

## THE LOVE OF GOD FOR HUMANITY<sup>1</sup>

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*John 3:16 declares God's love for the whole world, but in recent times some have insisted that God does not love everyone. The OT and the NT repeatedly indicate that God's love extends to everyone. The immediate context of John 3:16 supports this fact. Further, no grounds exist for questioning God's sincerity in showing mercy to the non-elect. Though difficult for humans to understand, God can love and be the Savior of those whom He does not save. His love for the elect may be somewhat different from that for the non-elect, but His love for the latter is still genuine. God demonstrates His love for all people in four ways: through His common grace, through His compassion, through His admonitions to the lost, and through His gospel offer to them.*

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Perhaps you have noticed that someone shows up at almost every major American sporting event, in the center of the television camera's view, holding a sign that usually reads "John 3:16." At the World Series, the sign can normally be spotted right behind home plate. At the Super Bowl, someone holding the sign inevitably has seats between the goalposts. And in the NBA playoffs, the ubiquitous "John 3:16" banner can be seen somewhere in the front-row seats. How these people always manage to get prime seats is a mystery. But someone is always there, often wearing a multicolored wig to call

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<sup>1</sup>The source of this essay is the recently released volume entitled *The Love of God* (Dallas: Word, 1996). It is adapted and used here by permission.

attention to himself.

A couple of years ago, one of the men who had gained some degree of fame from displaying these John 3:16 signs barricaded himself in a Los Angeles hotel and held police at bay until he was permitted to make a statement on television. It was a surrealistic image—here was someone who felt his mission in life was declaring John 3:16, and he was waving a gun and threatening police, while spouting biblical slogans. His career of attending major sporting events ended when police took him into custody without further incident.

As I watched the sordid episode unfold on television, I was embarrassed that someone whom the public identified as a Christian would so degrade the gospel message. It occurred to me that I was watching someone whose approach to "evangelism" had never really been anything more than a quest for publicity. This stunt, it seemed, was nothing more than a large-scale attempt to get himself into the camera's eye once more. Sadly, he brought a horrible reproach on the very message he was seeking to publicize.

I also realized while watching that episode that John 3:16 may be the most familiar verse in all of Scripture, but it is surely one of the most abused and least understood. "God so loved the world"—waved like a banner at a football game—has become a favorite cheer for many people who presume on God's love and who do not love Him in return. The verse is often quoted as evidence that God loves everyone exactly the same and that He is infinitely merciful—as if the verse negated all the biblical warnings of condemnation for the wicked.

That is not the point of John 3:16. One has only to read v. 18 to see the balance of the truth: "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (AV). Surely this is a truth that needs to be proclaimed to the world at least as urgently as the truth of John 3:16.

## **DOES GOD LOVE THE *WHOLE* WORLD?**

Nevertheless, though acknowledging that some people abuse the notion of God's love, we cannot respond by minimizing what Scripture says about the extent of God's love. John 3:16 is a rich and crucial verse. Perhaps a closer look at this subject is warranted. I am encountering more and more Christians who want to argue that the

only correct interpretation of John 3:16 is one that actually limits God's love to the elect and eliminates any notion of divine love for mankind in general.

Arthur Pink's argued that "world" in John 3:16 "refers to *the world of believers*" rather than "*the world of the ungodly*."<sup>2</sup> This notion seems to have gained popularity in recent years. A friend recently gave me seven or eight articles that have circulated in recent months on the Internet. All of them, written and posted in various computer forums by Christians, deny that God loves everyone. It is frankly surprising how pervasive this idea has become among evangelicals. Here are some excerpts taken from these articles:

- The popular idea that God loves everyone is simply not to be found in the Scripture.
- God does love many, and those whom He loves, He will save. What about the rest? They are loved not at all.
- *Sheer logic alone* dictates that God save those whom He loves.
- If God loved everyone, everyone would be saved. It is as simple as that. Clearly not everyone is saved. Therefore God does not love everyone.
- Scripture tells us that the wicked are an abomination to God. God himself speaks of hating Esau. *How can anyone who believes all of Scripture claim that God loves everyone?*
- God loves His chosen ones, but His attitude toward the non-elect is pure hatred.
- The concept that God loves all humanity is contrary to Scripture. God clearly does not love everyone.
- All who are not keeping the Ten Commandments of God can be certain that God does not love them.
- Not only does God *not* love everyone, there are multitudes of people whom He utterly loathes with an infinite hatred. Both Scripture and consistent logic force us to this conclusion.

But neither Scripture *nor* sound logic support such bold assertions.

I want to state as clearly as possible that I am in no way opposed to logic. I realize there are those who demean logic as if it were somehow contrary to spiritual truth. I do not agree; in fact, to

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<sup>2</sup>Arthur W. Pink, *The Sovereignty of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1930) 314.

abandon logic is to become irrational, and true Christianity is not irrational. The only way any spiritual matter is understandable is through applying careful logic to the truth that is revealed in God's Word. Sometimes logical deductions are necessary to yield the full truth on matters Scripture does not spell out explicitly. (The doctrine of the Trinity, for example, is implicit in Scripture but is never stated explicitly. It is a truth that is deduced from Scripture by good and necessary consequence—and therefore it is as surely true as if it were stated explicitly and unambiguously.)<sup>3</sup> Certainly nothing whatsoever is wrong with sound logic grounded in the truth of Scripture; in fact, logic is essential to understanding.

But surely "*sheer logic alone*" may lead to a conclusion that runs counter to the whole thrust and tenor of Scripture. Applying logic to an incomplete set of propositions about God has often yielded the bitter fruit of false doctrine. Logical conclusions need checking by comparison with the more sure word of Scripture. In this case, the notion that God reserves His love for the elect alone does not survive the light of Scripture.

Scripture clearly says that God *is* love. "The Lord is good to all, and His mercies are over all His works" (Ps 145:9). Christ commands Christians to love even their enemies, and the reason He gives is this: "In order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (Matt 5:45). The clear implication is that in some sense *God* loves *His* enemies. He loves both "the evil and the good," both "the righteous and the unrighteous" in precisely the same sense He commands Christians to love their enemies.

In fact, the second greatest commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:31, cf. Lev 19:18) is a commandment to love *everyone*. It is certain the scope of this commandment is universal, because Luke 10 records that a lawyer, "wishing to justify himself . . .

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<sup>3</sup>This is the formulation of the Westminster Confession of Faith with regard to the sufficiency of Scripture: "The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in scripture, *or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from scripture*: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men" (1:6, emphasis added).

said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" (Luke 10:29)—and Jesus answered with the Parable of the Good Samaritan. The point? Even Samaritans, a semi-pagan race who had utterly corrupted Jewish worship and whom the Jews generally detested as enemies of God, were neighbors whom Jesus commanded to love. In other words, the command to love one's "neighbor" applies to *everyone*. This love commanded here is clearly a universal, indiscriminate love.

Consider this: Jesus perfectly fulfilled the law in every respect (Matt 5:17-18), including this command for universal love. His love for others was surely as far-reaching as His own application of the commandment in Luke 10. Therefore surely He loved *everyone*. He *must* have loved everyone in order to fulfill the Law. After all, the apostle Paul wrote, "The whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (Gal 5:14)—and, "He who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law" (Rom 13:8). Therefore Jesus must have loved His "neighbor." His definition of "neighbor" in universal terms demonstrates that His love while on earth was universal.

Is it possible that Jesus as perfect man loved those whom Jesus as God does not love? Would God command Christians to love in a way that He does not? Would God demand that Christian love be more far-reaching than His own? And did Christ, having loved all humanity during His earthly sojourn, then revert after His ascension to pure hatred for the non-elect? Such is unthinkable; "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yes and forever" (Heb 13:8).

Those who approach John 3:16 determined to suggest that it *limits* God's love miss the entire point of the verse's context. No delimiting language is anywhere in the context. Nothing relates to how God's love is distributed between the elect and the rest of the world. It is a statement about God's demeanor toward mankind in general. It is a declaration of *good* news to the effect that Christ came into the world on a mission of salvation, not a mission of condemnation: "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him" (v. 17). To convert it into an expression of divine hatred against those whom God does not save is to turn the passage on its head.

John Brown, the Scottish Reformed theologian, known for his marvelous studies on the sayings of Christ, has written,

The love in which the economy of salvation originates, is love *to the world*. "God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son." The term "world," is here just equivalent to mankind. It seems to be used by our Lord with a reference to the very limited and exclusive views of the Jews. . . .

Some have supposed that the word "world" here, is descriptive, not of mankind generally, but of the whole of a particular class, that portion of mankind who, according to the Divine purpose of mercy, shall ultimately become partakers of the salvation of Christ. But this is to give the term a meaning altogether unwarranted by the usage of Scripture.<sup>4</sup>

#### B. B. Warfield takes a similar position:

Certainly here "the world" and "believers" do not seem to be quite equipollent terms: there seems, surely, something conveyed by the one which is not wholly taken up by the other. How, then, shall we say that "the world" means just "the world of believers," just those scattered through the world, who, being the elect of God, shall believe in His Son and so have eternal life? There is obviously much truth in this idea: and the main difficulty which it faces may, no doubt, be avoided by saying that what is taught is that God's love of the world is shown by His saving so great a multitude as He does save out of the world. The wicked world deserved at His hands only total destruction. But he saves out of it a multitude which no man can number, out of every nation, and of all tribes, and peoples and tongues. How much must, then God love the world! This interpretation, beyond question, reproduces the fundamental meaning of the text.<sup>5</sup>

Warfield continues and makes the crucial point that the primary concern in interpreting the word "world" in John 3:16 should not be not to limit the *extent* of God's love, as much as to magnify the rich *wonder* of it:

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<sup>4</sup>John Brown, *Discourses and Sayings of Our Lord*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1990 reprint) 1:34.

<sup>5</sup>B. B. Warfield, *The Saviour of the World* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1991 reprint), 114.

The key to the passage lies . . . you see, in the significance of the term "world." It is not here a term of extension so much as a term of intensity. Its primary connotation is ethical, and the point of its employment is not to suggest that it takes a great deal of love to embrace it all, but that the world is so bad that it takes a great kind of love to love it at all, and much more to love it as God has loved it when He gave His Son for it.<sup>6</sup>

In fact, if the word "world" holds the same meaning throughout the immediate context, v. 19 cannot refer to the "world of the elect" alone: "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." About this, Robert L. Dabney wrote,

A fair logical connection between verse 17 and verse 18 shows that "the world" of verse 17 is inclusive of "him that believeth" and "him that believeth not" of verse 18. . . . It is hard to see how, if [Christ's coming into the world] is in no sense a true manifestation of divine benevolence to that part of "the world" which "believeth not," their choosing to slight it is the just ground of a deeper condemnation, as is expressly stated in verse 19.<sup>7</sup>

So the context of John 3:16 requires the verse to speak of God's love to sinful mankind in general. Calvin's interpretation is worth summarizing here. He saw two main points in John 3:16: "Namely, that faith in Christ brings life to all, and that Christ brought life, because the Father loves the human race, and wishes that they should not perish."<sup>8</sup>

A fresh look at John 3:16 helps to absorb the real sense: "God so loved *the world*," wicked though it was, and despite the fact that nothing *in* the world deserved His love. He nevertheless loved the

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 120-21.

<sup>7</sup>R. L. Dabney, *Discussions: Evangelical and Theological*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1982 reprint) 1:312.

<sup>8</sup>John Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, trans. William Pringle (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979 reprint), 123.

world of humanity so much "that He gave His only begotten Son," the dearest sacrifice He could make, so "that *whoever believes in Him* should not perish, but have eternal life." The end result of God's love is therefore the gospel message—the free offer of life and mercy to anyone who believes. In other words, the gospel—an indiscriminate offer of divine mercy to everyone without exception—manifests God's compassionate love and unfeigned lovingkindness to all humanity.

And unless one ascribes unrighteousness to God, His offer of mercy in the gospel is sincere and well-meant. Surely His pleas for the wicked to turn from their evil ways and live must in some sense reflect a sincere desire on God's part. As indicated below, however, some deny that this is the case.

### **IS GOD SINCERE IN THE GOSPEL OFFER?**

Of course, people who assert that God's love is exclusively for the elect will usually acknowledge that God nevertheless shows mercy, longsuffering, and benevolence to the unrighteous and unbelievers. But they will insist that this apparent benevolence has nothing whatsoever to do with *love* or any sort of sincere affection. According to them, God's acts of benevolence toward the non-elect have no other purpose than to increase their condemnation.

Such a view appears to impute insincerity to God. It suggests that God's pleadings with the reprobate are artificial and that His offers of mercy are mere pretense.

Often in Scripture, God makes statements that reflect His yearning for the wicked to repent. For instance, in Ps 81:13 He says, "Oh that My people would listen to Me, that Israel would walk in My ways!" Ezekiel 18:32 says, "I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies,' declares the Lord God. 'Therefore, repent and live.'"

Elsewhere, God freely and indiscriminately offers mercy to all who will come to Christ: "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My load is light" (Matt 11:28-30). "And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.' And let the one who hears say, 'Come.' And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes [whosoever will—AV] take the water of life without cost"

(Rev 22:17).

God Himself says, "Turn to Me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other" (Isa 45:22). And, "Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost" (Isa 55:1). "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, and He will have compassion on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon" (v. 7).

Some flatly deny that such invitations constitute a sincere offer of mercy to the non-elect. As far as they are concerned, the very word *offer* smacks of Arminianism (a name for the doctrine that makes salvation hinge solely on a human decision). They deny that God would "offer" salvation to those whom He has not chosen. They deny that God's pleadings with the reprobate reflect a real desire on God's part to see the wicked turn from their sins. To them, suggesting that God could have such an unfulfilled "desire" is a direct attack on His absolute sovereignty. God is sovereign, they suggest, and He does whatever pleases Him. Whatever He desires, He does.

To be completely honest, this poses a difficulty. How can unfulfilled desire be compatible with a wholly sovereign God? For example, in Isa 46:10, God states, "My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure." He *is*, after all, utterly sovereign. Is it not improper to suggest that any of His actual "desires" remain unfulfilled?

This issue was the source of an intense controversy within some Reformed and Presbyterian denominations about fifty years ago. It is sometimes referred to as the "free offer" controversy. One group denied that God loves the non-elect. They also denied the concept of common grace (God's non-saving goodness to mankind in general). And they denied that divine mercy and eternal life are offered indiscriminately to everyone who hears the gospel. The gospel offer is not free, they claimed, but extends to the elect alone. That position is a form of hyper-Calvinism.

Now let's acknowledge that Scripture clearly proclaims God's absolute and utter sovereignty over all that happens. Scripture says He declared the end of all things before time even began, and whatever comes to pass is in perfect accord with the divine plan.

What God has purposed, He will also do (Isa 46:10-11; Num 23:9). God is not at the mercy of contingencies. He is not subject to His creatures' choices. He "works all things after the counsel of His will" (Eph 1:11). Nothing occurs but that which is in accord with His purposes (cf. Acts 4:28). Nothing can thwart God's design, and nothing can occur apart from His sovereign decree (Isa 43:13; Ps 33:11). He does all His good pleasure: "Whatever the Lord pleases, He does, in heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps" (Ps 135:6).

But that does not mean God derives pleasure from every aspect of what He has decreed. God explicitly says that He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezek 18:32; 33:11). He does not delight in evil (Isa 65:12). He hates all expressions of wickedness and pride (Prov 6:16-19). Since none of those things can occur apart from the decree of a sovereign God, the inevitable conclusion is that there is a sense in which His *decrees* do not always reflect His *desires*; His *preferences* do not necessarily dictate His *purposes*.

The language here is necessarily anthropopathic (i.e., ascribing human emotions to God). To speak of unfulfilled desires in the Godhead is to employ terms fit only for the finite human mind. Yet such expressions communicate some truth about God that human language cannot express otherwise. God uses anthropopathisms in His Word to convey truth about Himself that no other means can represent adequately. To give an example, consider Gen 6:6: "The Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart." Yet God does not change His mind (1 Sam. 15:29). He is immutable; "with [Him] there is no variation, or shifting shadow" (Jas 1:17). So whatever Gen 6:6 means, it cannot suggest any changeableness in God. The best way to approach such an anthropopathism is try to grasp the essence of the idea, then reject any implications that lead to ideas about God that are unbiblical.

That same principle applies when grappling with the question of God's expressed desire for the wicked to repent. If God's "desire" remains unfulfilled (and in some cases it does—Luke 13:34), it is wrong to conclude that God is somehow less than sovereign. He is fully sovereign; it is impossible to understand why He does not turn the heart of every sinner to Himself. Further, speculation in this area is futile. It remains a mystery the answer to which God has not seen fit to reveal. "The secret things belong to the Lord our God"; only "the

things revealed belong to us" (Deut 29:29). At some point, finite humans join the psalmist in saying, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is too high, I cannot attain to it" (Ps. 139:6).

### **CAN GOD REALLY LOVE WHOM HE DOES NOT SAVE?**

I realize, of course, that most have no objection whatsoever to the idea that God's love is universal. Most were weaned on this notion, being taught as children to sing songs like, "Jesus loves the little children; all the children of the world." Many may never even have encountered a person who denies that God's love is universal.

Yet dwelling on this issue is necessary because it poses a perplexing difficulty to combine it with other aspects of God's revealed truth. Frankly, the universal love of God is hard to reconcile with the doctrine of election.

Election is a biblical doctrine, affirmed with the utmost clarity from beginning to end in Scripture. The highest expression of divine love to sinful humanity is evident in the fact that God set His love on certain undeserving sinners and chose them for salvation before the foundation of the world. There *is* a proper sense in which God's love for His own is a unique, special, particular love determined to save them at all costs.

It is also true that when Scripture speaks of divine love, the focus is *usually* on God's eternal love toward the elect. God's love for mankind reaches fruition in the election of those whom He saves. And not every aspect of divine love extends to all sinners without exception. Otherwise, all would be elect, and all would ultimately be saved. But Scripture clearly teaches that *many* will *not* be saved (Matt 7:22-23). Can God sincerely love those whom He does not save?

British Baptist leader Erroll Hulse in dealing with this very question has written,

How can we say God loves all men when the psalms tell us he hates the worker of iniquity (Ps. 5:5)? How can we maintain that God loves all when Paul says that he bears the objects of his wrath, being fitted for destruction, with great patience (Rom. 9:22)? Even more how can we possibly accept that God loves all men without exception when we survey the acts of God's wrath in history? Think of the deluge which

destroyed all but one family. Think of Sodom and Gomorrah. With so specific a chapter as Romans [1,] which declares that sodomy is a sign of reprobation, could we possibly maintain that God loved the population of the two cities destroyed by fire? How can we possibly reconcile God's love and His wrath? Would we deny the profundity of this problem?<sup>9</sup>

Yet Hulse realizes that when taking Scripture at face value, he cannot escape the conclusion that God's love extends even to sinners whom He ultimately will condemn. "The will of God is expressed in unmistakable terms," Hulse writes. "He has no pleasure in the destruction and punishment of the wicked (Ez. 18:32; 33:11)." Hulse also cites Matt 23:37, where Jesus weeps over the city of Jerusalem, and then says, "We are left in no doubt that the desire and will of God is for man's highest good, that is his eternal salvation through heeding the Gospel of Christ."<sup>10</sup>

It is crucial to accept the testimony of Scripture on this question, for as Hulse points out:

We will not be disposed to invite wayward transgressors to Christ, or reason with them, or bring to them the overtures of the Gospel, unless we are convinced that God is favorably disposed to them. Only if we are genuinely persuaded that he will have them to be saved are we likely to make the effort. If God does not love them it is hardly likely that we will make it our business to love them. Especially is this the case when there is so much that is repulsive in the ungodliness and sinfulness of Christ-rejecters.<sup>11</sup>

Biblically, it is an inescapable conclusion that God's benevolent, merciful love is unlimited in extent. He loves the *whole* world of humanity. This love extends to all people in all times. It is what Tit 3:4 refers to "the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind." God's singular love for the elect quite simply does not rule out a

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<sup>9</sup>Erroll Hulse, "The Love of God for All Mankind," *Reformation Today* (Nov-Dec 1983) 18-19.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 21-22.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 18.

universal love of sincere compassion—and a sincere desire on God's part to see every sinner turn to Christ.

Mark 10 relates a familiar story that illustrates God's love for the lost. It is the account of the rich young ruler who came to Jesus and began asking Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"—a great question. Scripture tells us,

And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments, `Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother'" (vv. 18-19).

Jesus designed every aspect of His reply to confront the young man's sin. Many people misunderstand the point of Jesus' initial question: "Why do you call Me good?" Our Lord was not denying His own sinlessness or deity. Plenty of verses of Scripture affirm that Jesus was indeed sinless—"holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens" (Heb 7:26). He is therefore also God incarnate (John 1:1). But Jesus' reply to this young man had a twofold purpose: first, to underscore His own deity, confronting the young man with the reality of who He was; and second, to chide gently a brash young man who clearly thought of *himself* as good.

