Professor of Old Testament.

Michael Pye has edited a tool which may prove helpful to pastors and teachers of all sorts. Over 5,000 entries by 43 internationally respected contributors are in this volume. "Entries include definitions of terms from various religious traditions that have entered into current English usage, as well as a wide variety of semi-technical terms from related fields such as philosophy, sociology and social anthropology" (front dust cover).

Entries are usually short and concise with a helpful cross reference system. But further reading`cf. "Reduction" if cited, would give a reader the wrong idea and is selective in citing sources. It is difficult to determine how the seventeen-page bibliography relates to the individual entries. Also, aside from the seven editorial advisors listed, it is impossible to determine which of the 43 contributors`only 41 are named`wrote (or contributed collectively to) a given entry. The primary editor acknowledges "considerable editorial correlation, conflation and supplementation has been necessary" (xi).

In short, the tool is helpful for quick reference work in sermon or lesson preparation. But it will not be usable for research where precise documentation is critical. The following exemplifies the editors' disclaimers:

Contributors should be credited with all the merit which the entries in their known fields of work display. At the same time they should not be blamed speculatively for any imperfections which may have crept in (xi).

This work is helpful except for the problem with documentation.

G. A. Riplinger. *New Age Bible Versions* (Munroe Falls, OH: A. V. Publications, 1993). 690 pp. \$14.95 (paper). Reviewed by Robert L. Thomas, Professor of New Testament.

This work on its cover carries the subtitle, "An Exhaustive Documentation Exposing the Message, Men and Manuscripts Moving Mankind to the Antichrist's One World Religion." Its cover further states, "The New Case against the NIV, NASB, NKJV, NRSV, NAB, REB, RSV, CEV, TEV, GNB, Living, Phillips, New Jerusalem, & New Century." The authoress, Gayle Riplinger, is reportedly a lay person with degrees in architectural and structural engineering, who lives in Ravenna, Ohio, though this reviewer has not met her and knows little about her. She claims to have documented "objectively and methodically" the hidden alliance between the new Bible versions and

the New Age movement's One World Religion (1).

Riplinger has succeeded in creating quite a stir among many Christians because her work conveys the aura of accurate scholarship. Yet this impression is entirely an illusion. Other reviewers have observed the way she distorts the meaning of writings she cites, mostly writings connected with the NASB and the NIV—the main targets of her tirade against recent versions (e.g., James White, "Here We Go Again. . . . Just When You Thought It Was Safe to Quote the NIV. . . . *New Age Bible Versions*" [a review available through Alpha and Omega Ministries, P. O. Box 37106, Phoenix, AZ 85069]). So this reviewer will examine four of her citations of an older source whom she blames most strongly for fostering this alleged conspiracy between the modern versions and the New Age movement.

His name is Brooke Foss Westcott, a leader in the Church of England toward the close of the nineteenth century. Westcott's expertise with the Greek text of the NT has left its mark on studies of the NT text throughout this century. If he was the villain Riplinger makes him out to be, the church has cause for concern, but if he was a man of God, Riplinger has cause for concern because of her blatant misrepresentation of him. The following four excerpts illustrate her portrayal of him:

(1) Early on, in referring to Westcott, she writes,

The Greek text used to translate the NIV, NASB and others was an edition drastically altered by a Spiritualist (one who seeks contact with the dead through seances), who believed he was in the "new age" (2).

She refers to Westcott, building her proof for labeling him "a Spiritualist" and a "new ager" on an excerpt from a two-volume work by Westcott's son, Arthur Westcott (*The Life and Letters of Brook Foss Westcott* [London: Macmillan, 1903] 2:252). The segment referred to is from a letter of Westcott written in 1898, in which he refers to

. . . signs that once more in the face of unbelief and non-belief the Son of Man will vindicate His sovereignty by showing that He satisfies every need and every capacity which the struggles of a new age have disclosed" (*Life and Letters* 252).

The context of the letter gives no indication of Westcott's being a spiritualist. Besides, his reference to a "new age" could well have referred to the turn of the century, very similar to what the church faces in this last decade of the twentieth century. His own church had demonstrated some encouraging improvements, and riding the crest of a postmillennial spirit in his day (as did B. B. Warfield and others), he was speaking optimistically regarding future spiritual conquests for Christ. "New Age" terminology related to today's New Age movement was entirely unknown at that point in history. The

authoress has done Westcott a great injustice by misconstruing his words this way.

(2) She continues later with this appraisal:

As a Cambridge undergraduate, Westcott organized a club and chose for its name "Hermes." The designation is derived from "the god of magic . . . and occult wisdom, the conductor of Souls to Hades, . . . Lord of Death . . . cunning and trickery" (400).

Her citation is from a paragraph telling of Westcott and three fellow undergraduates who formed an essay-reading club in May 1845 (*Life and Letters* 46-47). At first, they called it "The Philological Society" and later changed the name to "Hermes." The subjects of the papers read by Westcott himself were

The Lydian Origin of the Etruscans; The Nominative Absolute; The Roman Games of (or at) Ball; The so-called Aoristic Use of the Perfect in Latin; The Funeral Ceremonies of the Romans; The Eleatic School of Philosophy; The Mythology of the Homeric Poems; The Theology of Aristotle; Theramenes (*Life and Letters* 47).

These hardly tie him to Satan, as Riplinger contends in her chapter that names him a necromancer (397, 400). She does not give a source for her definition of Hermes, but *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (10th ed.) defines it thus: "a Greek god of commerce, eloquence, invention, travel, and theft who serves as herald and messenger of the other gods" (543). Since legend made Hermes a spokesman for the other gods, it is not unnatural to use such a name for a group delving into ancient Greek literature and giving speeches about their research (cf. Acts 14:12). She has leveled trumped-up charges against this man of God again.

(3) Further, her case for concluding Westcott was a spiritist (or spiritualist) rests on the following quotation:

Westcott's "Ghostly [sic, `Ghostlie'] Circular" reads, in part: "But there are many others who believe it possible that the beings of the unseen world may manifest themselves to us. . . Many of the stories current in tradition or scattered up and down in books, may be exactly true . . ." (406).

From this she concludes, "the members apparently had their own `experiences' and the circular was to elicit `information beyond the limits of their own immediate circle'" (406).

The "Ghostlie Guild" was a group Westcott belonged to whose purpose was to investigate reports of supernatural appearances and effects. Riplinger's quotation from the group's "Ghostlie Circular" is part of their discussion of procedures to obtain objective reports of

these phenomena with a view to either verifying or discrediting them. Nowhere in the extended quotation is there any indication of Westcott or his associates having their own 'experiences' in these matters. Her insinuation that they did rests on her inclusion of them in the reference to "their own immediate circle," which in the context of the words refers to "some members of the University of Cambridge," not to Westcott and company (*Life and Letters* 118-19). Here is another falsely founded allegation against the man.

(4) A final citation illustrates how badly this authoress wrests phrases from their context: "Their subversive and clandestine approach continued, as seen ten years later when Westcott writes to Hort, '. . . strike blindly . . . much evil would result from the public discussion'" (408). The fuller statement from Arthur Westcott's work is,

. . . Have you entered into the Maurice controversy? I only hope it may pass away quietly. At the first onset we always *strike blindly*; and *much evil would result from the public discussion* of the moot points just now. It is well, I believe, that they have been named; and it will be well for men to get familiarised with them. Then at length they may debate if they please. This is a strange symptom of belief or disbelief that Mr. Maurice's views on the Atonement seem to have called forth comparatively little criticism (*Life and Letters* 229, emphasis added).

Riplinger has lifted from the preceding paragraph the italicized words and cited them alone to prove Westcott's "subversive and clandestine approach." If she had paid attention, she would have seen that he did not write those words to Hort, but to J. F. Wickenden. If she had aimed for accurate representation, she would have noted that Westcott's statement is probing how to deal most effectively with Mr. Maurice's inadequate view of the Atonement. He says, in effect, "At first, we don't know how to approach such a matter, and it is best that we avoid public discussion until people have become informed of the issues involved."

Such perversions as these four pervade the book. In addition to notice of such misrepresentations, two more general observations are in order. First, some have found an endorsement page included in some of the printings of *New Age Bible Versions* to be troubling. The longest of the endorsements—though an endorsement not of the book, but of the King James Version—is from Frank Logsdon (probably known more widely as S. Franklin Logsdon). It is a repudiation of the NASB with which he had a loose association for a while. This reviewer knew Logsdon (who died about four years ago) and knows to be false the endorsement's claim that he was "Co-founder" of the NASB. Logsdon's only tie to the NASB was his personal friendship with Dewey Lockman. Lockman was the *sole* founder of the NASB project, and Logsdon's role was extremely minor as an occasional

adviser to Lockman. This reviewer remembers well the meeting of the Editorial Board of the Lockman Foundation when Lockman read the letter from Logsdon declaring his desire not to have any further association with the NASB. Lockman was crushed personally, but Logsdon's role was so minor that Lockman saw no need to interrupt the project in even the slightest way when he received this letter.