To stress this second point, Jesus quoted a section of the decalogue. Had the young man been genuinely honest with himself, he would have admitted that he had not kept the law perfectly. But instead, he responded confidently, "Teacher, I have kept all these things from my youth up" (v. 20). This was unbelievable impertinence on the young man's part. It shows how little he understood of the demands of the law. Contrast his flippant response with how Peter reacted when he saw Christ for who He was. Peter fell on his face and said, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" (Luke 5:8). This rich young ruler's response falls at the other end of the spectrum. He is not willing to admit he has ever sinned.

So Jesus gave him a second test: "One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess, and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me" (Mark 10:21).

Sadly, the young man declined. Here were two things he refused to do: he would not acknowledge his sin, and he would not

obey Christ's command. In other words, he shut himself off from the eternal life he seemed to be seeking so earnestly. As it turned out, some things were more important to him than eternal life. His pride and his personal property took priority in his heart over the claims of Christ on his life. So he turned away from the only true Source of the life he thought he was seeking.

That is the last we ever see of this man in the NT. According to the biblical record, he remained in unbelief. But notice a significant phrase, tucked away in Mark 10:21: "Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him." Here is an explicit statement that Jesus loved an overt, open, non-repentant, non-submissive Christ-rejector. He loved him.

Other Scriptures also speak of God's love for those who turn away from Him. In Isa 63:7-9 the prophet describes God's demeanor toward the nation of Israel:

I shall make mention of the lovingkindnesses of the Lord, the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord has granted us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which He has granted them according to His compassion, and according to the multitude of His lovingkindnesses. For He said, "Surely, they are My people, Sons who will not deal falsely." So He became their Savior. In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them; in His love and in His mercy He redeemed them; and He lifted them and carried them all the days of old.

Someone might object that the passage talks about God's redemptive love for His elect alone. No, this speaks of a love that spread over the entire nation of Israel. God "became their Savior" in the sense that He redeemed the entire nation from Egypt. He suffered when they suffered. He sustained them "all the days of old." This speaks not of an eternal salvation, but of a temporal relationship with an earthly nation. How do we know? Look at verse 10: "But they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit; therefore, He turned Himself to become their enemy, He fought against them."

That is an amazing statement! Here we see God defined as the Savior, the lover, the redeemer of a people who make themselves His enemies. They rebel against Him. They grieve His Holy Spirit. They choose a life of sin.

Now notice verse 17: "Why, O Lord, dost Thou cause us to stray from Thy ways, and harden our heart from fearing Thee?" That speaks of God's judicial hardening of the disobedient nation. He actually hardened the hearts of those whom He loved and redeemed out of Egypt.

Forward one chapter in Isaiah's prophecy are these shocking words in Isa 64:5: "Thou wast angry, for we sinned, we continued in them a long time; and shall we be saved?"

How can God be Savior to some who will not be saved? Yet these are clearly unconverted people. Verses 6-7 which begin with a familiar passage read,

For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; and all of us wither like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. And there is no one who calls on Thy name, who arouses himself to take hold of Thee; for Thou hast hidden Thy face from us, and hast delivered us into the power of our iniquities.

These are clearly unconverted, unbelieving people. In what sense can God call Himself their Savior?

Here is how He can do it: God revealed Himself as Savior. He manifested His love to the nation. "In all their affliction He was afflicted" (Isa 63:9). He poured out His goodness, lovingkindness, and mercy on the nation. That divine forbearance and longsuffering should have moved them to repentance (Rom 2:4). But instead they responded with unbelief, and their hearts were hardened.

Isaiah 65 takes it still further:

I permitted Myself to be sought by those who did not ask for Me; I permitted Myself to be found by those who did not seek Me. I said, "Here am I, here am I," to a nation which did not call on My name. I have spread out My hands all day long to a rebellious people, who walk in the way which is not good, following their own thoughts.

In other words, God turned away from these rebellious people, consigned them to their own idolatry, and chose a people for Himself from among other nations.

Isaiah reveals the shocking blasphemy of those from whom God turns away. They considered themselves holier than God (v. 5); they continually provoked Him to His face (v. 3), defiling themselves (v.4), and scorning God for idols (v. 7). God judged them with the utmost severity, because their hostility to Him was great, and their rejection of Him was final.

Yet these were people on whom God had showered love and goodness! He even called Himself their Savior.

In a similar sense Jesus is called "Savior of the world" (John 4:42; 1 John 4:14). Paul wrote, "We have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers" (1 Tim 4:10). The point is not that He actually saves the whole world (for that would be universalism, and Scripture clearly teaches not all will be saved). The point is that He is the only Savior to whom anyone in the world can turn for forgiveness and eternal life—and therefore He urges all to embrace Him as Savior. Jesus Christ is proffered to the world as Savior. In setting forth His own Son as Savior of the world, God displays the same kind of love to the whole world that was manifest in the OT to the rebellious Israelites. It is a sincere, tender-hearted, compassionate love that offers mercy and forgiveness.

### IN WHAT SENSE IS GOD'S LOVE UNIVERSAL?

What aspects of God's love and goodwill are seen even in His dealings with the reprobate? God manifests his love universally to all people in at least four ways:

***Common grace.*** Common grace is a term theologians use to describe the goodness of God to all mankind universally. Common grace restrains sin and the effects of sin on the human race. Common grace is what keeps humanity from descending into the morass of evil that would exist if the full expression of man's fallen nature had free reign.

Scripture teaches that people are totally depraved—tainted with sin in every aspect of their being (Rom 3:10-18). People who doubt this doctrine often ask, "How can people who are supposedly totally depraved enjoy beauty, have a sense of right and wrong, know the pangs of a wounded conscience, or produce great works of art and

literature? Aren't these accomplishments of humanity proof that the human race is essentially good? Don't these things testify to the basic goodness of human nature?"

The answer is no. Human nature is utterly corrupt. "There is none righteous, not even one" (Rom 3:10). "The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick" (Jer 17:9). Unregenerate men and women are "dead in . . . trespasses and sins" (Eph 2:1). All people are by nature "foolish . . . disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending [their lives] in malice" (Tit 3:3). This is true of all alike, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23).

Common grace is what restrains the full expression of human sinfulness. God has graciously given humans a conscience, which enables them to know the difference between right and wrong and which to some degree places moral constraints on evil behavior (Rom 2:15). He sovereignly maintains order in human society through government (Rom 13:1-5). He enables people to admire beauty and goodness (Ps 50:2). He imparts numerous advantages, blessings, and tokens of His kindness indiscriminately on both the evil and the good, the righteous and the unrighteous (Matt 5:45). All of those things are the result of common grace, God's goodness to mankind in general.

Common grace *ought* to be enough to move sinners to repentance. The apostle Paul rebukes the unbeliever: "Do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?" (Rom 2:4). Yet because of the depth of depravity in the human heart, all sinners spurn the goodness of God.

Common grace does not pardon sin or redeem sinners, but it is nevertheless a sincere token of God's goodwill to mankind in general. As the Apostle Paul said, "In Him we live and move and exist . . . for we also are His offspring" (Acts 17:28). That takes in everyone on earth, not just those whom God adopts as sons. God deals with all as His offspring, people made in His image. "The Lord is good to all, and His mercies are over all His works" (Ps 145:9).

If anyone questions the love and goodness of God to all, he should look again at the world in which we live. Someone might say, "There's a lot of sorrow in this world." The only reason the sorrow and tragedy stand out is because there is also much joy and gladness. The

only reason the ugliness is recognizable is that God has given so much beauty. The only reason a person feels disappointment is that there is so much that satisfies.

An understanding that all of humanity is fallen and rebellious and unworthy of any blessing from God's hand helps give a better perspective. "Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail" (Lam 3:22, NIV). The only reason God ever gives anything to laugh at, smile at, or enjoy is because He is a good and loving God. If He were not, His wrath would immediately consume humanity.

Acts 14 contains a helpful description of common grace. Paul and Barnabas were ministering at Lystra, when Paul healed a lame man. The crowds saw it and someone began saying that Paul was Zeus and Barnabas Hermes. The priest at the local temple of Zeus wanted to organize a sacrifice to Zeus. But when Paul and Barnabas heard about it, they said,

Men, why are you doing these things? We are also men of the same nature as you, and preach the gospel to you in order that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that is in them. And in the generations gone by *He permitted all the nations to go their own ways; and yet He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness* (vv. 15-17, emphasis added).

That is a fine description of common grace. Though allowing sinners to "go their own ways," God bestows on them temporal tokens of His goodness and lovingkindness. It is not saving grace. It has no redemptive effect. Nevertheless, it is a genuine and unfeigned manifestation of divine lovingkindness to all people.

**Compassion.** God's love to all humanity is a love of compassion. To say it another way, it is a love of pity. It is a broken-hearted love. He is "good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in lovingkindness to all who call upon [Him] (Ps 86:5). "To the Lord our God belong compassion and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against Him" (Dan 9:9). He is "compassionate and gracious, slow to anger,

and abounding in lovingkindness and truth" (Deut 34:6). "God is love" (1 John 4:8, 16).

Of course, nothing in any sinner compels God's love. He does not love sinners because they are lovable. He is not merciful to them because they in any way deserve His mercy. They are despicable, vile sinners who if not saved by the grace of God, will be thrown on the trash heap of eternity, which is hell. They have no intrinsic value, no intrinsic worth—there's nothing in them to love.

I recently overheard a radio talk-show psychologist attempting to give a caller an ego-boost: "God loves you for what you are. You *must* see yourself as someone special. After all, you are special to God."

That approach misses the point entirely. God does *not* love people "for what we are." He loves them *in spite of* what they are. He does not love them because they are special. Rather it is only His love and grace that give their lives any significance at all. That may seem like a doleful perspective to those raised in a culture where self-esteem is the supreme virtue. But it is, after all, precisely what Scripture teaches: "We have sinned like our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have behaved wickedly" (Ps 106:6). "All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; and all of us wither like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away" (Isa 64:6).

God loves because He *is* love; love is essential to who He is. Rather than viewing His love as proof of something worthy in mankind, people ought to be humbled by it.

God's love for the reprobate is not the love of value; it is the love of pity for that which *could* have had value and has none. It is a love of compassion. It is a love of sorrow. It is a love of pathos. It is the same deep sense of compassion and pity humans feel when they see a scab-ridden derelict lying in the gutter. It is not a love that is incompatible with revulsion, but it is a genuine, well-meant, compassionate, sympathetic love nonetheless.

Frequently the OT prophets describe the tears of God for the lost:

Therefore my heart intones like a harp for Moab, And my inward feelings for Kir-hareseth. So it will come about when Moab presents

himself, when he wearies himself upon his high place, and comes to his sanctuary to pray, that he will not prevail. This is the word which the Lord spoke earlier concerning Moab (Isa 16:11-13).

"And I shall make an end of Moab," declares the Lord, "the one who offers sacrifice on the high place and the one who burns incense to his gods. Therefore My heart wails for Moab like flutes; My heart also wails like flutes for the men of Kir-heres. Therefore they have lost the abundance it produced. For every head is bald and every beard cut short; there are gashes on all the hands and sackcloth on the loins" (Jer 48:35-37).

Similarly, the NT gives the picture of Christ, weeping over the city of Jerusalem: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling" (Matt 23:37). Luke 19:41-44 gives a more detailed picture of Christ's sorrow over the city:

And when He approached, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, "If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes. For the days shall come upon you when your enemies will throw up a bank before you, and surround you, and hem you in on every side, and will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation."

Those are words of doom, yet they are spoken in great sorrow. It is genuine sorrow, borne out of the heart of a divine Savior who "wanted to gather [them] together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings," but they were "unwilling."

Those who deny God's love for the reprobate usually suggest that it is the human side of Jesus here, not His divinity. They say that if this were an expression of sincere desire from an omnipotent God, He would surely intervene on their behalf and save them. Unfulfilled desire such as Jesus expresses here is incompatible with a sovereign God, they say.

That view has problems. Is Christ in His humanity *more* loving or *more* compassionate than God? Is tenderness perfected in the

humanity of Christ, yet somehow lacking in His deity? When Christ speaks of gathering the people of Jerusalem as a hen gathers her chicks, is this not deity speaking, rather than humanity? Do not these pronouncements of doom necessarily proceed from His deity as well? And if the words are the words of deity, how can anyone assert that the accompanying sorrow is the product of Christ's human nature only, and not the divine? Does not intuition dictate that if God is love—if His tender mercies are over all His works—then Jesus' words *must* be an echo of the divine?

**Admonition.** God's universal love is revealed not only in common grace and His great compassion, but also in His admonitions to all sinners. God is constantly warning the reprobate of their impending fate, and pleading with them to repent. Nothing demonstrates God's love more than the various warnings throughout the pages of Scripture, urging sinners to flee from the wrath to come.

If God really did *not* love the reprobate, nothing would compel Him to warn them. He would be perfectly just to punish them for their sin and unbelief with no admonition whatsoever. But He does love and He does care and He does warn.

Anyone who knows anything about the Bible knows it is filled with warnings about the judgment to come, warnings about hell, and warnings about the severity of divine punishment.

God obviously loves sinners enough to warn them. Sometimes the warnings of Scripture bear the marks of divine wrath. They sound severe. They reflect God's hatred of sin. They warn of the irreversible condemnation that will befall sinners. They are unsettling, unpleasant, even terrifying.

But they are admonitions from a loving God who weeps over the destruction of the wicked. They are necessary expressions from the heart of a compassionate Creator who takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. They are further proof that God is love.

**The gospel offer.** The final proof that God's love extends to all lies in the gospel offer. The gospel invitation is an offer of divine mercy. The breadth of that offer is unlimited. It excludes no one from the gospel invitation. It offers salvation in Christ freely and indiscriminately to all.

In Matt 22:2-14 Jesus told a parable about a king who had a marriage celebration for his son. He sent his servants to invite the wedding guests. Scripture says, "They were unwilling to come" (v. 3). The king sent his servants again with the message, "Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fattened livestock are all butchered and everything is ready; come to the wedding feast" (v. 4). But even after that second invitation, the invited guests remained unwilling to come. In fact, Scripture says, "But they paid no attention and went their way, one to his own farm, another to his business, and the rest seized his slaves and mistreated them and killed them" (vv. 5-6). This was outrageous, inexcusable behavior! And the king judged them severely for it.

Then Scripture says he told his servants, "The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. Go therefore to the main highways, and as many as you find there, invite to the wedding feast" (v. 9). He opened the invitation to all comers. Jesus closes with this: "Many are called, but few are chosen" (v. 14).

The parable represents God's dealing with the nation of Israel. They were the invited guests. But they rejected the Messiah. They spurned Him and mistreated Him and crucified Him. They would not come—as Jesus said to them, "You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me; and *you are unwilling to come to Me*, that you may have life" (John 5:39-40).

The gospel invites many to come who are unwilling to come. Many are called who are not chosen. The invitation to come is given indiscriminately to all. Whosoever will may come—the invitation is not issued to the elect alone.

God's love for mankind does not stop with a warning of the judgment to come. It also invites sinners to partake of divine mercy. It offers forgiveness and mercy. Jesus said, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls" (Matt 11:28-29). And Jesus said, "The one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out" (John 6:37).

It should be evident from these verses that the gospel is a *free offer* of Christ and His salvation to all who hear. Those who question the free offer therefore alter the nature of the gospel itself and deny

that God's love extends to all humanity, thereby obscuring some of the most precious truth in all Scripture about God and His lovingkindness.

God's love extends to the whole world. It covers all humanity. Common grace demonstrates it, as do His compassion, His admonitions to the lost, and the free offer of the gospel to all.

God *is* love, and His mercy is over all His works.

That is not all there is to know about God's love, but it is a very significant aspect of it, especially in light of recent declarations to the contrary. Those who contend that God does not love everyone are unbiblical and illogical. Who God is requires that His love extends to all mankind.

## A BIBLICAL CALL TO PASTORAL VIGILANCE<sup>1</sup>

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*Guarding Christ's flock of believers from spiritual danger remains one of the most neglected pastoral duties in today's church. In addition to commissioning spiritual sentinels to watch over His flock by directing them into truth and righteousness, God has charged these sentinels to protect the flock from doctrinal error and personal sin. Ezekiel 3, 33 and Acts 20 provide clear instruction on the "why's" and "how's" of being a "pastoral watchman." Christ's shepherding example and pastoral exhortations through church history urge today's shepherds to undertake their watchman responsibilities faithfully. Undershepherds of the flock will be good servants and obedient imitators of the Chief Shepherd when they regularly watch for and warn of encroaching spiritual dangers.*

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"Re-engineering the Church" represented the theme of a recent pastoral leadership conference on how to prepare the church for the twenty-first century. While reading the conference brochure, I responded, "Why re-engineer the church when God designed it perfectly in the beginning? Shouldn't we inspect the church first and demolish only the portions that don't meet God's building code? That

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<sup>1</sup>This essay has been adapted from the author's chapter "Watching and Warning" in *Rediscovering Pastoral Ministry*, ed. John MacArthur, Jr. (Dallas: Word, 1995) 336-50.

way, we can rebuild the defective portions according to the Builder's original plan. Who can improve on God's engineering?"

Obviously, the solution to the problems faced by the church is not *re-engineering*, but rather *restoration* to the perfect original specifications of the divine designer. The goal of change should be a return to the church's biblical roots in hope that she will regain her former glory.

An inspection of the existing church for possible rebuilding/remodeling should include the following types of questions: Have the builders/remodelers consulted the *Owner* (1 Cor 3:9)? Are they dealing with the *original Builder* (Matt 16:18)? Does the church still rest on the *beginning foundation* (1 Cor 3:11; Eph 2:20)? Is the *first Cornerstone* still in place (Eph 2:20; 1 Pet 2:4-8)? Are the workers using *approved building materials* (1 Pet 2:5)? Do they employ the right *laborers* (1 Cor 3:9)? Have they utilized the appropriate *supervisors* (Eph 4:11-13)? Are the initial *standards of quality control* still in place (Eph 4:13-16)? Are the builders continuing to work from the *original blueprint* (2 Tim 3:16-17)?

The biblical approach to keeping the church from deteriorating during the next century requires that the role of the *construction supervisors* be one of the first areas for review. With the church pictured as a building, the *supervisors* are none other than the *shepherds* of the flock, according to another biblical metaphor. The remainder of this discussion will use the latter terminology.<sup>2</sup>

Paul laid out the basic task of a shepherd with these words:

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as *pastors and teachers*, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head,

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<sup>2</sup>See Earl D. Radmacher, *What the Church Is All About: A Biblical and Historical Study* (Chicago: Moody, 1978) 298-307, for a succinct study of the picture of the church as a flock of sheep.

even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love (Eph 4:11-16, emphasis added).

### THE TRUE SHEPHERD

Scripture continually alerts its readers to watch for spiritual counterfeits.<sup>3</sup> Jesus warned of "false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves" (Matt 7:15). Elsewhere He characterizes the false shepherd as "a thief and robber" (John 10:1, 8).

Nowhere in Scripture is this more apparent than in the OT prophets who incessantly warned Israel about false prophets, even rebuking the nation when they strayed by following a false leader rather than a true one.<sup>4</sup> Though not as historically dramatic as the Old, frequently the NT also warns against deceiving, misleading spiritual leaders.<sup>5</sup> Every succeeding generation of history has proven the need for this caution. It remains a preeminent concern of God that true shepherds lead the church out of danger. One of the authenticating marks of a true shepherd lies in the ministry of watching and warning.

In the 1891 Lyman Beecher lectures on preaching at Yale, James Stalker insightfully cautioned, "The higher the honor attaching to the ministerial profession, when it is worthily filled, the deeper is the abuse of which it is capable in comparison with other callings. . . ."<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, the genuine attracts the uninvited clever imitation.

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<sup>3</sup>The NT frequently exposes the false (ceydlhw) such as with (1) false apostles (2 Cor 11:13), (2) false brethren (2 Cor 11:26; Gal 2:4), (3) false christs (Matt 24:24), (4) false prophets (Matt 24:11; 2 Pet 2:1; 1 John 4:1), (5) false teachers (2 Pet 2:1), and (6) false witnesses (Matt 26:60; Acts 6:13).

<sup>4</sup>For example, see Jeremiah 14, 23; Ezekiel 13, 34; Micah 3; Zechariah 11.

<sup>5</sup>For example, see Matthew 23; 2 Corinthians 11; 2 Timothy 3—4; Titus 1; 2 Peter 2; 1 John 4; 2 John 8-11; Jude; Revelation 2—3.

<sup>6</sup>James Stalker, *The Preacher and His Models* (New York: George H. Doran, 1891) 128.