Second, it is a pity that someone has taken upon herself to slander men of sound doctrine, including B. F. Westcott. As a nineteenth-century scholar, Westcott contributed much to his day and to the church throughout the twentieth century. His commentaries on the gospel of John, the epistles of John, and the book of Hebrews are classics that have enhanced the understanding of those books for many. Two brief citations illustrate how biblical his Christology is in these works. In one he speaks of "the permanence of the divine essence of the Son during His historical work" (*The Epistle to the Hebrews* 9). In another he speaks of recognizing "the union of the divine and human in one Person, a truth which finds its only adequate expression in the fact of the Incarnation" (*The First Epistle of John* 142). It is outlandish even to hint that someone with this high view of the person of Christ could be a promoter of New Age causes.

Whatever good qualities Gayle Riplinger must have, the above examples illustrate that reliability as a biblical and theological researcher and writer is not one of them. She has thoroughly discredited herself in these areas. It would be a mistake to judge whether she intentionally misrepresents her sources so often, but intentional or not, a reader cannot trust her representations in this book. Her main thesis that moderns versions of the Bible are part of a New Age conspiracy is totally her invention, evidenced in the faltering of its support at every phase of its development. If the "father of lies" (John 8:44) is on one side or the other in this debate, he is certainly not on the side of B. F. Westcott and recent translations of the Bible.

Leland Ryken and Tremper Longman III, eds. *A Complete Literary Guide to the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993. 528 pp. \$29.95 (cloth). Reviewed by Keith Essex, Assistant Professor of Bible Exposition.

During the past twenty-five years, the literary approach to biblical interpretation has become a major focus of discussion in biblical studies. Two well-known evangelical authors in this field, Leland Ryken of Wheaton College and Tremper Longman III of Westminster Theological Seminary, have joined together to edit this volume. Their purpose for this work is to have it become a reference book for anyone wishing to pursue a literary study of a biblical book or genre (11-12).

To achieve this purpose, they solicited essays from both literary and biblical scholars with each essay critiqued by readers from each discipline. The focus of discussion is on the issues of genre, unity and style in the biblical books, not on the historicity, authorship, or background material. A true literary interpretation of the Bible is the goal.

The book has four parts. The first consists of five essays that lay the foundation for a literary approach to biblical interpretation. Two sections that provide literary commentary on individual parts of the Old and New Testaments follow next. A beginning essay in each section describes the literary features of each testament as a whole before discussing individual biblical books. The volume's final part consists of four essays that survey the literary impact of the Bible on past and contemporary literature and preaching. Parts two and three are the major sections of the volume, consuming 375 pages of the total work.

This volume has a number of strengths. First, the introductory essay by the editors is a balanced discussion of the literary approach to the Bible. They recognize that "the Bible is a mixed book that contains three dominant types of material and therefore invites multiple approaches" (16). The literary method is only one of them and deserves attention along with the theological and historical approaches. The authors reject the assumption of others that since the Bible is literary, it cannot be historical. Second, Longman has written two very good essays on the literary characteristics of biblical narrative prose and biblical poetry. Third, some of the discussions on the biblical books are very strong. John Sailhamer on Genesis, V. Philips Long on Samuel, Richard L. Pratt, Jr., on Chronicles, Douglas Green on Ezra-Nehemiah, Longman on Psalms, G. Lloyd Carr on Song of Songs, and Richard Patterson on Old Testament Prophecy are especially noteworthy. Sadly, the rest of the treatments do not measure up to these high standards. Fourth, the concluding essay by Sidney Greidanus on "The Value of a Literary Approach for Preaching" is an excellent practical analysis. Greidanus calls for a balanced approach that allows the biblical genre to determine the form of the sermon. He eschews the modern tendency to make all preaching narrative preaching.

A number of weaknesses are also noteworthy. First is the reiteration that literary texts of the Bible do not contain propositions. The editors write, "Literary texts are irreducible to propositional statements and single meanings. . . . A propositional statement of theme can never be a substitute or even the appointed goal of experiencing a literary text" (17). This opinion ignores the fact that propositional statements are a part of biblical narrative and biblical poetry. For example, Gen 45:5-7 and 50:20 are the Bible's own interpretive statements of the meaning of the Joseph narratives. Second, the volume has inconsistencies in its literary approach.

Longman sees Job as a drama (90), but Jerry Gladson labels it a unique composition (232). Further, Ryken calls Jonah satire (346), but Branson L. Woodward, Jr., sees it as tragedy (351). A difference of genre leads to a difference in interpretation. The book should give more attention to points like these. Third, although the literary approach supposedly does not deal with issues of authorship, that does not keep Ryken from denying Solomonic authorship of Ecclesiastes (273-74). Also, William G. Doty only accepts seven letters as of genuinely Pauline authorship (447). The literary approach has violated its own boundaries with these conclusions.

This volume is a good introduction to the growing field of literary study of the Bible. However, it is not the complete guide nor the last word on the subject.

M. A. Ellis Smith, ed. *Holman Book of Biblical Charts, Maps, and Reconstructions*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1993. 176 pp. \$19.99 (cloth). Reviewed by David C. Deuel, Associate Professor of Old Testament.

This delightful little tool is enjoyable to peruse. Charts include such things as ancient versions of the biblical text, ancient numbering systems, a 52-week Bible reading plan, and prayers of the Bible religions of the world.

It has several minor weaknesses. One must keep his finger in the table of contents, because the order of maps and charts within sections is not sequential or topical, but alphabetical. For example, the OT charts begin with Abraham, move to the characteristics of God in the Psalms, then return to Joshua. Again, one finds a listing of the judges of the OT on the same page as a selection of events from the life of Abraham. A biblical or topical ordering would have been preferable. Even where one would expect a historical or geographical arrangement of maps, the book uses the alphabetical.

The selection of reconstructions may strike some readers as disproportionate. Three reconstructions of Roman siege machines may be an overkill, particularly in light of the paucity of OT charts (7, with 14 charts of the NT). The need for OT reconstructions compared to those for the NT is obvious.

The book will certainly be of benefit for individual use, but small groups will need to squint a great deal to read most of the charts, maps, and reconstructions. A set of transparencies would appeal to most teachers. Holman might consider making these available (but just one of the Roman siege machine, please).

Ralph L. Smith. *Old Testament Theology: Its History, Method, and Message*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1993. 525 pp. \$32.99 (cloth). Reviewed by David C. Deuel, Associate Professor of Old Testament.

Ralph L. Smith is Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Old Testament at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. His stated purpose is "to provide university and seminary students a textbook that gives a partial report of what others have said and done about Old Testament theology and then suggest ways the theological materials in the Old Testament may be organized, interpreted and appropriated" (15). The author includes in his target audience "pastors and interested lay people" (13).

Any author's viewpoint, background, and preparation colors his presentation of OT theology. Smith describes with great candor his own imprint on the material:

Perhaps the greatest danger is that in picking and choosing themes to include and omit and in systematizing the materials used to discuss each theme, I will put my own "spin" on the organization and interpretation of each subject (16).

The first chapter chronicles the prehistory and advent in the eighteenth century of a discrete discipline called OT theology. To some readers OT Theology's late starting point may seem strange because the OT has been around for several thousand years. The newness is actually in the areas of *focus* and *method* of doing theology: prior to a man named Gabler who wrote in the eighteenth century, it does not appear that OT students noticed distinctions "between dogmatic theology and biblical theology or between New Testament theology and Old Testament theology" (21). Part of the reason was that they used a proof-text method of studying the Bible (if they consulted it at all in doing theology). In fact, in the absence of historical and grammatical exegesis the proof-text method, with all of its potential dangers, was the dominant method of Gabler's day. Smith elaborates on its shortcomings:

The proof text method could never produce a true Old Testament theology. Old Testament theology is basically an *historical* and *descriptive* discipline. Only after the discovery of the historical-grammatical principles of interpretation could a true Old Testament theology be written (29, emphasis added).

Gabler attributed much of the confusion to the lack of a distinction "between dogmatic theology and the simple historical religion of the Bible" (30). He saw the need to understand the latter before one

attempts to construct the former. Only a major shift in the process of doing theology would establish the correct doctrinal methodology. That happened with the arrival of the Age of Reason:

The age of reason discovered the historical-grammatical principle of interpretation of the Scriptures, developed proper skills and tools for research, and freed biblical scholars and theologians from the authority of the church and the state (30).

Smith acknowledges that prior to this time the so-called "school of Antioch" hinted at in the book of Acts practiced a form of the historical-grammatical method. But he believes that its use was for a brief period and not widespread (25).