Realistically, the true shepherd must protect the flock from the spurious. Shepherds have explicit instructions from Scripture to warn that both overt and covert spiritual dangers continually threaten the pure life of the church because not everyone who claims to be a true shepherd is speaking the truth.

Charles Jefferson, in his classic work *The Minister As Shepherd*, lists seven basic functions of the genuine shepherd:

1. to love the sheep
2. to feed the sheep
3. to rescue the sheep
4. to attend and comfort the sheep
5. to guide the sheep
6. to guard and protect the sheep
7. to watch over the sheep.<sup>7</sup>

This essay treats Jefferson's last two categories in particular—guarding and watching over the sheep. No other aspect of contemporary pastoral ministry has fallen into disuse more than the life-saving role of a "watchman." For effective ministry to take place, the recovering of that aspect of shepherdly vigilance which guards and protects the flock from preventable spiritual carnage is vital. The true pastor will make the safety of Christ's flock a top priority. In so doing, he will also help rid the pastoral ranks of pollution brought by unauthorized look-alikes.

### **OVERSEEING THE FLOCK**

Each of the biblical terms for "pastor," "elder," and "overseer" describes facets of the shepherd's role. All three appear together in Acts 20:17, 28 and 1 Pet 5:1-2. "Elder" and "overseer" link up in Tit 1:5, 7 while both "overseer" and "shepherd" describe Christ in 1 Pet 2:25. Because of its relevance to the present discussion, "overseer" will be the center of attention in the following treatment.

Thomas Oden in a brief word captures the particular

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<sup>7</sup>Charles Jefferson, *The Minister As Shepherd* (reprint, Hong Kong: Living Books, 1973) 39-66. See also John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The Master's Plan for the Church* (Chicago: Moody, 1991) 169-76.

characteristic of "watchfulness" inherent in the term "overseer":

Bishop translates *episkopos*, which is derived from the family of Greek words referring to guardianship, oversight, inspection—accountably looking after a complex process in a comprehensive sense. *Episkopos* implies vigilance far more than hierarchy.<sup>8</sup>

A shepherd's *oversight* of the flock expresses itself broadly in two ways.<sup>9</sup> They do so, first, by providing truthful, positive direction and leadership to the flock. Second, they warn of spiritual dangers such as sin, false teaching and teachers, including Satan's assaults against the saints. The warning ministry also entails rescuing stray sheep.

On one hand, the shepherd teaches truth, and on the other, warns of sin and refutes doctrinal error. In leading the flock down the path of righteousness, the shepherd also watches for, warns, and even rescues the wandering sheep whom false teaching and alluring sin have enticed. When shepherds exercise their oversight responsibly, they will have both a preventative and a confrontive side to their ministry. One cannot shepherd the flock with credibility in the sight of God unless he provides a corrective oversight of watching and warning.

## SPIRITUAL SENTINELS

Any godly shepherd at the end of his ministry would like to be able to say with Paul, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim 4:7). Who would not want to hear the Lord's commendation, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

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<sup>8</sup>Thomas C. Oden, *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry* (San Francisco: Harper, 1983) 71.

<sup>9</sup>Pastoral oversight of others assumes that the shepherd has first exercised his own "self-watch" of which C. H. Spurgeon writes in *Lectures to My Students*, first series (reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977) 1-17. More recently John Stott has observed, "Only if pastors first guard themselves, will they be able to guard the sheep. Only if pastors first tend their own spiritual life, will they be able to tend the flock of God" ("Ideals of Pastoral Ministry," *BSac* 146/581 (January-March 1989):11.

Paul told the Ephesian elders, "I am innocent of the blood of all men" (Acts 20:26). Using the imagery of Ezek 3:18, 20—" . . . his blood I will require at your hand"—the apostle testified that he had delivered God's Word to both the lost and the saints. When unbelievers died in their sins, Paul had no pastoral blame since he fully discharged his duty of preaching the gospel (20:21). If believers strayed and engaged in prolonged patterns of sin, it was not because Paul failed to communicate the whole purpose of God (20:27).

If today's shepherds desire to finish their ministry like Paul, then they must not only be *approved workmen* (2 Tim 2:15), but also *unashamed watchmen*. The theme of "pastoral watchman" strikingly stands out in Ezek 3:16-21; 33:1-9. Later, Paul appropriately employed the same language to describe his ministry (Acts 20:17-31).

### ***Ezekiel 3 and 33***

God spoke to Ezekiel, "Son of man, I have appointed you a watchman to the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from My mouth, warn them from Me" (Ezek 3:17; cf. 2:7). The prophet then spoke to both the wicked (3:18-19) and the righteous (3:20-21).

Ezekiel 33:1-6 relates the duties of a military watchman to those of a shepherd. Watchmen attentively manned their post in order to warn the city of approaching danger and deliver the citizens from harm. If watchmen diligently discharged their duty, regardless of the outcome, they would be blameless (33:2-5). However, if a watchman failed to alert the city to danger, blame for the resultant destruction fell on him, as if he were the enemy and had personally attacked the city (33:6).

Twentieth-century pastoring provides appropriate parallels. The shepherd is to stand watch over the flock as the watchman did over the city. God's warnings apply to both unbelieving sheep outside the flock and believing sheep within the flock. To the degree that pastors faithfully deliver God's Word, regardless of the results, they will receive divine commendation. But where the shepherd neglects the duties of his post, God will hold him accountable for failing to signal coming danger and judgment.

In a life-and-death situation, He must alertly tend the flock like a vigilant watchman protects his city. Oden captures the pastoral analogy:

The image of pastor as watchman, or protective, vigilant all-night guard, was already well developed by the Hebrew prophets. Radical accountability to God was the central feature of this analogy, as dramatically stated by Ezekiel: "The word of the Lord came to me: . . . I have made you a watchman for the Israelites. . . . It may be that a righteous man turns away and does wrong. . . . I will hold you answerable for his death" (Ezek. 3:16-21). Such injunctions for prophetic accountability have often been transferred by analogy to the Christian office of elder.

Listen to the analogy: The watchman over a city is responsible for the whole city, not just one street of it. If the watchman sleeps through an attack, the whole resultant damage is his responsibility. This was the covenantal analogy later applied repeatedly to the pastor, who was charged with nothing less than caring for the souls of an analogous small city, the *ekklēsia*. If the congregation falls prey to seductive teaching or forgetfulness, whose responsibility can it be but that of the presbuteros, the guiding elder?<sup>10</sup>

### **Acts 20:17-31**

Paul's address to the elders of the Ephesian church comprises the most explicit and complete instruction on spiritual leadership given to a NT church. He relies heavily on the imagery and ideas of Ezekiel 3 and 33 from which the watchman theme extended itself far beyond Ezekiel's personal ministry.<sup>11</sup> Not only did Paul serve as a vigilant sentinel, but he commanded the elders of Ephesus to do likewise.

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<sup>10</sup>Oden, *Pastoral Theology* 70. Great church reformers of the past like John Knox (*The First Blast of the Trumpet*, in *On Rebellion*, ed. Roger A. Mason [Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1994] 7-8) and Martin Luther (*Luther's Works*, vol. 39, ed. Eric W. Gritch [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1957] 249-50) clearly sensed the watchman analogy in Ezekiel 3, 33, a factor that strongly influenced their ministries.

<sup>11</sup>See F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, in NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 415; Charles Lee Feinberg, *The Prophecy of Ezekiel* (Chicago: Moody, 1969) 29; Everett F. Harrison, *Acts* (Chicago: Moody, 1975) 315; Evald Lövestam, "Paul's Address at Miletus," *Studia Theologica* 41 (1987):1-10; Walter R. Roehrs, "Watchmen in Israel: Pastoral Guidelines from Ezekiel 1—3," *Concordia Journal* 16/1 (January 1990):6-17; Stott, "Ideals of Pastoral Ministry" 6-7.

At least five features attest to the close parallel between Ezekiel 3, 33 and Acts 20. First, both Ezekiel and the Ephesian elders were appointed by God. "I have appointed you a watchman . . ." (Ezek 3:16). ". . . The Holy Spirit has made you overseers . . ." (Acts 20:28). The commission in both instances resulted from God's direct call to ministry.

Second, the task assigned to both essentially involved vigilant oversight. The Hebrew **הֹשֶׁטֶט** (*sôpêh*), translated "watchman" in Ezek 3:16, is rendered  $\sigma\kappa\omicron\pi\omicron\omega$  (*skopos*) in the Greek LXX version.<sup>12</sup> Compare this to  $\epsilon\pi\iota\sigma\kappa\omicron\pi\omicron\omega$  (*episkopos*), translated "overseer," in Acts 20:28.<sup>13</sup> Both prophet and shepherd were accountable to God as a spiritual sentry responsible to warn of impending danger. Paul warned the Ephesian elders,

Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears (Acts 20:28-31).

Third, in both passages the watchman is assigned to deliver God's Word as His warning. What proved true of Ezekiel (2:7, 3:17, 33:7), also marked Paul's ministry (Acts 20:20-21, 27). They both delivered the Word of God without compromise. That is why the apostle commended the elders to the Word of God's grace which

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<sup>12</sup>A watchman is "fully aware of a situation in order to gain some advantage or keep from being surprised by the enemy" (*The Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. 2, ed. R. Laird Harris, et al. (Chicago: Moody, 1980) 773). "Watchman" is used in a true military sense in 1 Sam 14:16; 2 Sam 18:24; 2 Kgs 9:17-20; Isa 21:6. Watching in a spiritual sense also appears in Jer 6:17; Hab 2:1.

<sup>13</sup>John Calvin, *Commentaries on Ezekiel*, vol. 1 (reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.), 148-49, commented, "For we know that the word Bishop means the same as watchman." The related verb  $\sigma\kappa\omicron\pi\epsilon\omicron$  (*skopeo*) is used in the NT of watching both for the positive (Phil 3:17) and for the dangerous (Rom 16:17).

would be their message likewise (Acts 20:32).

Fourth, the watchman had a word for both the unrighteous (Ezek 3:18-19; 33:8-9) and the righteous (Ezek 3:20-21). Paul preached repentance to both Jew and Gentile (Acts 20:21) and the whole purpose of God to the church (Acts 20:20, 27). This twofold responsibility to reach the lost with the gospel and to watch over the saints continues to the present.

Fifth, both Ezekiel and Paul considered their "watchman, oversight" duties to be issues of highest importance—a matter of life and death. When Ezekiel carried out his task, regardless of the outcome, he had delivered himself from any spiritual liability (3:19, 21). On the other hand, if he failed to sound the warning, God promised, ". . . His blood will I require at your hand" (3:18, 20; 33:8). Paul reported, "I am innocent of the blood of all men (Acts 20:26).

The concept of "blood being on your head or hands" originated in Gen 9:5-6, a passage that articulates the judicial principle of capital punishment. This idea finds application in three categories of life.

1. Actual death, whether intentional (Josh 2:19, 1 Kgs 2:33; Matt 27:25; Acts 5:28) or accidental (Exod 22:2; Deut 22:8).
2. Heinous crimes not involving death but deserving of death as punishment (Lev 20:9, 11-13, 16, 27).
3. Spiritual matters of life and death proportion (Ezek 3:18, 20; 33:4, 6, 8; Acts 18:6; 20:26).

When the shepherd's responsibility as taught in Ezekiel 3, 33 and Acts 20, arrests a pastor's attention, it will give increased understanding of why Paul exclaimed, "For woe is me if I do not preach the gospel" (1 Cor 9:16). The apostle fully understood the serious responsibility given him by God as a preacher of the gospel. He would incur the displeasure of God should he do anything less. Watching and warning represent required duties in preaching the gospel, not optional tasks or those left to a specialist.

Ezekiel and Paul also shed light on Heb 13:17. Here the biblical writer succinctly cites the implication of being a faithful overseer, one who watches over the flock and who will one day give an account for his labors: "Obey your leaders, and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you." Pastors will stand accountable before God to watch over and

warn the flock on spiritual matters. Vigilance plays a vital part in the ministry entrusted by God to His pastoral servants.

### THE CHIEF SHEPHERD'S WATCHFULNESS

Nowhere in Scripture is the vigilance of which Ezekiel and Paul teach more evident than in the gospel ministry of the Chief Shepherd—Jesus Christ. Whether one examines the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5—7), His discourse on the parables (Matthew 13), or the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24—25), the fact is indisputable that Jesus continually warned His disciples and the crowds about false teachers, unsound doctrine, and/or ungodly living. Jesus prominently practiced watchfulness in His first-advent ministry.

Christ's post-resurrection letters to seven churches illustrate His spiritual concerns most clearly (Revelation 2—3).<sup>14</sup> The certainty that He watched over them becomes evident in the phrase "I know" which appears in each of the seven letters (cf. 2:2, 9, 13, 19; 3:1, 8, 15). His eyes like a flame of fire (1:14) portray the omniscient vigilance of Christ over His church.

Watchfulness presumes a personal presence which Christ had promised the disciples. "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:20). Revelation 1:13 pictures Christ standing in the middle of seven golden lampstands which represent seven churches (cf. 1:20). What was true of Christ and these first-century churches remains true to this very hour. As the Lord of His churches shepherded, so should the present generation of under-shepherds.

Christ commented in two different ways on what He observed in the churches: by commendation and by condemnation. Because He watched, He could warn. For example, He warned the Ephesian church that she had lost her first love (2:4-5). The church at Pergamum heard about Christ's distaste for compromise, especially as represented by the Balaamites (2:14) and the Nicolaitans (2:15). Jezebel and her consorts in Thyatira did not escape Christ's watchful eye and public

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<sup>14</sup>For a fuller discussion consult Richard Mayhue, *What Would Jesus Say About Your Church?* (Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 1995); cf. also Steven J. Lawson, *Final Call* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1994).

rebuke (2:20-23). The Savior put Sardis on notice that she appeared to be a lifeless church (3:1) and confronted Laodicea over her exceeding sinfulness (3:15-18). Since Christ concluded, "Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline . . ." (3:19), so contemporary shepherds should follow His lead in watching and warning.

While the modern shepherd does not possess Christ's divine attribute of omniscience, he has been given the revealed mind of Christ in Scripture (1 Cor 2:16). Sound doctrine, both in regard to belief and behavior, represents the eyes of Christ through which today's pastors can see and assess the spiritual landscape in order to watch and appropriately warn effectively (cf. Gal 2:11-21; 1 Tim 4:6; 2 Tim 1:3; 4:2; Titus 1:9, 2:1).

Christ commanded the disciples to teach obedience to all that He commanded them (Matt 28:20). Paul ministered to the Ephesian elders by proclaiming the whole will of God (Acts 20:27). The angel commanded the apostles to speak "the full message of this new life" (Acts 5:20). Paul instructed Timothy to pass the apostolic teachings on to the next generation (2 Tim 2:2). Christ commended the Ephesian church for taking doctrine seriously (Rev 2:2, 6). The only adequate approach to biblical truth in these instances is to take the implied responsibility seriously.<sup>15</sup>

Imagine what the forsaking of divine truth would entail. On what basis would one recognize and reject false teachers (Rom 16:17; 2 John 9-10) or identify and refute false doctrine (Titus 1:9)? How would believers know what is true and worth holding on to (1 Tim 3:9; Rev 2:24)? How would Christians distinguish between right and wrong? How would sin be confronted and corrected? Obviously, the prevention of this kind of spiritual disaster is the ultimate priority. Twentieth-century shepherds, like their pastoral predecessors, must earnestly watch over the faith once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3). Historically, indifference to Christian doctrine has produced heretics, but attention to revealed truth has crowned heroes of the faith and resulted in spiritually healthy flocks like those at Smyrna (Rev 2:8-11) and Philadelphia (Rev 3:7-13).

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<sup>15</sup>See Richard Mayhue, "Why We Need Doctrine," *Moody Monthly* 96/5 (January-February 1996):16-17, for a more complete discussion of "sound doctrine."

Several current events, like the "Toronto Experience" for example, illustrate the need for a watching and warning ministry. How does one know that the convulsive laughter, hysterics, and other bizarre behavior is actually of God? How can anyone distinguish this from other similar experiences outside of Christianity? Even leaders, otherwise sympathetic, have hesitated to endorse these experiences without a biblical basis for them.<sup>16</sup> Unless a standard of truth exists—i.e., doctrine—to help us discern the authentic from the counterfeit, the evangelical community will be prone to wander like sheep easily led astray.

Consider the sixth promise of a prominent ministry to men which encourages "reaching beyond denominational barriers to demonstrate the power of biblical unity." Though the goal of oneness is laudable and the realization of some spiritual good is undisputed, no real unity is worth the sacrificing of biblical truth. This movement brings the barriers down so low and reaches out so far, doctrinally speaking, that Roman Catholic and Mormon officials expressed strong interest in this ministry at a recent Los Angeles rally.<sup>17</sup> When doctrinal barriers become non-apparent, Christians have the right to question, "What makes this ministry uniquely Christian?"

An unofficial document signed by prominent evangelicals and Roman Catholics (*Evangelicals and Catholics Together*) seemingly distorts the true gospel that salvation is by God's grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone without human merit.<sup>18</sup> This accord reportedly appeared in order to establish common ground for mutual ministry such as opposing abortion, homosexuality, and pornography. But what is the gain in relinquishing the true gospel as provided by

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<sup>16</sup>See James A. Beverly, "Vineyard Severs Ties with 'Toronto Blessing' Church," *CT* 40:1 (January 8, 1996):66, who reported that John Wimber of the Vineyard Association of Churches is ". . . unable because of my own scriptural and theological convictions to any longer give an answer for, or defend the way, this particular move is being pastored and/or explained."

<sup>17</sup>As reported by John Dart "'Promise Keepers,' a Message to L.A. Men," *Los Angeles Times* (Saturday, May 6, 1995):B12-13.

<sup>18</sup>For a lucid analysis of this document, see John F. MacArthur, *Reckless Faith* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1994) 119-52.

Christ and reclaimed by the Reformation? To pay such a great price as possibly compromising the gospel to gain ministry cooperation is unthinkable. "Anathema," shouts Paul who opposed these social/spiritual blights, but never stopped offering the true gospel and opposing the false (Gal 1:8-9).

### PASTORAL CONCERNS FOR VIGILANCE

American patriot Thomas Jefferson observed that "eternal vigilance is the price of victory."<sup>19</sup> Although he spoke of political victory, watchfulness is even more true for the church if she is to win out over false teaching and sin. W. Phillip Keller warned of *Predators in Our Pulpits* through his recent call to restore true, biblical preaching to churches around the world.<sup>20</sup> "Predator" might sound harsh, but it nonetheless follows the example of Christ who rightfully called the Pharisees blind guides, serpents, and whitewashed tombs (Matthew 23). God's spiritual sentry must be forthright in his challenges and strongly confront those who would maliciously usurp the true shepherd's tasks, thereby leading Christ's flock astray.

The Shepherd of Psalm 23 comforted the sheep with His rod and staff.<sup>21</sup> These implements not only symbolize vigilance, but in the Shepherd's hand they are also instruments of protection and direction, which are the fruit of vigilance. The "rod" protected the flock against immediate, encroaching danger. The "staff" served to assemble the sheep, to guide them, and even to rescue them should they wander away. Likewise, the shepherd of Christ's flock—the church—must be vigilant. The spiritual health and integrity of the flock depend on his devotion to this phase of his responsibility.

In his day, Charles Jefferson memorably captured the protective aspect of an ancient Near Eastern shepherd's duty. The parallels to

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<sup>19</sup>John Bartlett, *Familiar Quotations* (reprint, Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1982) 397.

<sup>20</sup>W. Phillip Keller, *Predators In Our Pulpits* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1988).

<sup>21</sup>For a vivid description of the shepherds' rod and staff, see W. Phillip Keller, *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970) 92-103.

modern-day shepherding for pastors are obvious, but unfortunately all too often ignored.

The Eastern shepherd was, first of all, a watchman. He had a watch tower. It was his business to keep a wide-open eye, constantly searching the horizon for the possible approach of foes. He was bound to be circumspect and attentive. Vigilance was a cardinal virtue. An alert wakefulness was for him a necessity. He could not indulge in fits of drowsiness, for the foe was always near. Only by his alertness could the enemy be circumvented. There were many kinds of enemies, all of them terrible, each in a different way. At certain seasons of the year there were floods. Streams became quickly swollen and overflowed their banks. Swift action was necessary in order to escape destruction. There were enemies of a more subtle kind—animals, rapacious and treacherous: lions, bears, hyenas, jackals, wolves. There were enemies in the air; huge birds of prey were always soaring aloft ready to swoop down upon a lamb or kid. And then, most dangerous of all, were the human birds and beasts of prey—robbers, bandits, men who made a business of robbing sheepfolds and murdering shepherds. That Eastern world was full of perils. It teemed with forces hostile to the shepherd and his flock. When Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Habakkuk talk about shepherds, they call them watchmen set to warn and save.<sup>22</sup>

Without question, vigilance starts in the pulpit, but it goes far beyond. Watching over the flock as a body does not preclude watching over the congregation as individuals. Strong pulpit ministry has always been the backbone of shepherding, but it does not exhaust the shepherd's responsibilities. Consider the persuasion of Charles Bridges:

Let us not think that all our work is done in the study and in the pulpit. Preaching—the grand lever of the Ministry—derives much of its power from connection with the Pastoral work; and its too frequent disjunction from it is a main cause of our inefficiency. The Pastor and Preacher combine to form the completeness of the sacred office, as expounded in our Ordination services and Scriptural illustrations. How little can a stated appearance in public answer to the lowest sense of such terms as

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<sup>22</sup>Jefferson, *The Minister* 41-42.