The Age of Reason provided the conceptual tools for implementing, systematizing, and evaluating the historical-grammatical method, but it did not discover it. The entire notion requires much further investigation before one may speak confidently of a "precritical" method of interpretation.

Prior to the Age of Reason in the middle ages the "schoolmen simply systematized what the church fathers had said, giving little attention to the Scriptures" (25). Gabler believed that the Bible in contrast to the conflicting, systematized, and time-conditioned teachings of the schoolmen was authoritative; therefore, he forced the distinction:

Dogmatic theology is *didactic* and *normative* in character and teaches what a particular theologian decides about a matter in accordance with his character, time, age, place, sect, or school. Biblical theology is *historical* and *descriptive* in character, transmitting what the sacred writers thought about sacred matters (30, emphasis added).

From these assumptions he inferred a method for doing biblical or exegetical theology applicable to both testaments:

The biblical theologian should first study each passage of Scripture separately according to the historical-grammatical principles of interpretation. Second, he should compare the individual passages of Scripture with each other, noting differences and similarities. Third, he should systematize or formulate general ideas without distorting materials or obliterating distinctions (30-31).

The key to his methodological rigor was in his concern not to obliterate or even distort distinctions resident in the passages themselves. It is through observing the diversity that Bible students will find the true unity. This has led to perhaps one of the most fundamental but controversial assumptions of biblical theology the texts consistently display a common set of themes and theological

categories or centers.

Because ethics is the methodological outgrowth of exegetical theology, Smith addresses the issue. Under his discussion of ethics, he follows the trail of John Barton in making a distinction between the ethical practices of ancient Israel and the ethics of the OT: that is the distinction between what Israel did and "what was supposed to be done" (348). In short and perhaps somewhat oversimplified, it is the principle behind the law that provides ethical direction for the faithful today.

Smith's recent publication should serve well as an introduction to OT theology or even as a tool for topical study. The book's generous bibliography and indices (subject, author, Scripture, classical author, early literature, and Hebrew word) facilitate research, and its use of parnotes makes the reading more enjoyable and uninterrupted.

George M. Stulac. *James*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993. 206 pp. \$15.99 (cloth). Reviewed by James E. Rosscup, Professor of Bible Exposition.

This is a lucid, valuable part of the InterVarsity NT Commentary Series, done by a former InterVarsity director who pastors Memorial Presbyterian Church, St. Louis. It is a simplified survey of James, informed by substantial use of good tools. Stulac gets at the "gist" of many passages, keeping the main ideas clear and articulating the applicational relevance. Pastors and students who need more detailed help will find it in such as Davids, Adamson, Lenski, Hiebert, Mayor, Mitton, and Moo. However, this work is often insightful, and takes its place as one of the top three popular expositions, alongside those by Homer Kent and Simon Kistemaker.

Stulac thinks James the Just, the Lord's brother, wrote the book in the late 40's. The purpose is to refute a Jewish-Christian misunderstanding of Christ's lordship (17). Trials of the epistle came in the diaspora of Acts 8:1-3, before Paul's epistles (23). Paul in Romans 3:4 and James in 2:14-26 correlate consistently; Paul uses *dikaioō* to mean "declared to be righteous in the judicial sense of 'acquitted,'" whereas James uses the verb in the sense of "shown to be righteous" in a moral sense in acts of daily life (21).

The epistle encourages faith amidst suffering, reflecting servanthood to Christ. By faith one can have joy in trial (1:2), show impartiality (2:1-13), bless and not curse people even in trials (3:9), be cheerful (5:9), be at peace rather than fighting other believers (4:1-2), pray and trust God during sickness (5:13-14) (31).

One good section deals with trust when one lacks material wealth, the kinds of reactions one can feel, and false notions that

money means personal security, power, and advantage (33-39).

Stulac sees 1:12 as a summary drawing together major elements in 1:3-11. He never says so, but he apparently takes the "crown of life" to be "the crown which consists of life." This is the ultimate fulfillment, eternal life for all the saved, all of whom love God in some measure and live faithfully in trials (49).

"Deceived" in 1:22-24 is not a warning to genuine Christians to be more serious. It is a warning against one's false assumption of his own salvation when his religion has been only external. "The core of accepting salvation is accepting Christ as Saviour and Lord. If I am saved, I will give myself to the doing of my Lord's word. It is not that I will attempt to save myself by obeying commands; rather, because I am saved, I will set my heart on doing the will of God who is my Saviour" (75). A long section develops how Stulac feels a person today would be only a hearer, self-deceived, in a belief that is merely relativistic, superstitious, emotional, or theoretical (76-78).

At times the work is fairly detailed in stating and supporting different viewpoints. Stulac decides that God jealously desires the human spirit He gave us to be committed wholeheartedly to Him rather than the world. In 5:14-16 the problem is physical sickness with sin possibly involved. The anointing is with oil as in Mark 6:13, but healing depends on the Lord and not the oil. Faith is the principle for all Christian living in 1:6 and throughout the epistle. He sees the passage as applicable today.

Most things appear to be clear, even though concise. The author passes over some points. For example, copious remarks stress being joyful and show that joy is *not* denial, complaint, or self-pity (39). But he never says what joy *is*, positively; he leaves that vague. Converting a sinner in 5:19-20, to the commentator, refers either to evangelizing a non-Christian or helping a saved person get right by repentance. Some will wonder if saving a soul from death suggests one interpretation or the other.

All in all, the work is usable for general readers and only a light refreshment with occasional help for those who give attention to detail in teaching.

Marianne M. Thompson. *1-3 John*. Ed. by Grant R. Osborne. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992. 168 pp. \$14.95 (cloth). Reviewed by James E. Rosscup, Professor of Bible Exposition.

This is a lucid work in the relatively new InterVarsity NT Commentary Series, based on the NIV. The series includes exposition and explanatory notes combined with applicational relevance. In overall helpfulness this particular work seems to rate about fourth

among similar works, behind Stott, Kistemaker, and Ryrie. Several heavier works explain more to those in preaching/teaching ministries (e.g., Brown, Burdick, Smalley, and Marshall). This writer, Associate Professor of NT at Fuller Theological Seminary, earned her PhD from Duke.

The book is readable for popular, general use and perceptively helpful at times. It is frustratingly incomplete at other points, bypassing differing viewpoints or solid supports or not commenting sufficiently on a subject before going on.

A mist of vagueness descends in some cases. The writer is not clear on why she doubts that those who have seceded from the Christians (1 John 2:19) are Gnostic. She lists about a half dozen similarities between Gnostic belief and the secessionists of 1 John, and feels that Johannine elements are not as fully developed or entirely congruent with later Gnostic writers. Yet she does not nail down what she means (17-18).

She is not sure who wrote the epistles, whether the apostle John or another John. She could have built a better case for the apostle. Seven themes mark the epistles: God's character, the centrality of Jesus Christ, Christian discipleship, love/unity/fellowship, preserving sound teaching, discernment, and assurance/confidence (21-25). Yet she does not point to an overall theme or statement to unify the seven.

The writer sees a contrast between a characteristic pattern of life of genuine believers and of those lacking genuineness, the secessionists. Those who are genuine walk in the light, abide, acknowledge their sin, show love, and follow the truth; the others do not. References to those not loving, believing, and keeping commands are to the secessionists (26). Yet exhortations to love and obey are relevant to the saved, for each of them, though walking imperfectly, needs to "bring all of . . . life under the scrutiny of God's light, and to live in conformity with God's character and will" in an increasing way (26). False claims of 1:6, 8, 10 are by the secessionists (44). A contrast in 3:4-10 is between those with eternal life (children of God) and those without this life (children of the devil).

Many times the commentator's generalizing leaves the impression that the saved one must live an ideally perfect walk in the light (cf. 43). Yet at many other points she is clear that Christians do sin (45): "Those in the light do indeed sin`but they recognize the need to be purified from sin" and "We are not perfect light as God is." "The shape of the Christian life as a whole" not perfect obedience`fulfills the Christian response to God's Word (53). She needs to explain more of how a Christian can be in fellowship with God`walking in the light, reflecting God's character, doing the truth, living as God desires (46-47)`when, before confession and cleansing, he has fallen into sin and is impure. Is he always in fellowship, or in and out at different times, with the dominant pattern being one of victory? The commentary

does have a healthy clarity that true grace, distinguished from cheap grace (cf. 51), leads Christians to confess and seek forgiveness and obedience to God's will (51). The writer recognizes obedience as a basis for assurance, as mentioned in 1 John 2:3 (51), but does not integrate this with other grounds for assurance.

Some ideas are catchy but misleading, as "we are not given directions, but direction" (54). Within God's overall direction are many directions or specific ways to live by grace according to His character. Obeying specifics such as following a check-list, as God enables, need not amount to legalism. She very helpfully clarifies that keeping God's commands (aren't these specifics?) as in 1:7 "is not the condition, but rather the characteristic of the knowledge of God" (54).