Shepherd, Watchman, Overseer, Steward!—terms, which import not a mere general superintendence over the flock, charge, or household, but an acquaintance with their individual wants, and a distribution suitable to the occasion; without which, instead of "taking heed to the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made us overseers," we can scarcely be said to "take the oversight of it" at all.<sup>23</sup>

Pastoral oversight includes a strong emphasis on watching carefully for lurking spiritual danger according to the follow sampling of NT exhortations:

"And He was giving orders to them saying, `Watch out! Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod'" (Mark 8:15).

"Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love respectful greetings in the market places, and chief seats in the synagogues, and places of honor at banquets . . ." (Luke 20:46).

"Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision . . ." (Phil 3:2).

"Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Pet 5:8).

"Watch yourselves, that you might not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward" (2 John 8).

The early church took these biblical instructions seriously as the actions of both the Apostle John and his disciple Polycarp confirm:

The same Polycarp, coming to Rome under the episcopate of Anicetus, turned many from the aforesaid heretics to the church of God, proclaiming the one and only true faith, that he had received from the apostles, that, viz., which was delivered by the church. And there are those still living who heard him relate, that John the disciple of the Lord went into a bath at Ephesus, and seeing Cerinthus within, ran out

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<sup>23</sup>Charles Bridges, *The Christian Minister* (reprint, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1980) 343.

without bathing, and exclaimed, "Let us flee lest the bath should fall in, as long as Cerinthus, that enemy of truth, is within." And the same Polycarp, once coming and meeting Marcion, who said, "acknowledge us," he replied, "I acknowledge the first born of Satan." Such caution did the apostles and their disciples use, so as not even to have any communion, even in word with any of those that thus mutilated the truth, according to the declaration of Paul: "An heretical man after the first and second admonition avoid, knowing that such an one is perverse, and that he sins, bringing condemnation upon himself."<sup>24</sup>

The pattern continued to the fourth generation (Christ, John, and Polycarp being the first three) in the ministry of Irenaeus, a disciple of Polycarp:

Inasmuch as certain men have set the truth aside, and bring in lying words and vain genealogies, which, as the apostle says, "minister questions rather than godly edifying which is in faith," and by means of their craftily-constructed plausibilities draw away the minds of the inexperienced and take them captive, [I have felt constrained, my dear friend, to compose the following treatise in order to expose and counteract their machinations.] These men falsify the oracles of God, and prove themselves evil interpreters of the good word of revelation. They also overthrow the faith of many, by drawing them away, under a pretense of [superior] knowledge, from Him who founded and adorned the universe; as if, forsooth, they had something more excellent and sublime to reveal, than that God who created the heaven and the earth, and all things that are therein. By means of specious and plausible words, they cunningly allure the simple-minded to inquire into their system; but they nevertheless clumsily destroy them, while they initiate them into their blasphemous and impious opinions respecting the Demiurge; and these simple ones are unable, even in such a matter, to distinguish falsehood from truth.<sup>25</sup>

More recently—in the mid-1960's—Harry Blamires has written

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<sup>24</sup>Eusebius Pamphilus, *Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History* (reprint, Grand Rapids: Guardian, 1955) 141-42.

<sup>25</sup>Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, vol. 2 of *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956) 315.

a significant volume warning the British church of its rapid departure from truth. He has since been associated with the concept of "thinking Christianly" because of his clear call for the restoration of a Christian mind-set based on Scripture:

Our culture is bedeviled by the it's-all-a-matter-of-opinion code. In the sphere of religious and moral thinking we are rapidly heading for a state of intellectual anarchy in which the difference between truth and falsehood will no longer be recognized. Indeed it would seem possible that the words *true* and *false* will eventually (and logically) be replaced by the words *likeable* and *dislikeable*. . . .

Christian truth is objective, four-square, unshakable. It is not built of men's opinions. It is not something fabricated either by scholars or by men in the street, still less something assembled from a million answers, Yes, No, and Don't know, obtained from a cross-section of the human race. Christian truth is something given, revealed, laid open to the eye of the patient, self-forgetful inquirer. You do not *make* the truth. You *reside* in the truth. A suitable image for truth would be that of a lighthouse lashed by the elemental fury of undisciplined error. Those who have come to reside in the truth must stay there. It is not their business to go back into error for the purpose of joining their drowning fellows with the pretense that, inside or outside, the conditions are pretty much the same. It is their duty to draw others within the shelter of the truth. For truth is most certainly a shelter. And it is inviolable. If we start to dismantle it and give it away in bits to those outside, there will be nothing left to protect our own heads—and no refuge in which to receive the others, should they at length grow weary of error.<sup>26</sup>

What Blamires wrote to the British church of the 60's, David Wells has more recently written to the American church of the 90's:

The stream of historic orthodoxy that once watered the evangelical soul is now damned by a worldliness that many fail to recognize as worldliness because of the cultural innocence with which it presents itself. To be sure, this orthodoxy never was infallible, nor was it without its blemishes and foibles, but I am far from persuaded that the

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<sup>26</sup>Harry Blamires, *The Christian Mind* (reprint, Ann Arbor, MI: Servant, 1978), 112-14.

emancipation from its theological core that much of evangelicalism is effecting has resulted in greater biblical fidelity. In fact, the result is just the opposite. We now have less biblical fidelity, less interest in truth, less seriousness, less depth, and less capacity to speak the Word of God to our own generation in a way that offers an alternative to what it already thinks. The older orthodoxy was driven by a passion for truth, and that was why it could express itself only in theological terms. The newer evangelicalism is not driven by the same passion for truth, and that is why it is often empty of theological interest.<sup>27</sup>

Perhaps no pastor in America has made his point more frequently or forcefully in the past decade than John MacArthur who warns,

True discernment has suffered a horrible setback in the past few decades because reason itself has been under attack within the church. As Francis Schaeffer warned nearly thirty years ago in *The God Who Is There*, the church is following the irrationality of secular philosophy. Consequently, reckless faith has overrun the evangelical community. Many are discarding doctrine in favor of personal experience. Others say they are willing to disregard crucial biblical distinctives in order to achieve external unity among all professing Christians. True Christianity marked by intelligent, biblical faith seems to be declining even among the most conservative evangelicals.<sup>28</sup>

Blamires, Wells, and MacArthur stand in the long, unbroken chain of gallant men who have taken seriously the biblical injunctions to watch and warn. They serve as exemplars of shepherdly vigilance in the best tradition of the NT overseer.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>David F. Wells, *No Place for Truth or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993) 11-12.

<sup>28</sup>John F. MacArthur, *Reckless Faith* 19; cf. also MacArthur's *Ashamed of the Gospel* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1993) and *The Vanishing Conscience* (Dallas: Word, 1994).

<sup>29</sup>Doctrinal error does not always appear in its most obvious or despicable form. "Error, indeed, is never set forth in its naked deformity, lest, being thus exposed, it should at once be detected. But it is craftily decked out in an attractive dress, so as, by its outward form, to make it appear to the inexperienced (ridiculous as the expression may seem) more true than the truth itself" (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 315).

Paul wrote Titus that an overseer should hold "fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict" (Titus 1:9). To "exhort" only and not to "refute" amounts to spiritual insubordination, even gross disobedience. Certainly, it is nothing less than dereliction of duty.

John Stott recently exposed the growing negligence of late twentieth-century shepherds in their failure to watch for and confront doctrinal error:

This emphasis is unpopular today. It is frequently said that pastors must always be positive in their teaching, never negative. But those who say this have either not read the New Testament or, having read it, they disagree with it. For the Lord Jesus and His apostles gave the example and even set forth the obligation to be negative in refuting error. Is it possible that the neglect of this ministry is one of the major causes of theological confusion in the church today? To be sure, theological controversy is distasteful to sensitive spirits and has its spiritual dangers. Woe to those who enjoy it! But it cannot conscientiously be avoided. If, when false teaching arises, Christian leaders sit idly by and do nothing or turn tail and flee, they will earn the terrible epithet "hirelings" who care nothing for Christ's flock. Is it right to abandon His sheep and leave them defenseless against the wolves to be like "sheep without a shepherd"? Is it right to be content to see the flock scattered and individual sheep torn to pieces? Is it to be said of believers today, as it was of Israel, that "they were scattered for lack of a shepherd, and they became food for every beast of the field" (Ezek. 34:5)? Today even some of the fundamental doctrines of historic Christianity are being denied by some church leaders, including the infinite personality of the living God, the eternal deity, virgin birth, atoning death, bodily resurrection of Jesus, the Trinity, and the gospel of justification by grace alone through faith alone without any meritorious works. Pastors are to protect God's flock from error and seek to establish them in the truth.<sup>30</sup>

### **A GOOD SERVANT OF JESUS CHRIST**

"In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good

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<sup>30</sup>Stott, "Ideals of Pastoral Ministry" 8.

servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following" (1 Tim 4:6). For the spiritual good of the Ephesian church, Paul insisted that Timothy point out "these things," referring back to the false doctrine exposed in 4:1-3 and truth taught in 4:4-5. "A good servant of Jesus Christ" points them out to the flock by way of warning and instruction.<sup>31</sup> Failure to warn invites a "spiritual Chernobyl" because real danger still exists even though the sheep are unaware. Ultimately, they will suffer harm through the negligence of a shepherd to sound a timely warning.

As a former naval officer, I have stood many four-hour watches on the bridge of a destroyer at sea. During the watch I had responsibility for the operation and safety of the ship. If a dangerous situation appeared, I had to warn both the captain and the crew. They depended on my alertness in carrying out my assigned task. Failure to function properly according to my charge would have amounted to gross negligence on my part, possible damage to the ship or loss of life, and the dishonorable end of my naval career. Just as "a good naval officer" warns when danger lurks nearby, so must "a good servant of Jesus Christ."

Be assured that it is good and right to protect the flock from false teachers, untrue doctrine, and personal sin, even when it involves exercising church discipline.<sup>32</sup> They will find comfort in your diligent protection (Ps 23:4). If you begin by preaching the whole of Scripture, then the process of watching and warning will begin to take place in the normal course of ministry because His saints receive warnings through the truth of God's Word (Ps 19:11).

Although Paul proved to be a courageous shepherd, he still harbored a few fears. This is one of them: "But I am afraid, lest as the

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<sup>31</sup>Charles Haddon Spurgeon proved to be a classic watchman in the 19th century as illustrated in such writings as "How to Meet the Evils of the Age" and "The Evils of the Present Time" (in *An All-Round Ministry* [reprint, Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim, 1983] 89-127, 282-314).

<sup>32</sup>For helpful material on "church discipline" as a means of dealing with and prayerfully restoring a sinning believer, see J. Carl Laney, *A Guide To Church Discipline* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1985), and John MacArthur, Jr., *Matthew 16-23* (Chicago: Moody, 1988), 123-39.

serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ" (2 Cor 11:3).

Good servants of Jesus Christ would do well to share this fear with Paul, not as a sign of weakness or cowardice, but as a significant demonstration of spiritual strength coupled with a clear sense of spiritual reality. To do less would result in hollow ministry, invite Christ's displeasure with their service, and endanger the spiritual health of the flock. The blood of the flock would be on their hands. Because the flock is so susceptible to deception, shepherds must be ever vigilant.

Jesus Christ stands as the ultimate Shepherd and Guardian of people's souls (1 Pet 2:25). Today's undershepherds could do no better than to follow His example of watching and warning. Failure to measure up to His pattern would be biblically unthinkable and spiritually unconscionable.

## THE ONLY SURE WORD

John Sherwood<sup>43</sup>

*In the face of challengers in his second letter, the apostle Peter makes it clear in 1:16-21 that God's word is his source of authority and spiritual knowledge. In doing this, he shows that the knowledge gained in God's written revelation prevails over that gained anywhere else. Because of its superiority, Scripture deserves concentrated attention. All other conceivable sources of knowledge must bow the knee to God's Word.*

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We were robbed! A Roman Catholic charismatic group snatched some key businessmen who had been studying the Bible with us for some months, and it hurt. In contrast to our steady work in God's Word, they could offer fantastic charismatic experiences like being spiritually slain and tongues-speaking without stepping outside the bounds of tradition and the Mother Church. How can we compete?

How often had we faced this type of question? A member of

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one of our Bible studies asks what I think about the recent apparitions of Virgin Mary on a neighboring island of the Philippines. An estimated one million were expected to visit. There they hoped to hear Mary's voice with a new message for the nation. How can we convince these new Bible students, coming from an experience-oriented culture, that any search for spiritual knowledge outside God's Word amounts to a rejection of God and His Word?

The advantages of ministering in the Philippines, the "only Christian nation in Asia"<sup>44</sup> (i.e., 85% Roman Catholic), include the assumption of the vast majority that the Bible is the Word of God. For example, missionaries to the Philippines rarely face inerrancy as an issue. However, the superiority of Scripture to all other sources of knowledge is constantly under challenge. Aside from direct apparitions, other "miraculous" happenings, signs and omens, superstition, various prophets receiving new revelation, and the more subtle traditions, teachings, and experiences of men all vie for equal status and even superiority to written revelation.

Peter evidently faced a similar challenge from foes of a pre-Gnostic variety in his second letter.<sup>45</sup> Consequently, in 2 Pet 2:16-21, he answers their challenge with a *comparison of four different sources of knowledge*. He moves through the passage from the least authoritative source to the one with most authority.

For Peter's readers and for the present time, it is not enough to recognize God's written revelation as without error; it is also *superior* to all other sources of knowledge and *sufficient* for "everything that relates to life and godliness" (1:3). An understanding of Peter's progress of thought in these verses, together with their context, will correct a wrong understanding of the passage perpetuated by most of

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<sup>44</sup>*World Christian Encyclopedia*, ed. David B. Barrett (Oxford: Oxford University, 1982) 562.

<sup>45</sup>Michael Green (*Second Peter and Jude*, Tyndale New Testament Commentary [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968] 81; cf. also comments on v. 16b) feels these false teachers are not pre-Gnostics because Peter is here answering their accusation that he was using fables, when they themselves used the same. This requires too much consistency on the part of false teachers, however, that they would not accuse Peter of doing the very thing they were guilty of. Moreover, it could be that Peter contrasts his method of not relying on legends with theirs to show the superiority of his authority.

the current English translations (see comments on v. 19 below).

*For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 1:16).<sup>46</sup>*

As Peter neared the end of his life, he wanted to remind his readers of the most important truths (1:12-15).<sup>47</sup> Yet even as he wrote, he remained mindful of attacks upon his authority, and therefore identified his sources of knowledge about these vital truths. His teaching is only as valuable as the source he bases it on.

### FIRST SOURCE: ILLEGITIMATE MYTHS

The first possible source—an illegitimate one—Peter calls *mythos* (*muthos*, "myth") from which the English word "myth" with the same meaning comes.<sup>48</sup> The adjectival participle used to describe these myths as "cleverly devised" comes from σοφίζω (*sophizō*, "I become wise, skilled"). This word also took on a sarcastic meaning as early as Plato and Demosthenes (*Rep*, 496a; *Demos*. 25:18) possibly in relation to those clever Greek sophists who could invent ingenious arguments for any side of an issue. "Cleverly concocted" and "artfully spun" (NEB) both adroitly convey the idea.<sup>49</sup> Peter uses an instrumental participle of ἰακωλοῦμαι (*eksakolouthēō*, "I follow, depend on") to introduce this first source: "Not by means of following cleverly concocted tales. . . ."

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<sup>46</sup>All Scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible unless otherwise specified.

<sup>47</sup>Note the phrases, "remind you of these things" (v. 12), "stir you up by way of reminder" (v. 13), and "call these things to mind" (v. 15).

<sup>48</sup>It is unlikely that Peter had seen Paul's use of this word for fanciful Jewish genealogies in 1 Tim 1:4; 2 Tim 4:4; Titus 1:14 since these letters originated at approximately the same time as 2 Peter. Peter refers to this kind of error as "heresies" (2 Pet 2:1) and "false words" (2 Pet 2:3).

<sup>49</sup>John Calvin uses some adroitness himself when he writes that Peter is explaining that he is not like the teachers "who presumptuously mount the pulpit to prattle of speculation unknown to themselves," in *Library of Christian Classics* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1958) 383.

One of the vital truths that Peter emphasized in his first letter and about which someone may have accused him of concocting tales is Christ's "power and coming" (1 Pe 1:5, 7, 11, 13; 2:12; 4:5-7, 13; 5:4; cf. 2 Pet 2:9; 3:4, 7, 9-12).<sup>50</sup> As here, normally it is Jesus' return rather than His incarnation that Scripture associates with power (e.g., see the previous references in Peter's letters). In addition, "coming," *parousia* (*parousia*, "arrival, presence"), when used in relation to Christ in the NT, only describes His second coming. This agrees with its Koine use for a hidden divinity making his presence felt by a revelation of his power or, in a secular sense, for the visit of a high-ranking person.<sup>51</sup>

The mystery religions which surged in popularity in the Greek and Roman worlds around the first millennium's beginning developed elaborate schemes of the supernatural to which only the initiated were privy. Peter had nothing to do with those.

This first source of knowledge, being manmade, encompasses a large number of ancient claims of knowledge as well as modern ones.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>This could possibly be an occurrence of *hendiadys* to avoid a long string of genitives, in which case *dynamis kai parousia* ("power and coming") would stand for *dynamis parousias* (power of [His] coming). Thus the Twentieth Century NT translates, "the Coming in power."

<sup>51</sup>Calvin (*Library of Christian Classics* 382) understood this as referring to the first appearance of Christ. In addition, John Owen, in a footnote in his translation of Calvin, writes, "The whole passage refers only and expressly to his first coming." This leads him to understand that it is the believer's own experience with the gospel ("star arise in your hearts") that renders the written prophecies more sure to him personally (*ibid.*, 386).

<sup>52</sup>Such man-made guides addressed include religious leaders, modern counseling and psychology, new revelation in the signs and wonders movement, popular techniques of spiritual warfare, philosophy and rational thinking, science, tradition, and even personal experience and emotion. Several books have recently addressed this very topic from the point of view of the sufficiency of God's Word, including *Power Religion*, ed. Michael Horton (Chicago: Moody, 1992); Thomas Ice and Robert Dean, Jr., in *Overrun by Demons* (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 1990); and John MacArthur, *Our Sufficiency in Christ* (Dallas: Word, 1991). We laughingly remember the occasion when I shared this passage in a devotional meditation before leaving from the mission field for a furlough. After the meditation, a woman approached my wife and remarked with emotion as she patted her heart, "I just *feel it in my heart* that you will return."

This very passage shows the deficiency of Catholic tradition and religious experience as guides to Christian experience.

## SECOND SOURCE: LEGITIMATE PERSONAL PERCEPTION

*But we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased"—and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain (2 Pet 1:16b-18).*

Next, Peter mentions the second source of knowledge, one which he did rely on and count as valuable. If the earlier participle,  $\text{jakoloyuhsantew}$  (*exakolouthesantes*, "following," v. 16a), is instrumental, so is probably the parallel participle,  $\text{genhu\theta\text{ntew}}$  (*genethentes*, "becoming," v. 16b): "not by (means of) following cleverly concocted myths did we make known to you . . . , but (all', *all'*) by (means of) being (becoming) eyewitnesses. . . ."<sup>53</sup>

Peter flings a verbal dart at his pre-Gnostic adversaries with his use of  $\text{epoptai}$  (*epoptai*, "eyewitnesses"). A NT *hapax legomenon* (i.e., used only this once in the NT), *epoptes* had become by NT times a technical term used in mystery sects to designate those initiated into a higher knowledge. If Peter intended this cultic sense, he did so to reverse their snobbish use of the word by excluding the false teachers from his circle of true eyewitnesses.

Peter, with John and James, had personally witnessed Christ revealed in glory on the mountain of Matt 17:1-8.<sup>54</sup> Clearly he consid-

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<sup>53</sup>One may take both participles to be causal without a change of meaning: "not because we followed . . . but because we were eyewitnesses. . . ."