The commentary is ambiguous in explaining the named age-groups in 2:12-14. The discussion vacillates and creates uncertainty as to what is meant. It does not settle upon a view solidly. She links Christ's second coming with final judgment as in amillennial reasoning (72), yet the brevity leaves one unsure.

The work sees the shame of unbelievers at the future judgment in 2:28, contrasting this with the confidence believers (those who abide) will have. Comments bring in the very close connection in v. 29 with the one who is born again and whose pattern of life is to do what is right. "Righteous conduct does not make us God's children. Rather, such conduct is the consequence or expression of a relationship that already exists." The practice comes from the reborn nature (87), as God "created us and re-created us in his own image" (90), giving us the family likeness as His children (cf. 3:1-10).

Problem verses often get only a cursory discussion, without other viewpoints or much, if any, evidence. In regard to not sinning in 3:6, 9, she sees the present tense as denoting the identifying characteristic of a person genuinely born of God (95). The authoress skirts the issue of "God's seed remains" (3:9), leaving it without explanation. Without supporting it, she mentions possible identification as the Holy Spirit or the Word of God, but settles for the generalization that the seed is "that which makes them his children" (97). What, then, is it? And in 2 John 8, she takes the warning not to "lose what you have worked for" as reflecting on what happens to professing but not really saved people. They lose eternal life, which they worked for in the sense of what is actually the work of God in John 6:29 that people believe in the one whom God has sent. She fails to explain how past belief, if it had a beginning and now can be *continued*, was not real while it was there, or how one can lose eternal life when this implies that he once had that life. She does not mention Stott's view that the reference is to the truly saved losing special reward.

Satisfaction with half explanations here and frequently elsewhere makes the work bothersome. This is unfortunate since in

many places the commentary has benefit for those readers seeking help from a lighter commentary.

Wolfram von Soden. *The Ancient Orient: An Introduction to the Study of the Ancient Near East*. Tr. by Donald G. Schley. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994. 263 pp. \$11.99 (paper). Reviewed by David C. Deuel, Associate Professor of Old Testament.

The author, viewed by many as "the master of the field of Assyriology" (D. G. Schley, "Translator's Preface") and best known for his *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch* (3 vols.) as well as his *Grundriss der akkadischen Grammatik*, sets forth "the summing-up of a lifelong career in Assyriology" (G. Buccellati, front dust cover). Von Soden's primary objective is to provide an introductory work which he describes as a "short presentation" of "select themes" (xvii). In essence, he has written "to show what the study of the ancient Orient has already accomplished . . . and how much still remains to be done" (ibid.).

The present work, although an introduction, contains no history of the Orientalist's discipline. The beginning student may consult works such as G. Roux, *Ancient Iraq*, for a general but essential introduction to the field and the scholars who gave shape to it. Neither does von Soden intend to "provide an overview of the ancient Orient covering nearly three thousand years" (42). Here he defers to the comprehensive multi-volume works such as *The Cambridge Ancient History* and the *Fischer-Weltgeschichte*. His book does "sketch out the historical framework" (42) for the topical treatments of state and society, nutrition and agriculture, artistry, trade and commerce, law, Sumerian and Babylonian science, religion and magic, literature, building, and art and music in that order.

At the outset, he notes with regrets that biblical studies and its more inclusive sister discipline, Ancient Near Eastern studies (ANE), once had closer connections but now have grown apart. "Many orientalists in the early years . . . were by no accident theologians" (3). The affirmative remarks on the back cover by prominent ANE scholars who also work in biblical studies serve as a further reminder of inter-relationships between the two disciplines. Unfortunately, specialization has and continues to drive the two fields further apart.

Since these cultures present us with their own manifold problems, according to the respective state of the development of their languages and literatures, no scholar can deal with all of these simultaneously in a thorough fashion . . . (3).

The disparity broadens through the uncritical research of scholars on both sides who present their theories as historical realities

without sufficient disclaimers. Here, the author with his encyclopedic understanding of the methods, texts, and synthetic knowledge of ANE is painstakingly honest, even critical of historians' satisfaction with superficial analysis of their data. And because many aspects of historical analysis are still in their infancy stages (11) and the vast collections of documents and material remains both in museums and in unexcavated tells makes the task of analysis both daunting and tentative. Much of this abides as common knowledge among the community of scholars, but they leave out the uninitiated, failing to convey to them not only this knowledge, but the degree of certainty or speculation involved in it. Any theory or hypothesis needs scrutiny. "Both points of emphasis and gaps in the treatment will always be determined in part by the respective availability or lack of material" (12). These and other factors lead von Soden to conclude candidly, "Consequently, a presentation of the history and cultures which has been weighed from all perspectives and which in every case draws out that which is essential, is and will long remain impossible" (12).