<sup>54</sup>This reference to the transfiguration experience confirms Peter as the author of this epistle, liberal scholarship notwithstanding. Peter even uses the emphatic pronoun  $\text{h\text{mei}\omega}$  (*hemeis*, "we") and refers both to being an eyewitness (v. 16) and to hearing (v. 18). Many dismiss this as secondhand mention by someone who had heard of the transfiguration from Peter or another apostle (e.g., Bo Reike, *The Epistles of James, Peter, and Jude*, vol. 37 of *The Anchor Bible* [Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1964] 142, 144).

ered this mountain experience to be a basis for belief in the Second Coming of Christ. That sanctified mountain<sup>55</sup> episode foreshadowed the glory and power in which Christ will return. All three of the Synoptic Gospels record that Jesus also understood an intended connection between the transfiguration and "the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom" (Matt 16:28; cf. Mark 9:1; Luke 9:27).<sup>56</sup>

Perhaps this connection in Peter's mind is also visible when he records the messianic proclamation announced<sup>57</sup> by the Magnificent<sup>58</sup> Father (cf. Ps. 2:7; Isa 5:1; 42:1).<sup>59</sup> Unfortunately this title remains rather hidden in the KJV, NASB, RSV, and NIV renderings, all of which render "beloved" as adjectivally modifying "Son." More accurate are the NEB and RSV footnotes which translate the two articular phrases separately: "this is My Son, my Beloved," because Peter adds a second pronoun, *moy* (*mou*, "my") that none of the gospel accounts includes.

Verse 17 poses the interesting syntactical challenge of identifying which independent verb the participle *labōn* (*labōn*, "having received") modifies. Kistemaker, with others, explains it as an incom-

<sup>55</sup>The mountain became "holy" because of what took place there. Similarly, Jerusalem was the "holy city" (Matt 4:5; Rev 11:2).

<sup>56</sup>Though Green (*Second Peter and Jude* 82) says that mention of the transfiguration is rare in early Christian literature, in the Apocalypse of Peter someone familiar with 2 Peter also mentions it in connection with Christ's return (in the *Akhmim* and *Ethiopic* fragments, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, trans. J. K. Elliot, [Oxford: Clarendon, 1993] 609-12). This may reflect the early church's interpretation of the verse.

<sup>57</sup>"Announced" (*ἀνευξέσθη*, lit. "was brought," v. 17). The word also depicts God's utterance of a word or an announcement in vv. 18, 21. Could this be the origin of the southern expression, "Preacher sure brought a good message this morning"?

<sup>58</sup>*Megaloprepoyw* is probably a euphemism for God.

<sup>59</sup>*Toiasde* ("of such kind") evidently introduces the following announcement in much the same way as *τοιοῦτω* does in Classical Greek (BDF, par. 289). Joseph Henry Thayer adds that it suggests something excellent or admirable (*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, trans. and rev. Joseph Henry Thayer [reprint, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1958] 627).

plete sentence, broken by v. 18 and continued in v. 19.<sup>60</sup> An ellipsis is possible here such as "[the prophetic word was established] when..." but it is much simpler to understand the participle as temporally modifying the finite verb in v. 18, *h kōysamen* (*ekousamen*, "we heard"): e.g., "When He received honor and glory . . . we also heard this voice."<sup>61</sup>

In short, Peter considers his eyewitness experience as valid and even powerful for corroborating truth. Experience is not reliable as a final arbitrator of truth because the interpretation of experience apart from divine revelation is subjective. The next step in Peter's sequence demonstrates this. Nevertheless, experience is not without value.<sup>62</sup> Accordingly, believers receive encouragement and an expansion of their faith when they see the truth of God's promises confirmed by some incident in their lives. We as Western missionaries, in our desire to elevate objective truth, must not be too hasty to demean experience in its valid role of fleshing out truth. The sad result will be an elevation of biblical truth out of the realm of practice and into the realm of theory.<sup>63</sup>

### THIRD SOURCE: SUPERIOR SCRIPTURE

*And so we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place . . . (2 Pe. 1:19a).*

Verse 19 introduces one of the two major interpretive problems of this passage, both of which have theological importance. Green

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<sup>60</sup>Simon Kistemaker, *First and Second Peter and Jude* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987) 267.

<sup>61</sup>Both the NASB and the RSV seem to handle the syntax this way.

<sup>62</sup>Biblical signs and wonders provided testimony to the truth for those who witnessed them. Yet they are clearly inferior in the witness of written revelation and point to further revelation which interprets them (cf. Luke 16:29-31; John 20:29).

<sup>63</sup>Rodney Henry (*Filipino Spirit World*, [Manila: OMF Publishers, 1971]) discusses this separation in the realm of the spirit world.

summarizes this first problem with the following questions: "Does it [the verse] mean that the Scriptures confirm the apostolic witness (AV)? Or does it mean that the apostolic witness [eyewitness experience] fulfills, and thus authenticates, Scriptures . . . ?"<sup>64</sup> Almost all the modern English translations reflect this second sense (including NASB, NIV, NKJV, JB, RSV, and NEB).

An examination of the NASB clarifies the issue: "And *so* we have the prophetic word *made* more sure. . . ." In this translation Peter's experience on the mountain serves to confirm the prophetic or written Word. In other words, Scripture would have lacked some of its authority had apostolic experience not authenticated it. Objective truth would thus be dependent upon subjective; signs and wonders would continue to confirm the canon; this might lead to reliance on philosophies and theories of men to complement the inadequacies of the Bible.

The translation choice revolves around the use of  $\kappa\alpha\iota$  (*kai*, "even" or "and") and of  $\beta\epsilon\beta\alpha\iota\omega\tau\epsilon\rho\omicron\nu$  (*bebaioteron*, "sure").

### ***Kai: Epexegetical or Simple Conjunction?***

By adding the word "so," the NASB has supported the idea that v. 19 gives a *result* of the previous verses. In that case, written revelation receives its confirmation and is "made more sure" by the visual revelation of the transfiguration. Similarly Strachan suggests that the transfiguration experience made the OT "prophetic Word" more certain, even though it was already certain before Peter's time. Therefore he translates, "Thus we have still further confirmation of the words of the prophets."<sup>65</sup>

*Kai* can sometimes contain that type of epexegetical or inferential sense (i.e., thus, so), but only rarely. Much more plausible, rather, is the simple *kai* copula introducing an *additional* source for the truths Peter is bringing to their memories as he continues to ascend, as it were, through his four-part sequence.

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<sup>64</sup>Green, *Second Peter and Jude* 86.

<sup>65</sup>R. H. Strachan, "The Second Epistle General of Peter," *EGT* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961) 5:131. Likewise, Moffatt translates, "gained fresh confirmation of the prophetic word."

### ***The Meaning of Bebaios***

Βῆβαιω (*Bebaios*, "Reliable, Firm") and its cognates, used 19 times in the NT, originally described something firm, fit to tread on; it "is concerned with that which is based, or still to be fixed or anchored to a foundation, assumed to be unshakable."<sup>66</sup> In secular Greek, it was often a legal term used of an unassailable position or guarantee. Good translations include "permanent, firm, reliable, dependable, certain." In a significant parallel usage of the cognate verb, Mark wrote that Jesus "*confirmed* the word by the signs that followed" (16:20).

A verbal interpretation of *bebaios* in the present verse, "*made more sure*," seen in many versions including the NASB, is unlikely for two reasons:

(1) *Bebaios* is clearly an adjective and it seems tenuous to translate it verbally, "made more sure," as if it were *bebaivonta* (*bebaiōthenta*). In fact, Peter does use this adjective with a verbal sense only a few verses earlier in this very letter, *but only* with the complementary *poie@suai* (*poieisthai*, "do, make"), "to make certain" (1:10). (Incidentally, the reduplicated stem adds no more of a perfective or verbal sense than in *bēbhlow* [*bebelos*, "worldly"] or *pepo@hsw* [*pepoithesis*, "confidence"].)

(2) A different approach translates *bebaios* elatively so that the comparative adjective implies no comparison: "We also have the *very* certain prophetic Word." However, of the seven other times Peter uses a comparative adjective, he always uses it comparatively instead of elatively, sometimes with an expressed object of comparison (1 Pet 1:7; 3:17; 2 Pet 2:20, 21), sometimes without (1 Pet 3:7; 5:5; 2 Pet 2:11). (First Pet 5:5 is a possible exception in using a comparative adjective substantively if translated "young men.") If the present verse follows that norm, he must be comparing the prophetic word to something. Since the following verses make clear that he is speaking of the written Word, he has now advanced to present the written Word as superior to the audio/visual experiences of vv. 17-18.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>H. Schönweiss, "Firm, Foundation, Certainty, Confirm," *NIDNTT* 1:658.

<sup>67</sup>Comparatives can sometimes be used for superlatives. Thus Bo Reicke (*Epistles of James, Peter, and Jude* 158) translates, "And we regard the prophetic word as most reliable." This would fit well if Peter is comparing three different sources of

Hence, *bebaios* as in all its nine uses in the NT, is an adjective, moved forward in its clause for emphasis.<sup>68</sup> Almost alone, the AV correctly translates, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy."<sup>69</sup> Barbieri paraphrases, "If you don't believe what I have said, then believe what is written in the Word of God."<sup>70</sup> In good presuppositional form, Peter asserts that the written Word needs no authentication from religious experience or otherwise.

Theologically, such an interpretation makes especially good sense coming from a Jew whose heritage traditionally favored written revelation to oral.<sup>71</sup> Furthermore, in the larger context of the NT, support from the OT was the irrefutable source of authority of the

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knowledge, namely, myths, direct revelation, and written revelation. The suggestion offered above is preferable.

<sup>68</sup>Interestingly, this construction, verb-adjective-article-adjective, is quite uncommon. A study of its occurrences is inconclusive as to whether the adjective, in this case  $\beta\beta\alpha\iota\omicron\omega$ , is used attributively or predicatively. Apart from its idiomatic uses with  $\pi\alpha\omega$  ("all, every") and  $\delta\ \lambda\omicron\omega$  ("whole, complete"), the construction appears only a few times. Luke 5:7 has the adjective,  $\alpha\ \mu\omicron\theta\epsilon\tau\epsilon\alpha$  ("both"), used attributively in this construction. Particularly parallel to 2 Pet 1:19 is Acts 17:16, which describes Athens as "the full-of-idols city." (Or is it "that the city was full of idols"?) Hebrews 11:23 can either be understood as attributive, "they saw the beautiful child," or predicate, "they saw that the child was beautiful." Cf. also Rom 4:16, with  $e\ \sigma\eta\mu\alpha\iota$  ("to be").

<sup>69</sup>The presence of the article would be better translated as "the more sure word. . ."

<sup>70</sup>Louis Barbieri, *First and Second Peter*, Everyman's Bible Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1977) 105.

<sup>71</sup>Unfortunately, this preference for written revelation was not applied to a preference for the OT. In fact, the Rabbis seemed to favor the *Mishnah* and *Gemara* to the OT. Edersheim, citing the Talmud tractate Baba Met 33a, writes, "The Talmud has it, that he who busies himself with Scripture only (*i.e.* without either the *Mishnah* or *Gemara*) has merit, and yet no merit" (Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* [reprint, Peabody, Mass.: Hendricksen, 1993] 75). However, concerning the value of oral revelation, the Rabbis had developed the concept of the  $\text{לִבְנוֹת הַקוֹל}$  /  $\text{ב}$  (*bat qol*), literally the "daughter of a voice," "an echo of a heavenly voice that was audible on earth and proclaimed some divine oracle or judgment" (M. J. Harris, "Quiet, Rest, Silence, etc.," *NIDNTT* 3:113).

apostles, the "final word" as it were.<sup>72</sup>

Kistemaker takes yet another approach and writes,

This wording [the common translation in which the transfiguration serves to confirm written revelation] does justice to the sequence of the apostolic message confirmed by the transfiguration and by the Old Testament Scripture.<sup>73</sup>

In this case, he confines "the prophetic Word" to the OT Scriptures and chronologically juxtaposes it with the apostolic witness in the NT which confirms the former.

But Peter does not seem to be confining himself to the OT. He rather equates this "prophetic Word" (τὸν προφητικὸν λόγον, *ton prophetikon logon*) with the "prophecy of Scripture" (προφητεῖα γραφῶν, *propheteia graphes*) in v. 20. With the reuse of that same term, γραφή (*graphie*, "writing"), he equates "prophecy of Scripture" with other writings of Scripture, including Paul's mentioned in 2 Pet 3:15-16. Further, προφητικὸς (*prophetikos*, "prophetic") appears again only in Rom 16:26 where it refers specifically to the NT. Finally, a study of Peter's use of the word λόγος (*logos*, "word") suggests no restriction to OT.<sup>74</sup> Kistemaker's limitation to the OT fails here.

Because written revelation remains the highest authority for truth during the present age, Peter commends his readers for focusing on it.<sup>75</sup> ΠΡΟΣΕΧΘΕ (*prosechō*, "pay attention") usually pairs with a dative to

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<sup>72</sup>Especially prominent in Matthew, the apostles' sermons in Acts, Romans 9—15, Hebrews, 1 Peter 2.

<sup>73</sup>Kistemaker, *First and Second Peter and Jude* 269.

<sup>74</sup>A study of Peter's 14 uses of λόγος (including those in Acts) reveals a wide variety of meanings, most often referring to the gospel. It never refers only to the OT.

<sup>75</sup>Strachan ("Second Epistle General" 131 f.) suggests that the pronoun  $\tau\alpha\upsilon\tau\alpha$  refers not to the preceding noun, but to the whole preceding clause. In that case the "lamp shining" would refer to the transfiguration as an especially crucial sign of Christ's return, substantiating the prophecies. Conversely, of the 49 times  $\tau\alpha\upsilon\tau\alpha$  appears in the NT without a preposition, it *always* refers to a noun or pronoun, usually expressed and rarely implied, but never to a clause. In addition, the transfiguration has not, in fact, served such a significant role historically.

define its focus, what occupies attention. When used positively, the word speaks of deliberate concentration on something (e.g., Heb 2:1).

Moulton and Milligan point out that εὖ (*eu*, "well") or καλῶ (*kalōs*, "well") with the future tense ποιῆσειν (*poiesēis*, "will do, make") and a following participle, can suggest an imperative similar to "please" or "kindly"<sup>76</sup> (e.g., 3 John 6). However, in this clause ποιεῖτε (*poieite*) is a present indicative, and so Peter is commending them for something they were already doing (e.g., Jas 2:8, 19). Of course, a commendation can have the same practical force as a mandate. Peter knew that this focus on the written Word would protect them from false teachers who relied on manmade tales.

Peter's comparison of God's Word to a lamp suggests several OT passages (2 Sam 22:29; Ps 18:28; 119:105; Prov 6:23). The word for "dark," ἀγμῆρῃ (*auchmerō*), only here in the NT, also connotes a dry place, or even murky and filthy.<sup>77</sup> The light from Scripture shows the dirt of people's lives and the filth of false teaching, cleaning them out and providing guidance for a straight walk. God's Word alone provides everything needed pertaining to life and godliness" (2 Pet 1:3) so that believers can grow in Christlikeness (1:4).

When over a million flock to a small Philippine town and claim to hear Mary's voice commanding them to pray the Rosary, to see Mary cry tears of blood, we can only point back to the unchanging Word for protection. Subjective experiences are subject to man's misuse while God's unchanging Word explains itself.<sup>78</sup>

#### **FOURTH SOURCE: FACE-TO-FACE WITH CHRIST**

*Until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts (2*

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<sup>76</sup>MM, 95.

<sup>77</sup>One Koine epitaph reads: "May there be many blossoms upon the newly-built tomb, not *parched* [ἀγμῆρῳ] bramble, not worthless goat-weed." It is also used to describe the dark and dry sleeping place called Hades (MM, 95).

<sup>78</sup>Experiences which were valid and legitimate in the time of Peter, such as witnessing the transfiguration, no longer continue in the same way in this time following the completion of the NT canon.

Pet 1:19b).

Several different interpretations of 2 Pet 1:19b are possible, none of which is without difficulty:

(1) Some, pointing at the final phrase, "in your hearts," suggest "until" refers to a time when a higher level of divine insight in a Christian's life will supersede a lower level of faith in the written Word.<sup>79</sup> This view smacks of the very Gnostic elitism that Peter is confronting. Paul clearly refutes the notion of perfectionism in Phil 3:12-14.

(2) Kistemaker<sup>80</sup> and Hiebert<sup>81</sup> think that this time alludes to a subjective response ("in your hearts") of those awaiting Christ's return. Yet  $\epsilon$   $\omega\omega$  (*heos*, "until") introduces a terminal point, whether related to location, quantity, some activity, or time, as in this case. In what sense would that positive attitude toward Christ's return provide an end to the need to concentrate on Scripture?

(3) A more novel approach would have this final part of v. 19 providing the terminal point neither for the reliable Word,<sup>82</sup> nor for the time of focusing on that Word, but modifying the immediately preceding clause, "as to a lamp shining in a dark place" (v. 19a). Accordingly, the lamp of God's Word shines in a dark heart until the day of salvation faith dawns. This finds support in 2 Cor 4:6, "God . . . is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." This interpretation is unlikely because of the following thoughts.

(4) The most common explanation emphasizes the need to concentrate on God's Word until the time that Christ returns and

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<sup>79</sup>Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament*, 4th ed., 4 vols. (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1903) 4:400.

<sup>80</sup>Kistemaker, *First and Second Peter and Jude* 271

<sup>81</sup>D. Edmond Hiebert, "The Prophetic Foundation for the Christian Life: An Exposition of 2 Peter 1:19-21," *BSac* 141/562 (April-June, 1984):158-68.

<sup>82</sup>Both the NASB and Nestle's 26th edition of the Greek NT suggest this with their punctuation.

believers receive fuller light in heaven directly from Him.<sup>83</sup> Scripture frequently compares Messiah Jesus to a star or light (Num 24:17; Mal 4:2; Luke 1:78; 2 Cor 4:6; Eph 5:14), even a Morning Star (Rev 2:28; 22:16).<sup>84</sup> Moreover, the day of Christ's return relates to an ending of darkness for believers when they stand in the complete light of God's presence (Rom 13:12; Rev 21:23-25). Many people understand 1 Cor 13:9-12, "when the perfect comes . . .," to speak of this superseding of written revelation by Christ's presence. Presence with God, then, would be the fourth source of spiritual knowledge, but one not yet available to the believer.

This preferred view prompts some interesting questions: Will written revelation be of no more relevance at the revelation of Christ? Or will it rather be replaced by something superior such as "adult" things inevitably replace C. S. Lewis' child's sandbox? Will Christians know all in heaven, or will heaven be a place of eternal learning?

The only obstacle to this view lies in the final phrase, "in your

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<sup>83</sup>Green, *Second Peter and Jude* 89. This interpretation would be even more obvious if the textual variant is followed which places the article before  $\eta$   $m\acute{\alpha}ra$  ("*the day*"), but the textual support for the article is weak.

<sup>84</sup>Though Revelation uses a different term,  $\theta\acute{\alpha}$   $st\acute{\alpha}r\acute{\alpha}$   $prv\#n\acute{\omega}$  ("morning star"), rather than  $\acute{\nu}\varsigma\acute{\sigma}\acute{\tau}\acute{\epsilon}\rho\omega$  ("morning star") used here, the terms are synonymous.

hearts," which does not seem to fit an eschatological interpretation recommend that this refers to the final transformation of the believer connected with Jesus' return (1 John 3:2),<sup>85</sup> but this is a weak rejoinder.

A convenient and preferable solution to the problem lies in beginning the sentence with the problematic phrase and continuing into v. 20: "Since this first of all in your hearts. . . ."<sup>86</sup> 1En (*en*, "in") prepositional phrases sometimes introduce nominative participial clauses, even starting new sentences on rare occasions.<sup>87</sup> Furthermore, in an idea parallel to knowing someone's heart, Eph 1:18 explains that when the heart is enlightened, one has hope to which God has called believers.<sup>88</sup>

This explanation of the prepositional phrase has it introducing 2:20-21, where a second major interpretive problem exists.

### THIRD SOURCE REVISITED

*But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men have spoken what they have been moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God (2 Pet 1:20-21).*

#### ***Divine Origin of Written Revelation***

After his brief look at the ultimate, face-to-face exposure to knowledge to come, Peter returns to the present and written revelation. Strachan skontew (*ginōskontes*, "knowing") *temporally*—"while realizing this"—renders it as an *imperative*—"Recognize this truth to be of utmost importance" but it suits the context better to see a *causal* force, giving the reason why one should concentrate on Scripture, "Since you know this above all."<sup>90</sup> T

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<sup>85</sup>Calvin, *Library of Christian Classics* 381 ff.

<sup>86</sup>Green (*Second Peter and Jude* 89) does not allude to this possibility.