Between the lines is a subtle plea for Bible students to remember this statement before they use this custom or that archaeological argument to interpret the Scriptures. One example of the complexities associated with historical analysis is the language used in textual remains to identify groupings of people. To call these "peoples" is imprecise. A more suitable term would be "ethnic groups" identifiable with states (14). That being the case, Israel distinguished itself exclusively as a "people." "People everywhere else were characterized only according to their origin in a particular land or according to their membership in a social group, insofar as one does not speak merely of 'humankind'" (14). One reason for misunderstandings of this sort has to do with the assumptions with which scholars have drawn conclusions about various peoples based on the changes in material culture. Indeed, with respect to the interpretation of material remains which show changes, sometimes abrupt, in pottery styles and other types of material remains, von Soden cautions:

. . . there can be frequent and substantial changes in the ceramic style, even if no other people has come onto the scene. In other cases, very important events such as the invasion of Asia Minor by the people later known as the Hittites, cannot be read at all in the contemporary archaeological finds. Conclusions based on ceramic evidence and miniature sculpture can be drawn only in rare cases, and then only with great care (13).

All this is not to say that we know nothing. It is a realistic assessment of the data and methods. In the final analysis, it is an indictment of the sweeping and superficial generalizations which often lack the temper of careful study and publication.

Another challenge for Bible scholars and historians of the ancient Near East is the manner in which the Bible and extrabiblical sources interact. Many have argued that the Babel of Genesis 11 is, in reality, a folk etymology (explanation of the origin) of the Akkadian *Babil*, "the gate of God." But closer examination reveals the latter itself is an Akkadian interpretation of *Babillu*, a much earlier term with the place name infix *ill-* (15). Regarding the transcontinental attestation of this feature (Asia Minor), von Soden concludes,

It is still much too early for an historical interpretation of these and other linguistic phenomena which can be observed over broad sections of Western Asia; but this will be an important task for future scholarship (16).

Etymologies of individual terms pale into insignificance when compared to large-scale theories. The author disputes the Arabian hypothesis of the origin of the Semitic people on the grounds that "Arabia, which in large part is extremely arid, makes a poor cradle for emergent peoples" (18). In addition, the inflected characteristic of Semitic languages moves the locus of Semitic origins (ethnicity = language use) to other regions: "Since the Semites and Hamites may have emerged from northwest Africa one should also seek the earliest speakers of inflected languages in the area of northwest Africa and western Europe" (18).

On a far grander scale than any single hypothesis is the whole issue of ANE/OT chronology. Bible scholars who build upon the chronologies articulated by ANE or other Bible scholars would do well to heed the disclaimers of a scholar who has a thorough understanding of the issue:

The chronology of the remaining areas of Western Asia after about 1500 depends primarily upon that of Assyria. Yet this dependence makes possible only rather rare, tolerably exact numerical determinations, so long as further temporal data or synchronisms do not come into play from Egypt, as is sometimes the case with the Hittite kingdom and Syria Palestine. The numerous chronological references in the Old Testament create a particularly difficult problem as well (44).

The last statement, in light of the remainder of the quote, serves as a warning regarding a greater issue: the dating system for the ANE is rife with gaps, and the synchronisms which link its various relative chronologies together are few and often suspect. The upshot is simple: no one can afford to be uncritical in using dates, particularly in discussions of events and documents. For the Bible scholar who uses *historical* data upon which he will probably base his *theological* conclusions, subjectivity increases exponentially when dating enters the discussion. This does not mean he cannot use chronology in his

research. He must in order to comprehend the historical referents of the words of Scripture. But he can reduce exponentially the number of competing interpretations of a given passage as well as broader hypotheses by paying careful attention to the various strengths and weaknesses of his methods, particularly in the case of OT chronology.

The present work's topical organization makes it particularly suited to student research. Although not devoid of technical terms and complex theoretical hypotheses, it tends to be unusually readable for a book of its kind. The translator, D. G. Schley who has mediated both foreign language and field-specific complexity, has added notations that will facilitate the book's use by students of the Bible.