<sup>87</sup>Cf. Matt 11:25; 13:1; Eph 3:17; Phil 2:7; Col 1:10, 11; 3:16, 22; 1 Tim 5:10; Titus 3:3; Heb 1:11; Jude 20. The first two begin even a new sentence in the Nestle 26th ed. Greek Text.

<sup>88</sup>Many other activities take place within believers' hearts, including sin (Matt 5:28; 9:4; Jas 3:14), thinking and remembering (Matt 24:48; Mark 2:6; Luke 2:19, 51; 3:15; 9:47), and God's love (Rom 5:5), belief (Rom 10:9). Further, the Holy Spirit dwells there (2 Cor 1:22; Eph 3:17).

<sup>89</sup>Strachan, "Second Epistle General" 132; Green, *Second Peter and Jude* 89. Though a temporal participle is very often possible, it is often best to resort to it only when interpretive possibilities fit (Dan Wallace, "Selected Notes" [unpublished syllabus, Grace Seminary, circa 1981]). The NASB and the NIV understand an imperatival participle in 2:20 and 3:3. This is possible, but the rarity of this use of a participle makes it unlikely. In context, 22 times the nominative participle of *ginōskō* used adverbially appears in the NT, 19 either probably express the cause for an associated action (Matt 12:15; 16:8; 22:18; 26:10; Mark 15:45; Luke 9:11; John 5:6; 6:15; Acts 23:6; Rom 1:21; 6:6; Gal 2:9; 4:9; Eph 5:5; Phil 2:19; Heb 1:3; 2 Pet 1:20; 3:3).

returns to the earlier emphasis, reminding them of the most important truth.

Verse 20 gives one of the reasons why written revelation is so subjective experiential knowledge.<sup>92</sup> The final clause of v. 20 includes the major syntactical problem of the passage. The problem revolves around *pilysew* (*epiluseōs*, literally "loosen, untie"). The NT uses the noun only. Mark 4:34 uses the verb to speak of interpreting a parable, and Acts 17:11 unravels and settling a dispute. Though the semantic connotation is the object of the interpretation remains unclear. Four potential meanings are of discussion.

**(1) Individual interpretation must yield to corporate interpretation.**

primarily the Roman Catholic tradition that understands Peter to be disallowing individuals from trying to interpret Scripture apart from the authority of the church—i.e., he forbids private interpretation by individual readers.<sup>93</sup>

*Idias* ("one's own") can mean private in contrast to corporate (Mark 4:34; Gal 2:2). However, this view is contextually difficult because v. 21 is useless, although the verse's clear function is to support what it expresses.<sup>94</sup> Moreover, this meaning contradicts other Scripture that recommends that the individual approach Scripture to understand it for himself (Acts 17:11; 2 Tim 2:15; 1 Pet 2:5, 9; 1 John 2:27). Calvin asks how Scripture can be called "light" if it is not clear to the individual Christian. He writes, "Execrable, therefore, is the blasphemy of the Papists, who pretend that the Scripture does nothing but dazzle the eyes, in order to keep the simple from reading it."<sup>95</sup>

**(2) Verses must be interpreted in light of other Scriptures.** Here, *idia* means "its own" (as in Luke 6:44; John 15:19; 1 Cor 15:38; 1 Tim 5:8), emphasizing

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"above all" in the LXX of Isa 9:1, stressing urgency of action.

<sup>91</sup>This verse is grammatically similar to 3:2-3 where Peter gives the reason for his command: "Remember the words of the prophets."

<sup>92</sup>Though Peter may view prophecy in its narrow sense—those truths and events foretold by prophets—he probably sees it in the broader sense of all Scripture. The same word in the next verse has its wider sense because of its similarity to 2 Tim 3:16.

<sup>93</sup>The *Jerome Biblical Commentary* explains, "This is to be found in the apostolic tradition of the Church" (eds. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, and Roland E. Murphy, New York: Prentice-Hall, 1968] 496). The Jerusalem Bible translates, "Interpretation of prophecy is never a matter for the individual." In our own setting in the Philippines, our lay organization of the Roman Catholic Church advised members to read the Bible devoutly, but to depend on the Church and its clergy for deeper interpretation.

<sup>94</sup>Although *gār* ("for," v. 21) can sometimes function in ways other than expressing a supporting reason for a previous statement, of the 25 times Peter uses the conjunction an overwhelming number of times it provides a supporting reason for a previous statement.

the solidarity of God's Word. Indeed, extraction of verses from their n greater contexts leads to error. This view certainly harmonizes with bib but is an unlikely meaning here. Aside from leaving v. 21 hanging, i properly handle the very unusual clause, "is *a matter* of one's own inter (NASB, RSV,<sup>1</sup> d̄awê pilysewv ḡnetai, *idias epiluseos ginetai*). A fuller dis this clause relates more closely to the next view.

**(3) Meaning is not dependent on the individual reader's interpreta**

view, held by Barbieri, Kistemaker, and Green, invalidates all arbitrary denying that any one verse can have multiple meanings for different ind Rather, as v. 21 explains, because God Himself wrote Scripture, it is s single, objective meaning exists for any passage and the interpreter mus discover it. Divine origin (v. 21) implies a divine and immutable meaning.

This view fits nicely into the context by showing why objectiv revelation is superior to the subjective, visual revelation of vv. 16-18, th which lends itself to various interpretations by various witnesses.<sup>97</sup> Pet offering this as a corrective to the false teachers who were twisting Sc support their myths and stories (3:16).

The use of *idias* in this instance is impersonal, referring to any rea own (novel) interpretation. Of the other eight times Peter uses this pr antecedent is always clear. Yet here the only possible antecedent is "your" in v. 19b. This cannot be the antecedent because the subject of v. interpretation. It is necessary to infer an antecedent. The impersonal tra possible, but unlikely because it is uncommon in the NT. This is the onl NASB translates *idios* by "one's own."

The meaning of the genitive, *idias epiluseos*, with *ginetai* pose perplexing problem. This coupling of *ginomai* ("I become") with a geni predicate is very rare.<sup>98</sup> If *ginetai* were translated as the simple copul genitive would then carry a loose descriptive meaning, such as "a r "related to," or "dependent on."<sup>99</sup> It is also possible to perceive di purpose in the genitive: "no prophecy . . . is for one's own interpre

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<sup>96</sup>It is important to distinguish between meaning, which is singular for any p application, which can be multiple.

<sup>97</sup>Thayer suggests that the point is the believer's need of the Holy Spirit to underst reads, "an interpretation which one thinks out for himself, opp. to that which the teaches" (*Greek-English Lexicon* 296). Just as the Spirit is the source of the writing, v. 21, the source of interpretation or understanding.

<sup>98</sup>Of the 3 other possible occurrences of this combination of ḡnomai and a gen predicate, Mark 13:18 uses a genitive of description, "happen in the winter"; Rev 11 genitive possessively; and Acts 20:3 remains enigmatic.

<sup>99</sup>In Rom 9:16, the genitive has the idea of dependence: "so then it *does* not *depend* on t wills. . . ." A. T. Robertson admits that the genitive had become very broad by Koine

designed for a personal interpretation."<sup>100</sup>

**(4) Scripture did not originate in the human author's interpretation he saw.**<sup>101</sup> *Idias* in this instance refers to the writer of Scripture rather than the reader. Human authors and prophets did not receive visions and have no power to explain personally those visions resulting in Scripture. Nor in foretelling do they personally decipher the meaning of current events to forecast what will come. Instead, as v. 21 clarifies, their prophecies came from God. Both Luther and Calvin, together with the NIV, hold this final view which describes the revelation process.<sup>102</sup>

In this case, interpretation of Scripture itself is not the final step in the interpretation of history or visions in order to write Scripture. Like the other previous views, this one does find support in other Scripture (Dan 12:10-12) and in v. 21 which parallels and expands the idea. Further, this view receives its strongest recommendation from *ginetai* plus the genitive which describe Scripture's origin. *Ginomai* often carries the meaning "come about," "arose," describing the origin of something (e.g., 1 Tim 6:4; 1 Pet 4:12; 2 Pet 1:10). This semantic connotation pairs nicely with a genitive (or ablative) of source—"comes about *from* the author's own interpretation"—or of means—"comes about *by means of* the author's own interpretation."<sup>103</sup>

The fourth interpretation that refers v. 20 to the divine origin of the revelation is preferable, but the third is a definite possibility.

### **The Method of Divine Inspiration**

In what amounts to an example of synthetic parallelism, Peter repeats in v. 21 the essence of v. 20 with further details on inspiration's mechanics. He places emphasis to his first statement by moving *uelhmatià nur/voy* (*thelematià*, "will of man") forward to its beginning and by the addition of *potê* (*potè*, "ever") to the negative *ou* (*ou*, "not"): "for *never* by means of human will was prophecy uttered."<sup>104</sup> This reference to human will is reminiscent of the parable which describes mistaken sources of regeneration.

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<sup>100</sup>For other genitives of direction/purpose in Peter, cf. 1 Pet 2:16, "as a covering *for* evildoers"; 3:12, "appeal to God *for* a good conscience"; 5:2, "exercising oversight . . . not *for* sordid gain."

<sup>101</sup>The Living Bible paraphrases, "was ever thought up by the prophet himself."

<sup>102</sup>Hiebert, "Prophetic Foundation" 165. In a similar vein, Strachan ("Second Epistle to the Hebrews," 165 ff.) understands it to mean that the prophet, when he described a revelation applied to the present generations' historical situation, did not give the only application, but other historical applications were possible: "The prophets . . . saw clearly only the contemporary political or moral situation and the principles involved and illustrated therein."

<sup>103</sup>Admittedly, both genitives (or ablatives) of source and means are rare, but 1 Pet 3:2 is an example of the former, "dirt *from* the flesh," and the participle in 1 Pet 2:15 is certainly an example of the latter, "by doing right you may silence the ignorance. . . ." In the latter case, the genitive of means would parallel the dative of means, *uelhmati* ("through the will") in v. 15.



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## CONCLUSION

In our age, enemies of Christianity disbelieve God's Word, but even professing Christians belittle Scripture by adding to it. Added to Scripture are myths and miracles of still quasi-pagan religious, fabulous experiences sought by people looking for excitement instead of truth, and so-called psychotherapies and theories grounded in godless presumptions. These "Methods of Addition" demean Scripture's sufficiency by suggesting alternate sources of spiritual knowledge and solutions. To them Peter responds with his reaffirmation of Scripture's superiority. To them God uttered this same message more than two centuries before Peter when He said about those who advised Isaiah elsewhere for answers:

And when they say to you, "Consult the mediums and the spirits who whisper and mutter," should not a people consult their God? Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living? To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak

## EVANGELICAL RESPONSES TO THE JESUS SEMINAR<sup>1</sup>

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*Evangelicals have reacted strongly against the conclusions of the Jesus Seminar. Yet their methodologies in studying the gospels fit the pattern of methods employed by that Seminar, particularly the assumption that the composition of the gospels involved some form of literary dependence. Ten Scriptures illustrate how this assumption leads inevitably to assigning historical inaccuracies to various portions of the Synoptic Gospels. Only one alternative avoids a dehistoricizing of the gospels, that of concluding that the synoptic problem does not exist—and is therefore unsolved—because the writers did not depend on one another's works. They wrote independently of each other but in dependence on the Holy Spirit who inspired them to compose books that were historically accurate in every detail.*

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The Jesus Seminar, composed of liberal scholars under the leadership of Robert Funk, began its twice-a-year meetings in 1985. Its highly publicized findings have denied the authenticity of eighty-two percent what the four gospels indicate that Jesus said. Their

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<sup>1</sup>A forthcoming work entitled *The Jesus Crisis: How Much Will Evangelicals Surrender?* (Kregel), scheduled for release in the summer of 1997, will incorporate material from this essay along with other analyses and implications of Historical Criticism.

conclusions about Jesus' sayings appeared in *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* in 1993.<sup>2</sup> The Seminar continues its meetings currently to vote on the deeds of Jesus in anticipation of publishing a similar work treating that subject. The already published work prints Jesus' sayings in four colors—red, pink, gray, and black—to match the colors of the symbolic beads members used to cast votes in their meetings—red, Jesus definitely said it; pink, Jesus probably said it; gray, Jesus probably did not say it; black, Jesus definitely did not say it. Only one red statement appears in the Gospel of Mark and none in the Gospel of John. In comparison, the appearance in red of three sayings in the Gospel of Thomas illustrates the skepticism of this group toward the canonical gospels.

The evangelical<sup>3</sup> community has reacted strongly against the pronouncements of the Jesus Seminar because of that group's rejection of many historical aspects of the gospels.<sup>4</sup> The number of specific evangelical responses to this Seminar is growing.<sup>5</sup> Yet most of these responses come from those who utilize the same methodology in gospel study as do the Jesus Seminar personnel. Further, a closer look at studies done by some of these evangelical critics yields results that show their goal of refuting Seminar findings to be quite challenging if not impossible to achieve. To a degree, they must attack the same presuppositional framework that they themselves utilize. In their

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<sup>2</sup>Robert W. Funk, Roy W. Hoover, and the Jesus Seminar, *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1993).

<sup>3</sup>The ensuing discussion will not attempt a close definition of the term "evangelical." The loose sense envisioned allows the word to apply to individuals who probably think of themselves as being in the evangelical camp.

<sup>4</sup>E.g., D. A. Carson, "Five Gospels, No Christ," *Christianity Today* 38/5 (April 25, 1994):30-33; Ben Witherington III, *The Jesus Quest: The Third Search for the Jew of Nazareth* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1995) 42-43; James R. Edwards, "Who Do Scholars Say That I Am?" *Christianity Today* 40/3 (March 4, 1996):14-20.

<sup>5</sup>E.g., Michael J. Wilkins and J. P. Moreland (gen. eds.), *Jesus Under Fire* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995); Gregory A. Boyd, *Cynic Sage or Son of God?* (Wheaton: Victor, 1995); Witherington, *Jesus Quest* 42-57. *Jesus Under Fire* includes chapters by Craig L. Blomberg, Scot McKnight, and Darrell L. Bock, among others.

acceptance of the same historical-critical assumptions, they have rejected the wisdom of B. B. Warfield who many years ago wrote, "And in general, no form of criticism is more uncertain than that, now so diligently prosecuted, which seeks to explain the several forms of narratives in the Synoptics as modifications of one another."<sup>6</sup> The following discussion will reflect this.

### EVANGELICAL SIMILARITIES TO THE JESUS SEMINAR

Outspoken evangelical critics have engaged in the same type of dehistoricizing activity as the Jesus-Seminar people with whom they differ. If they were to organize among themselves their own evangelical "Jesus Seminar,"<sup>7</sup> the following is a sampling of the issues they would vote on, most of which they would probably pass:<sup>8</sup>

- (1) The author of Matthew, not Jesus, created the Sermon of the Mount.
- (2) The commissioning of the twelve in Matthew 10 is a group of instructions compiled and organized by the author of the first gospel, not spoken by Jesus on a single occasion.
- (3) The parable accounts of Matthew 13 and Mark 4 are anthologies of parables that Jesus uttered on separate occasions.
- (4) Jesus did not preach the Olivet Discourse in its entirety as we have it in three of the gospel accounts.
- (5) Jesus gave His teaching on divorce and remarriage without the exception clauses found in Matt 5:32 and 19:9.
- (6) In Matt 19:16-17, the writer changed the words of Jesus

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<sup>6</sup>Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, *Christology and Criticism* (New York: Oxford, 1929) 115 n.

<sup>7</sup>Carson alludes to such a possibility ("Five Gospels" 30).

<sup>8</sup>See below for a detailed discussion of and the documentation for the same ten issues enumerated here.

- and the rich man to avoid a theological problem involved in the wording of Mark's and Luke's accounts of the same event.
- (7) The scribes and Pharisees were in reality decent people whom Matthew painted in an entirely negative light because of his personal bias against them.
  - (8) The genealogies of Jesus in Matthew 1 and Luke 3 are figures of speech and not accurate records of Jesus' physical and/or legal lineage.
  - (9) The magi who according to Matthew 2 visited the child Jesus after His birth are fictional, not real, characters.
  - (10) Jesus uttered only 3 or 4 of the 8 or nine beatitudes in Matt 5:3-12.

Recognizably, the listed conclusions impinge upon the historical accuracy of the gospel records. Various evangelicals have opted for the stated unhistorical choice in each of the suggested instances. Granted, their reduction of historical precision in the gospels is not the wholesale repudiation of historical data as is that of the original Jesus Seminar, but that it is a repudiation is undeniable. An acceptance of imprecision is even more noticeable in light of the fact that the above questions are only the tip of the iceberg. An exhaustive list would reach staggering proportions.<sup>9</sup>

In the spring of 1991, the Los Angeles Times religion staff planned to run two articles, one a pro-Jesus Seminar piece and the other an anti-Jesus Seminar one. The co-chairman of the Jesus Seminar—Robert Funk—wrote the former and a professor at a prominent evangelical seminary—Robert Guelich—wrote the other.<sup>10</sup> The plan to

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<sup>9</sup>Marshall comments regarding Ernst Käsemann, "Many people who read his works may well be highly shocked by the amount of material in the Gospels which even he regards as unhistorical" (I. Howard Marshall, *I Believe in the Historical Jesus* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977] 12). The same observation would hold true regarding many evangelical scholars if Christians in evangelical churches were to have access to an exhaustive compilation of their conclusions about unhistorical facets in the gospels.

<sup>10</sup>See "How Should the Jesus Seminar's Conclusions Be Viewed?" *Los Angeles Times* (April 6, 1991):F18-F19.

represent the two sides failed, however. Some staff person for this newspaper recognized that the anti-Seminar article was not "anti" at all, but took the same essential viewpoint as the Jesus Seminar. This came to light when a Times editor called me and asked if I would do an "anti" article the following week because the evangelical contributor approached the gospels in the same way as those he was supposed to oppose.<sup>11</sup> This observation by someone on the editorial staff—to this day I do not know who—was shrewd because it recognized that the evangelical in what was to have been the "con" article supported the same general methodological and presuppositional mold as those whom he purposed to refute.

## A STANDARD METHODOLOGY

### *Methodological Framework*

What do evangelical scholars who surrender this or that historical aspect of the first three gospels have in common? They all build on the same presuppositional construct, which also happens to be the one followed by the more radical Jesus Seminar.<sup>12</sup> They thereby render themselves all but powerless to respond to the radical conclusions of that Seminar.

A title appropriate to the methodology common to Jesus-Seminar personnel and many evangelicals is Historical Criticism. Various subdisciplines that have come into vogue under this broad heading include Source Criticism, Tradition Criticism, Form Criticism, and Redaction Criticism. Source Criticism was the earliest of these to arise, having its origin in the nineteenth century. The others sprang up at various points in the twentieth century. The stated purpose of all

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<sup>11</sup>See "Did the Jesus Seminar Draw from Faulty Assumptions?" *Los Angeles Times* (April 13, 1991):F18-F19.

<sup>12</sup>Craig L. Blomberg argues for an "evidentialist" approach in responding to radical excesses in dehistoricizing the gospels (*The Historical Reliability of the Gospels* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1987] 9-10). He contrasts this with a "presuppositionalist" approach which assumes the inspiration of the Scriptures. What he means by "evidentialist"—i.e., defending the accuracy of Scripture on purely historical grounds—includes an embracing of the same methodology as those of radical persuasions (cf. *ibid.*, 12-18). That is the methodology outlined below in this section.

the subdisciplines is to *test* the historical accuracy of NT historical narrative,<sup>13</sup> but in one way or another, they *reduce* the historical accuracy of the Synoptic Gospels.

The claim of these evangelical scholars is that the widely practiced Historical Criticism is not necessarily antithetic to finding the gospels historically reliable. Yet the results of their research belie their claim. They profess that their methodology is neutral and does not necessitate negative presuppositions regarding the integrity of the gospel accounts,<sup>14</sup> but the same people question Matthew's and Mark's representation that Jesus taught the parables of Matthew 13 and Mark 4 on a single occasion<sup>15</sup> and Matthew's and Luke's indications that Jesus preached the whole Sermon on the Mount and Sermon on the Plain to one audience.<sup>16</sup> The evangelical stance of those who thus question historicity dictates that in all probability the theories do not arise from conscious antisupernaturalistic predispositions. Their questionings must issue from a flawed methodology, one that inevitably leads to diminishing historical accuracy in the gospels.

A basic tenet of Historical Criticism is the assumption that the authors of the three Synoptic Gospels depended on one another's writings. Various schemes regarding who depended on whose writings have surfaced, the most widely held current theory being that Mark wrote first and Matthew and Luke depended on Mark.<sup>17</sup> The other element of the theory maintains the existence of another

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<sup>13</sup>I. Howard Marshall, "Historical Criticism," in *New Testament Interpretation*, ed. by I. Howard Marshall (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977) 126-27.

<sup>14</sup>E.g., William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Dallas: Word, 1993) 95; Robert H. Stein, *The Synoptic Problem, An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987) 217-18; Blomberg, *Historical Reliability* 20; Edwards, "Who Do Scholars" 20.

<sup>15</sup>E.g., Klein, *et al.*, *Biblical Interpretation* 164.

<sup>16</sup>E.g., Stein, *Synoptic Problem* 96, 149-50, 219-20.

<sup>17</sup>The proposal of Markan priority originated relatively recently. France recalls that Matthean priority was the unanimous opinion of the church for seventeen hundred years, until the theory of Markan priority emerged (R. T. France, *Matthew, Evangelist and Teacher* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989] 25-27).

document called "Q" on which Matthew and Luke depended also. No one in recent centuries has ever seen Q, if indeed it ever existed.<sup>18</sup>

### ***Attempted Proof of Literary Dependence***

Rarely does one find a defense of the general theory of literary dependence. It is most often just an assumption with no serious attempt at proof.<sup>19</sup> One exception to the unsupported assumption is the argumentation by Stein favoring a common literary source for the Synoptic Gospels. He cites agreements (1) in wording, (2) in order, and (3) in parenthetical material and (4) the Lukan prologue (Luke 1:1-4) as proof of literary dependence.<sup>20</sup>

(1) He lists a number of places to illustrate agreements in wording, but makes no allowance in his argument for places of disagreement. He fails to note that these disagreements include three categories: Matthew and Mark against Luke, Matthew and Luke against Mark, and Mark and Luke against Matthew.<sup>21</sup> This factor argues strongly against any type of literary dependence and favors a random type of composition through which no writer ever saw another's work before writing his own gospel.<sup>22</sup>

(2) Stein also notices agreements in sequence in the gospels,<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>See Eta Linnemann, "Is There a Gospel of Q?" *Bible Review* (August 1995):19-23, 42, for strong evidence that Q never existed.

<sup>19</sup>E.g., Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 1:1-9:50*, in Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, ed. by Moisés Silva (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994) 7; D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in *EBC*, Frank E. Gaebelin, gen. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984) 8:13; John Nolland, *Luke, Volume 1: 1:1—9:50*, vol. 35A of *Word Biblical Commentary*, ed. by David A. Hubbard, Glenn W. Barker, et al. (Dallas: Word, 1989) xxix.

<sup>20</sup>Robert H. Stein, *Synoptic Problem* 29-44. Scot McKnight builds a case for literary dependence similar to Stein's (*Interpreting the Synoptic Gospels* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988] 37-40).

<sup>21</sup>See Robert L. Thomas, "The Agreements Between Matthew and Luke Against Mark," *JETS* 19 (1976):110-11; idem, "The Rich Young Man in Matthew," *Grace Theological Journal* 3/2 (Fall 1982):244-48.

<sup>22</sup>Thomas, "Agreements" 112; see also idem, "Rich Young Man" 249-51, 259.

<sup>23</sup>Stein, *Synoptic Problem* 34-37.

but fails to give more than passing notice to disagreements in order which are adverse to the case he builds for literary dependence. He does not endorse or even mention the possibility that agreements in order could result from the sequence of historical occurrences they describe. Yet such a possibility offers a natural explanation for the agreements in essentially all cases.

(3) His first illustration of agreements in parenthetical material lies in the words "let the reader understand," found in Matt 24:15 and Mark 13:14. Yet he cites this without acknowledging the widely held opinion that these words were not parentheses added by Matthew and Mark, but were the words of Jesus Himself, referring to the reader of Daniel, not the reader of Matthew and Mark.<sup>24</sup> His other three instances of agreement in parenthetical material are not verbatim agreements with each other and could easily be coincidental words of explanation from writers working independently, without seeing each other's work.

(4) His final reason in proof of literary dependence is the prologue of Luke's gospel. In defending his use of the prologue for this purpose, he reflects no awareness of the possibility that Luke's sources mentioned therein do not include another canonical book.<sup>25</sup> This is the traditional understanding of the prologue, an understanding quite defensible exegetically, modern Source Criticism notwithstanding. The best understanding of Luke's prologue excludes Mark from, not includes Mark among, the sources used by the author of the third gospel.

So a tabulation of tangible evidence shows the case for literary dependence is essentially nonexistent. It is merely an assumption, incidentally an assumption known to be shared by only one early church figure. Besides Augustine, the church for her first eighteen hundred years held the first three gospels to be independent of each other in regards to literary matters.<sup>26</sup> Substantial opinion in support of

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<sup>24</sup>E.g., Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew, A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994) 481.

<sup>25</sup>Cf. Stein, *Synoptic Problem* 42, 194; idem, *Luke*, vol. 24 of *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman, 1992) 28-29, 63.

<sup>26</sup>E.g., see Wayne A. Meeks, "Hypomn\_mata from an Untamed Skeptic: A

independence has emerged recently,<sup>27</sup> but most in the historical-critical school apparently do not take the possibility seriously.

### CONSEQUENCES OF LITERARY DEPENDENCE

Where has the theory of literary dependence among the Synop- tists led? Does it impact one's view of the inerrancy of Scripture? To many, this foundational plank of Historical Criticism appears inconse- quential. Yet when pursued to its logical end, the theory has quite significant repercussions.

The type of dependence advocated by most is the one described above, i.e., Mark and Q are the earliest documents and Matthew and Luke are copies of and elaborations on these two. The usual name assigned to this theory is the Two-Source (or Two Document) Theory.<sup>28</sup> To many, this assumption does no harm. After all, literary collaboration between the writers of Kings and Chronicles in the OT is obvious,<sup>29</sup> and did not Jude depend on 2 Peter in writing his epistle (or vice versa, as some would have it)?

Yet the consequences are more serious when dealing with Matthew, Mark, and Luke and their similar records of the life of Christ. McKnight elaborates on the nature of the consequences in his

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Response to George Kennedy," *The Relationships Among the Gospels*, William O. Walker, Jr., ed. (San Antonio: Trinity University, 1978) 171.

<sup>27</sup>William O. Walker, Jr., "Introduction: The Colloquy on the Relationships Among the Gospels," in *The Relationships Among the Gospels*, William O. Walker, Jr., ed. (San Antonio: Trinity University, 1978) 2; Albert B. Lord, "The Gospels as Oral Tradition Literature," in *The Relationships Among the Gospels* 82; Leander F. Keck, "Oral Tradition Literature and the Gospels," in *The Relationships Among the Gospels* 116; Eta Linnemann, *Is There a Synoptic Problem?* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992) 155-91; cf. R. T. French, *Matthew, Evangelist and Teacher* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989) 25.

<sup>28</sup>A closely related theory goes by the name Four-Source, the two additional documents being "M" on which Matthew relied and "L" on which Luke relied. Like "Q," these two documents are also phantoms. No one in modern times—if indeed at any time during the Christian era—has ever seen them.

<sup>29</sup>Everett F. Harrison, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964) 145.

observations about comparing the gospels and identifying authorial reasons for editorial changes:

For example, a redaction critic, usually assuming Markan priority, inquires into the nature of and rationale for Matthew's addition of Peter's unsuccessful attempt to walk on the water (cf. Mark 6:45-52 with Matt. 14:22-33). The critic seeks to discover whether the confession at the end of the story (Matt. 14:33) is materially different from Mark's rather negative comment (Mark 6:52). . . .

Alteration . . . involves direct alterations of the tradition to avoid misunderstandings, as when Matthew alters Mark's comment which could suggest inability on the part of Jesus (Mark 6:5; Matt. 13:53) or when he changes Mark's form of address by the rich young ruler (Mark 10:17-18; Matt. 19:16-17).<sup>30</sup>

To illustrate how authorial changes impact historical accuracy, a closer look at the ten sample issues listed above in this essay is in order. For clarity's sake, presentation of the illustrations will be in three categories that redaction critics find useful to describe the types of editorial changes allegedly made by the Synoptic Gospel writers: arrangement, modification, and creativity.<sup>31</sup> The first category is that of arrangement of material, by which they mean the writer rearranged material from a chronological to a nonchronological sequence. Four samples are of this type.<sup>32</sup>

### ***Arrangement of Material***

***(1) The Sermon on the Mount.*** According to many evangelical

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<sup>30</sup>Scot McKnight, *Interpreting the Synoptic Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988) 84, 87.

<sup>31</sup>Cf. Donald A. Hagner, "Interpreting the Gospels: The Landscape and the Quest," *JETS* 24/1 (March 1981):30-31.

<sup>32</sup>In which category each example belongs is a subjective judgment. Recategorizing from one category to another does not affect the thrust of this discussion. As they stand, perhaps the order of the categories reflects an increasing degree of departure from historical accuracy, with arrangement having the smallest impact on historicity. Nevertheless, even with arrangement a degree of dehistoricization is present.

practitioners of Historical Criticism, the traditional credit given to Jesus for preaching the Sermon on the Mount is a mistake. Guelich has written,

When one hears the phrase "the Sermon on the Mount," one generally identifies it with Matthew's Gospel and correctly so, not only because of the presence of the Sermon in the first Gospel but because the Sermon on the Mount, as we know it, is ultimately the literary product of the first evangelist.<sup>33</sup>

Mounce's opinion clarifies Guelich's position somewhat: "We are not to think of the Sermon on the Mount as a single discourse given by Jesus at one particular time. Undoubtedly there was a primitive and historic sermon, but it has been enlarged significantly by Matthew. . . ." <sup>34</sup> Stein goes even further regarding the creativity of the gospel writers:

The Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:1—7:29) and the Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6:20-49) are literary creations of Matthew and Luke in the sense that they are collections of Jesus' sayings that were uttered at various times and places and have been brought together primarily due to topical considerations, i.e., in order to have an orderly account (1:3). There is no need, however, to deny that a historical event lies behind the scene. Jesus' teaching on a mountain/plain has been used as an opportunity by the Evangelists (or the tradition) to bring other related teachings of Jesus in at this point.<sup>35</sup>

Hagner concurs: "The `sermon' is clearly a compilation of the sayings of Jesus by the evangelist, rather than something spoken by Jesus on a single occasion."<sup>36</sup> Others share the view that teachings in the Sermon

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<sup>33</sup>Robert A. Guelich, *The Sermon on the Mount, A Foundation for Understanding* (Dallas: Word, 1982) 33.

<sup>34</sup>Robert H. Mounce, *Matthew, A Good News Commentary*, W. Ward Gasque, ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985) 34

<sup>35</sup>Stein, *Luke* 198; cf. also idem, *Synoptic Problem* 96, 219-20.

<sup>36</sup>Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1—13*, vol. 33A of *Word Biblical Commentary*, ed. by David A. Hubbard, Glenn W. Barker, *et al.* (Dallas: Word, 1993) 83. Regarding the

on the Mount did not all come at the same time in Jesus' ministry, but were the result of the "clustering" of similar themes by the gospel writers.<sup>37</sup>

Going the route of these evangelical scholars entails explaining away Matthew's introduction to the Sermon (5:1-2)—which indicates Jesus began at a certain point to give the Sermon's contents—and his conclusion to the Sermon (7:28)—which indicates Jesus' conclusion of that same portion. Dispensing with the factuality of the introduction is what Wilkins does in his remarks:

Instead Matthew's editorial activity in the introduction to the Sermon serves to make an explicit distinction between them [i.e., the μαθηταὶ and the ὄχλοι]. . . . Since the underlying Sermon tradition clearly had the disciples as the audience (cf. Lk 6:20), this writer suggests that Matthew has maintained that tradition and has added that the crowds were also there, but as a secondary object of teaching because of their interest in his mission (4:23-25).<sup>38</sup>

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conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 7:28-29), Hagner writes, "Matthew will not miss the opportunity here at the end of a *masterful distillation* of the teaching of Jesus to call his readers' attention to the supreme authority of this Teacher" (194, emphasis added). He means the Sermon is "masterful" because of Matthew's knack for distillation, not because of Jesus' preaching.

<sup>37</sup>E.g., William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Dallas: Word, 1993) 164 n. 10; C. R. Blomberg, "Gospels (Historical Reliability)," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall, eds. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992) 295; G. R. Osborne, "Round Four: The Redaction Debate Continues," *JETS* 28/4 (December 1985):406; France, *Matthew* 162-64. McKnight writes, "I would suggest that Matthew (or a previous Christian teacher) has thematically combined two teachings on prayer for reasons other than strict chronology, augmenting 6:5-6 with 6:7-13 (14-15)" (*Synoptic Gospels* 53 n. 2). In other words, Jesus did not utter 6:7-13 on the same occasion as He gave the words of 6:5-6.

<sup>38</sup>Michael J. Wilkins, *The Concept of Disciple in Matthew's Gospel, As Reflected in the Use of the Term Μαθητῶν* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988) 149-50. Gundry is similar in treating the introduction and conclusion to the Sermon, observing that "and seeing the crowds" (Matt 5:1) is a Matthean addition that makes Jesus' teaching applicable to the universal church, that Matthew derives "He went up a mountain" (Matt 5:1) from Mark 3:13a, that "and it came about when He completed these words" (7:28) is a rewording of Luke 7:1a, and that "the crowds were amazed at His teaching" is the

In other words, the introductory and concluding formulas are no more than literary devices adopted by Matthew to give the impression (for whatever reason) that Jesus preached just such a Sermon to the crowds and the disciples on one given occasion. The historical reality of the situation was that Jesus did not preach it all at that time. Rather, Matthew grouped various teachings of Jesus given at different times to create the Sermon.

It is difficult to locate an explanation for why Matthew bracketed the Sermon with "And seeing the crowds, He ascended into the mountain; and having sat down, His disciples came to Him; and having opened His mouth, He began teaching them, saying" (5:1-2) and "and it came about that when Jesus finished these words, the crowds were amazed at His teaching" (7:28). If Jesus did not preach such a sermon on a single occasion, why would the gospel writer mislead his readers to think that He did? This question has no plain answer.<sup>39</sup>

Yet the proponent of Historical Criticism, because of his proclivity to compare parts of the Sermon with words of Christ uttered at other times and to assume Matthew's dependence on other writings (such as Mark and Q), finds himself compelled to visualize the Sermon as made up of many small pieces that the writer of Matthew assembled in a masterful manner. This theory devastates the historical accuracy of the gospels.

**(2) *Commissioning of the Twelve.*** A number of evangelical leaders have proposed that Jesus did not on a single occasion commission the twelve disciples as described in Matt 10:5-42, but that Matthew has drawn together sayings of Jesus from a number of

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writer's reworking of Mark 1:22 (*Matthew* 65-66, 136).

<sup>39</sup>D. A. Carson comments on those who see the introductory and concluding notes that frame each of Matthew's five discourses as "artistic, compositional devices" ("Matthew," in *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Frank E. Gaebelin, gen. ed. [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984] 124). He objects to this premise because such introductory and concluding brackets do not appear in any other first-century literature. This means they were not merely artistic devices to show the reader that they meant anything other than to furnish the historical setting they profess to describe (124-25).

different occasions and combined them into a single flowing discourse. Carson, for example, is of the opinion that if the sermon came from Q, conceived as a variety of sources, oral and written and not necessarily recorded in the historical setting in which the teaching was first uttered, the effect on historical conclusions would be "not much."<sup>40</sup> He finds it plausible that Matthew, without violating the introductory and concluding formulas in 10:5a and 11:1, collapsed the discourse to the seventy-two in Luke 10:1-16 with the commissioning of the twelve in Matthew 10 to form a single discourse.<sup>41</sup> Carson thus concludes that the Matthew 10 instructions are a mingling of what Jesus gave the seventy-two with what He told the twelve when He sent them out.<sup>42</sup>

Carson's explanation of how such liberties are possible without violating the sermon's introduction and conclusion is unconvincing, however. Certainly Matthew left no clues for his first readers to alert them to the fact that this sermon was a compilation of Jesus' teachings from more than one occasion.<sup>43</sup>

Wilkins agrees that Matt 10:5-42 is a composite of Jesus' utterances on several occasions. He evidences his agreement in allowing that Matthew used a statement from a separate occasion when he borrowed from Mark 9:41-42 in recording Jesus' words in the last verse of Matthew 10.<sup>44</sup> The episode in Mark came later in Jesus'

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<sup>40</sup>Carson, "Matthew" 243. When Carson sees the effect of this theory on historical accuracy as "not much," he in essence concedes that it does make *some* difference. Yet he endorses the theory anyway. The effect on the meaning of the words is significant rather than "not much," when he casts them in a different historical context.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 241-42; cf. Blomberg, *Historical Reliability* 145-46.

<sup>42</sup>Carson, "Matthew" 241.

<sup>43</sup>See R. Morosco, "Redaction Criticism and the Evangelical: Matthew 10 a Test Case," *JETS* 22 [1979]:323-31, for an attempt to prove that "seams" in the discourse are a sign of such a compilation. Except for the last two centuries, Morosco's proposed clues have escaped readers since the time of Christ, however. The reason is they are nonexistent in the discourse. See also idem, "Matthew's Formation of a Commissioning Type-Scene out of the Story of Jesus' Commissioning of the Twelve," *JBL* 103 (1984):539-56.

<sup>44</sup>Wilkins, *Matthew* 131.

life when Jesus warned His disciples against causing believers to stumble and is parallel to Matt 18:6. Wilkins shows his view further in stating that the interpretation and context of Matt 10:24-25 differs from that of the similar statement in Q (Luke 6:40).<sup>45</sup> The context of the latter is that of Luke's Sermon on the Plain, which came chronologically earlier than the commissioning of the twelve in Matthew 10. His conclusion is that Matthew used the statement from Q in two different places, once in its correct historical context and once in the context of Matthew 10. Thus Wilkins groups himself with those who view Matt 10:5-42 as a combination of Jesus' words from different periods of His ministry, in disregard for the historical markers found in the discourse's introduction and conclusion.

Blomberg also notes how the latter part of the discourse in Matthew 10 (Matt 10:17-42) parallels Jesus' eschatological discourse (esp. Mark 13:9-13; Luke 21:12-17) and scattered excerpts in Luke elsewhere (e.g., 12:2-9, 51-53; 14:26-27). On this basis and because of what he calls the vague wording of Matt 11:1, he concludes that a theory of composite origins is more plausible here than it is in Matthew's other four discourses.<sup>46</sup>

Gundry joins in the opinion that in Matt 10:16-42 "Matthew brings together various materials scattered in Mark and Luke and relates them to the persecution of the twelve disciples, who stand for all disciples of Jesus."<sup>47</sup>

The theory of literary dependence has done it again. It has caused its advocates to sacrifice historical particularity in the gospel accounts. It has caused a disregard for the discourse's introduction (Matt 10:5a)—"Jesus sent these twelve, charging them, saying"—and conclusion (Matt 11:1a)—"and it came about when Jesus finished giving orders to His twelve disciples"—which to Matthew's earliest readers and to readers for almost twenty centuries have meant that Matt 10:5-42 constituted a commissioning of Jesus delivered on one

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 145.

<sup>46</sup>Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, vol. 22 of *The New American Commentary*, David S. Dockery, gen. ed. (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman, 1992) 166.

<sup>47</sup>Gundry, *Matthew* 190-91.

occasion, not several.

**(3) *The Parables of Mark 4 and Matthew 13.*** Bock proposes that the parable accounts of Mark 4 and Matthew 13 are probably anthologies.<sup>48</sup> He notes the difficulty in placing the parable of the soils chronologically in light of the possibility that either Matthew or Mark, or both, may have done some rearranging of material. He sees the parables as having been uttered by Jesus on separate occasions and grouped in these chapters for topical reasons. He gives little or no historical weight to Matt 13:1-3 and 13:53, another introduction and conclusion that bracket the parabolic teachings in 13:4-52.<sup>49</sup>

In dealing with the Mark sequence of parables, Brooks isolates 4:10-12 and 4:21-25 as words not spoken by Jesus on this particular occasion.<sup>50</sup> Regarding the former, he favors those as words applying to Jesus' whole ministry and not just to Jesus' teachings in parables as Mark indicates. Regarding the latter, he sees those as five or six sayings of Jesus spoken at various times, with Mark bringing them together and attributing them to Jesus at this point in His ministry. It is clear that Mark's introduction and conclusion to the parabolic discourse (Mark 4:1-2, 33) are of no historical consequence to Brooks.

Stein suggests the possibility that the three synoptic writers, Luke in particular (Luke 8:11-15), interpreted the parable of the soils in light of their own theological interests.<sup>51</sup> Without concluding that the

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<sup>48</sup>Bock, *Luke 1:1—9:50* 718, 742-43. R. T. France also views the parables of Matthew 13 as a compilation, not uttered by Jesus on the same occasion: "This is hardly a 'single sermon', and it seems that the larger part of it is not addressed to the audience stated in verse 2 at all" (*Matthew* 157).

<sup>49</sup>Blomberg concludes that the parables of Matt 13:1-52 came on a single occasion, but that Mark and Luke redistributed them elsewhere in their gospels. He gives Mark and Q as Matthew's source for the parables, but then says that Mark along with Luke have scattered these parables elsewhere. He evidences a lack of concern for Mark's introduction and conclusion that bracket his section of parables, two of which parallel those in Matthew 13 (cf. Mark 4:1-2, 33) (*Matthew* 211).

<sup>50</sup>James A. Brooks, *Mark*, vol. 23 of *The New American Commentary*, David S. Dockery, gen. ed. (Nashville: Broadman, 1991) 82-83.

<sup>51</sup>Stein, *Luke* 243-44.

interpretation was a pure creation of the early church, he still sees that interpretation as being strongly influenced by early church circumstances in which existed a real danger of falling away from allegiance to Christ. Again, this questions the historical integrity of such indicators as Luke's clear statement that Jesus Himself gave the interpretation of Luke 8:9-10.

Stein's statement about the parabolic series in Mark 4:3-32 confirms his reluctance to attribute historical worth to introductory and concluding formulas: "It is clear that Mark sees the parables of Mark 4:3-32 as a summary collection and not a chronology of consecutive parables that Jesus taught in a single day."<sup>52</sup> With this perspective he can allow Matthew to add parables to Mark's collection and Luke to put some of the parables in other locations.<sup>53</sup> This is all without regard to how it erodes historicity.

**(4) *The Olivet Discourse.*** Brooks expresses the following opinion regarding Jesus' Olivet Discourse:

This claim that the substance of the discourse goes back to Jesus himself should not be extended to claim that it is a verbatim report or free from any adaptation and application on Mark's part or spoken on one occasion. That portions of it are found in other contexts in Matthew and Luke suggests Mark included some comments Jesus spoke on other occasions.<sup>54</sup>

Blomberg concurs with this position:

Sayings of Jesus may appear in different contexts. The Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5—7) and the Olivet Discourse (Mt 24—25) gather together teachings which are scattered all around the Gospel of Luke. Some of these may simply reflect Jesus' repeated utterances; others no doubt reflect the common practice of creating composite speeches. Again, no

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<sup>52</sup>Stein, *Synoptic Problem* 36.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid. Cf. also Gundry, *Matthew* 250; Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, *Biblical Interpretation* 164.

<sup>54</sup>Brooks, *Mark* 205.

one questioned the integrity of ancient historians when they utilized a device that modern readers often find artificial.<sup>55</sup>

Yet one must ask Brooks and Blomberg what to make of the introductory and concluding formulas of this discourse, which in Matthew read, "Jesus answered and said to them" (Matt 24:4) and "and it came about when Jesus finished all these words" (Matt 26:1). Despite what the practice of ancient historians may have been, Matthew's intention to cite a continuous discourse from a single occasion is conspicuous. Was he mistaken? Hopefully, an evangelical would not propose that he was.

Regarding the discourse, Stein writes,

Although Luke added additional material to the discourse (cf. 21:12, 15, 18, 20-22, 23b-26a, 28), his main source appears to have been Mark. Whether his additional material came from another source or sources (L, proto-Luke, some apocalyptic source) is debated.<sup>56</sup>

Like others of the historical-critical school, he sees in this discourse as recorded in all three Synoptic Gospels sayings that Jesus uttered on other occasions.<sup>57</sup> He even attributes to Luke a widening of the audience of the discourse from that to whom it was addressed in Mark, his source.<sup>58</sup> Later in his comments, he suggests, "Luke changed Mark 13:19; Matt 24:21 . . . in order to avoid confusing Jerusalem's destruction, which he was describing, with the final tribulation that precedes the return of the Son of Man, which Mark and Matthew were describing."<sup>59</sup> All this raises the question as to what were the circumstances and words of Jesus on the occasion of the sermon. Were

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<sup>55</sup>Blomberg, "Gospels (Historical Reliability)" 295. Blomberg attributes a higher degree of accuracy to modern historians than to Spirit-inspired writers of the gospels in ancient times.

<sup>56</sup>Stein, *Luke* 510 n. 57.

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*, 510.

<sup>58</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, 522.

they as Mark and Matthew described them, as Luke described them, or neither?

### ***Modifying of material***

The second type of alteration is that of modifying material. This editorial activity accounts for places where a writer changed material when incorporating it into his gospel. Illustrations (5), (6), and (7) are of this type.

**(5) *The Exception Clause.*** Hagner is one of those who cannot endorse the exception clauses in Matt 5:32 and 19:9 as having come from Jesus. One of the reasons he gives for this is the absolute prohibition of divorce in Mark 10:11 which Matthew used as his source.<sup>60</sup> With this to work from, either Matthew or someone else in the traditional handling of Jesus' teaching must have added it.<sup>61</sup>

Gundry's reasoning is similar as he draws the conclusion, "It [the exception clause in Matt 5:32] comes from Matthew, not from Jesus, as an editorial insertion to conform Jesus' words to God's Word in the OT."<sup>62</sup> Stein likewise reasons that "the 'exception clause' is an interpretative comment added by Matthew" because of its nonappearance in Mark, Q, and Paul.<sup>63</sup> Bruner says the exception clause came from the creative thought of Jesus' spokesman, not from Jesus Himself.<sup>64</sup> In other words, Jesus never uttered the clause.

Here is another instance where the assumption of literary dependence forces scholars to diminish the historical precision of a gospel account. This is no different in kind from decisions of the Jesus Seminar. Granted, these evangelicals do not carry their dehistoricizing to the same degree as those who radically reduce the biographical data

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 123, cf. xlvii-xlviii.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 123.

<sup>62</sup>Gundry, *Matthew* 90.

<sup>63</sup>Stein, *Synoptic Problem* 152.

<sup>64</sup>Frederick Dale Bruner, *The Christbook, A Historical/Theological Commentary: Matthew 1—12*, (Dallas: Word, 1987) 191.

in the gospels, but it is nevertheless the same type of dehistoricizing.

**(6) *Dialogue with the Rich Man.*** The writer of Matthew supposedly found the words of Jesus and the rich man in Mark 10:17-18 theologically unacceptable and changed them in his account to solve a Christological problem:

Mark 10:17-18

. . . Having run up and knelt before Him, one was asking Him, "Good Teacher, what should I do to inherit eternal life?" And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone."

Matt 19:16-17

. . . Having come up to Him, one said, "Teacher, what good thing should I do to have eternal life?" And He said to him, "Why do you ask me about what is good? One there is who is good."

The impression given by Stein and others is that Mark's wording implies that Jesus was less than Deity, so Matthew felt compelled to change the young man's question and Jesus' answer to convey a high view of Christology.<sup>65</sup> Even Stonehouse sacrificed the historical accuracy of Matthew's account in theorizing Matthew's change of Mark's wording.<sup>66</sup>

All these recent writers part company with Warfield on this issue. It was in connection with this passage that Warfield reached the sensible conclusion already noted: "And in general, no form of criticism is more uncertain than that, now so diligently prosecuted, which seeks to explain the several forms of narratives in the Synoptics as modifications of one another."<sup>67</sup> It is not difficult to harmonize Matthew's account of the rich man with the one in Mark and Luke if one drops the assumption that Matthew embellished Mark's account

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<sup>65</sup>Stein, *Synoptic Problem* 67, 75-76; cf. also Gundry, *Matthew* 385; Blomberg, *Matthew* 297; Carson, "Matthew" 421-23.

<sup>66</sup>Ned B. Stonehouse, *Origins of the Synoptic Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963) 108-9.

<sup>67</sup>Warfield, *Christology and Criticism* 115 n.

and assumes that all three writers worked independently of each other.<sup>68</sup>

**(7) *The Pharisees.*** It is a recent tendency among evangelicals to dwell on the positive qualities of the Pharisees of Jesus' time, even though Jesus emphatically denounced the group on many occasions, such as when He pronounced woes against them and the scribes in Matt 23:13-36. Hagner laments,

It is a tragedy that from this ch. in Matthew [chapter 23] that the word "Pharisee" has come to mean popularly a self-righteous, hypocritical prig. Unfortunately not even Christian scholarship was able over the centuries to rid itself of an unfair bias against the Pharisees.<sup>69</sup>

Wyatt proposes that an accurate description of the Pharisees is possible only by a comparison of three major sources: Josephus, the NT, and the rabbinic literature.<sup>70</sup> The resultant picture differs from how the NT pictures them, i.e., almost always in a negative light.

Hagner notes, "Pharisaism was at heart, though tragically miscarried, a movement for righteousness. . . . This basic drive for righteousness accounts for what may be regarded as attractive and Biblical both about Pharisaic and rabbinic Judaism."<sup>71</sup> One can only marvel at how radically this appraisal differs from that of Jesus: "For I say to you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no way enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 5:20).

How has Historical Criticism managed to formulate a picture of this group so different from the one painted by Jesus? Largely through assuming that the gospel writers, particularly Matthew, took

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<sup>68</sup>Cf. Thomas, "Rich Young Man" 251-56; cf. also Carson, "Matthew" 423.

<sup>69</sup>D. A. Hagner, "Pharisees," *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Merrill C. Tenney, gen. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975) 5:750.

<sup>70</sup>R. J. Wyatt, "Pharisees," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, gen. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986) 3:823.

<sup>71</sup>Hagner, "Pharisees" 752.

great editorial liberties in describing the life of Christ. Matthew was writing about the church of his day late in the first century more than about the actual experiences and words of Jesus. By comparing Matthew with his source, Mark, one can see how his embellishments were intended to make the Pharisees look so bad. The cause of these embellishments is traceable to the tension that existed between Matthew's community and "a noticeable Jewish presence" in which Matthew wrote his gospel.<sup>72</sup> It was this hostility between the late first-century church and the synagogue that left its impact on the material found in Matthew 23.<sup>73</sup>

This type of reasoning once again highlights the implications of theorizing a form of literary dependence among the Synoptic-Gospel writers. In trying to explain why Matthew changed his source material to convey new emphases, the historical critic must postulate that the writers took editorial liberties that exceeded the limits of historical precision. In the case of the Pharisees, that liberty included reading into the life of Jesus circumstances that prevailed in the surroundings of Matthew when he wrote his gospel.<sup>74</sup>

### ***Creation of Material***

The third kind of editorial change is that of creativity. In this case, according to historical critics the writer inserted new material that was not a part of the source(s) from which he worked. Examples (8), (9), and (10) come under this classification.

**(8) *The Genealogies.*** In regard to the two genealogies in Luke and Matthew, Marshall and Gundry assume that the two writers worked from a common source, presumably "Q." Marshall detects

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<sup>72</sup>S. Westerholm, "Pharisees," *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. by Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, I. Howard Marshall (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992) 613.

<sup>73</sup>Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14—28*, vol. 33B of *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, 1995) 654-55.

<sup>74</sup>Westerholm expresses the position of Historical Criticism thus: "The Gospels' depictions of Pharisees reflect both memories from the career of Jesus *and subsequent developments in the Christian communities*" (Westerholm, "Pharisees" 613, emphasis added).

that Luke's genealogy is not historically accurate through comparing it with the one in Matthew.<sup>75</sup> Gundry, on the other hand, finds that Matthew has made more revisions in the traditional material than Luke when he compares Matthew's genealogy with the one in Luke.<sup>76</sup> This leads Gundry to the conclusion that Matthew's "genealogy has become a large figure of speech for Jesus' messianic kingship,"<sup>77</sup> thereby removing it from the realm of historical data. Marshall concludes that it is impossible "to be sure that the genealogy in Lk. is accurate in detail," and may have resulted from Luke's use of midrashic techniques.<sup>78</sup>

Here are two evangelical treatments that dehistoricize the genealogies. The starting point for both is apparently the assumption that the two gospel writers used a common source. In other words, the two commentators feel compelled to explain discrepancies in the genealogies as traceable to editorial liberties taken by the gospel writers, liberties that injected nonhistorical elements into the apparent ancestral lists. They choose the assumption that the writers worked from a common source rather than the possibility that they worked from different sources and that the genealogies lend themselves to rational harmonization.<sup>79</sup>

**(9) *Visit of the Magi.*** Because of his assumption that Matthew

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<sup>75</sup>I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke, Commentary on the Greek Text*, in *The New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 157-60.

<sup>76</sup>Gundry, *Matthew* 13-14.

<sup>77</sup>Gundry, *Matthew* 15.

<sup>78</sup>Marshall, *Luke* 160. Nolland sees difficulty in reading biblical genealogies with a strict historical and biographical interest. He concludes that this difficulty precludes ancestry as the exclusive factor in interpreting the Lukan genealogy (*Luke 1—9:20* 169).

<sup>79</sup>For possible ways to harmonize the genealogies, see Robert L. Thomas (ed.) and Stanley N. Gundry (assoc. ed.), *A Harmony of the Gospels with Explanations and Essays, Using the Text of the New American Standard Bible* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978) 313-19; idem, *The NIV Harmony of the Gospels* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988) 304-10.

follows the same tradition as represented in Luke 2:8-20 (presumably the tradition found in Q), Gundry concludes that Matt 2:1-12 transforms the visit of local Jewish shepherds into adoration by Gentile magi from foreign parts.<sup>80</sup> He sees the necessity of a transformation because of his foregone conclusion that literary collaboration must explain the origin of the Synoptic Gospels.

Such compulsion forces the conclusion that the author of Matthew takes editorial liberty with his sources, a liberty justified by allowing that Matthew incorporated lessons for the church of his day into his gospel. Gundry alleges that for Matthew the coming of the magi previews the bringing of Gentiles into the church at a later time.<sup>81</sup> To further his emphasis on Jesus as the star of David, Matthew also replaces the tradition about the angel and the heavenly host (Luke 2:8-15a) with that of a star.<sup>82</sup> Here is another example of the extremes to which an assumption of literary dependence among the synoptists will drive a scholar.

**(10) *The Beatitudes.*** Opinion is also widespread among evangelical advocates of Historical Criticism that Jesus is not the source of all the beatitudes in Matt 5:3-12. Hagner allows that eight of them (5:3-10) may have originated with Jesus Himself—though Jesus spoke them in the second person rather than the third as Matthew has them—but that the ninth (5:11-12) is probably an addition by Matthew himself.<sup>83</sup> Guelich is of the opinion that the core beatitudes (5:3, 4, 6; also 5:11-12) go back to Jesus Himself, but that four more (5:5, 7, 8, 9) developed in church tradition after Jesus and before Matthew wrote. The gospel writer himself created one beatitude (5:10).<sup>84</sup> Gundry's

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<sup>80</sup>Gundry, *Matthew* 26-27, 651 n. 25.

<sup>81</sup>*Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>82</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup>Hagner, *Matthew* 1—13 90.

<sup>84</sup>Guelich, *Sermon on the Mount* 117-18. Bock calls Guelich's analysis "helpful," but is less confident than Guelich as to whether Matthew and his sources are responsible for additional beatitudes beyond what Jesus actually spoke (Bock, *Luke . . . 1:1—9:50* 552).

approach has four beatitudes coming from the lips of Jesus (5:3, 4, 9, 10) and four resulting from Matthew's redaction (5:5, 6, 7, 8).<sup>85</sup>

Gundry assumes Matthew's source (Q?<sup>86</sup>) had only four beatitudes because Luke's Sermon on the Plain has only four. So, he concludes, Matthew must have added the other four.<sup>87</sup> Guelich understands several stages in the growth of three to eight beatitudes. Jesus originated the first three for the sake of the "desperate ones of his day."<sup>88</sup> Tension between what Jesus was accomplishing and the future consummation was the cause for adding the fourth (5:11-12) to the list. The Christian community later added four more (5:5, 7-9) through use of the Psalms and Jesus' sayings. Finally, Matthew added the last (5:10) as he adapted the rest to Isaiah 61.<sup>89</sup> Hagner sees the first eight beatitudes as a unity in themselves, with the ninth probably being added by Matthew himself.<sup>90</sup>

In one way or another the positions of all three men arise through the assumption that Matthew worked from the same source (presumably Q) as Luke did in creating the Sermon on the Plain. So they must explain Matthew's differences from Luke under the assumption that they arose through Matthew's editorial activity. This assumption forces them to grant Matthew unusual liberties in attributing to Jesus either one, four, or five of the beatitudes that He never spoke, which amounts to a dehistoricizing of the gospel accounts. Even the Jesus Seminar has allowed that Jesus probably

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<sup>85</sup>Gundry, *Matthew* 67-70. Hagner, Guelich, and Gundry differ conspicuously among themselves regarding which beatitudes came from Jesus, which from church tradition, and which from Matthew.

<sup>86</sup>See Robert H. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993) 17, for an indication that Gundry understands Q to have been a written source.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid.

<sup>88</sup>Guelich, *Sermon on the Mount* 17.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid.

<sup>90</sup>Hagner, *Matthew 1—13* 90.

spoke three of the beatitudes, the same number granted by Guelich.<sup>91</sup>

The above ten "tip-of-the-iceburg" illustrations are revealing. The hazards of Historical Criticism have entered the evangelical camp, raising questions about how much of the gospels is accurate history and how much is editorial embellishment. McKnight's rejoinder that redaction is not a matter that impinges on history, but that it is a matter of style<sup>92</sup> makes an "either—or" issue out of one that is rightly a matter of "both—and." If authorial style introduces historical inaccuracy, it is not "contorted historiography and logic"—as McKnight contends—to conclude that it is *both* authorial style *and* historical distortion.<sup>93</sup> A factual misrepresentation is an inaccuracy, regardless of its cause.

### THE REMAINING ALTERNATIVE

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<sup>91</sup>Funk, Hoover, *et al.*, *Five Gospels* 138.

<sup>92</sup>McKnight, *Synoptic Gospels* 89-90.

<sup>93</sup>Marshall crystalizes the issue in the following: "It is certainly impossible to practise the historical method without concluding that on occasion the correct solution to a difficulty lies in the unhistorical character of a particular narrative. Several cases of this kind have been cited above, but in many of them we have claimed that to establish that a particular statement is unhistorical is not to establish the presence of an error which would call into question the reliability of the NT writer. Very often the reader may be demanding a kind of historical truth from the narrative which it was never intended to provide" ("Historical Criticism" 136). He proceeds to admit that the ordinary reader would view matters differently from the way scholars would. When Marshall and Blomberg speak of "reliable," they obviously distinguish the word from "accurate" or "errorless." When a writer says something happened that did not happen, he can still be reliable even though he has reported the event inaccurately or erroneously (Blomberg, *Historical Reliability* 151-52; cf. also Marshall, "I Believe" 19). These writers distinguish sharply between what is *generally reliable* and what is *historically factual* as does Graham Stanton who writes, "Gospel truth cannot be confirmed by historical evidence, but it does depend on *general reliability* of the evangelists' portraits of Jesus. . . . I have chosen the term 'general reliability' deliberately. We do not have precise historical *records* in the Gospels . . ." (*Gospel Truth? New Light on Jesus and the Gospels* [Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1995] 193, emphasis original).

In view of the consequences of assuming literary dependence among the Synoptists, a balancing of evidence for most nonspecialists in gospel studies would rule against such an assumption. Yet it is not so with most who specialize in this field. Despite their acknowledgment that no solution to the Synoptic Problem is without its problems, they still cling to the theory that the gospel writers depended on the works of each other in some manner. Without such literary collaboration, the Synoptic Problem does not exist,<sup>94</sup> but they practice a wholesale neglect of that possibility. They are content to cite the theory of Matthew's and Luke's dependence on Mark and Q as the majority opinion and to build on that as a foundation. They acknowledge the absence of absolute proof of the theory,<sup>95</sup> but are unable to provide any widely accepted solution to plug its holes. This is why McKnight must admit, "But we can never be totally certain about some of these matters since we can never be totally confident of a solution to the Synoptic Problem."<sup>96</sup> The consequence of that theory's being wrong is a trashing of most of the research done on the Synoptic Gospels over the last hundred years.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>94</sup>Linnemann, *Synoptic Problem* 149-52

<sup>95</sup>E.g., McKnight, *Synoptic Gospels* 37; R. H. Stein, "Synoptic Problem," *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. by Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, I. Howard Marshall (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992) 790; Carson, "Matthew" 13-14; Hagner, *Matthew 1-13* xlvi-xlviii; Blomberg, *Matthew* 40-41.

<sup>96</sup>McKnight, *Synoptic Gospels* 89. Robert H. Stein expresses the uncertainty of the two-document solution by calling it the "least worst!" of the proposed theories ("Is It Lawful for a Man to Divorce His Wife?" *JETS* 22 [June 1979]:117 n. 8).

<sup>97</sup>A. J. Bellinzoni describes the situation thus: "Since Markan priority is an assumption of so much of the research of the last century, many of the conclusions of that research would have to be redrawn and much of the literature rewritten if the consensus of scholarship were suddenly to shift. . . . Were scholars to move to a position that no consensus can be reached about the synoptic problem or that the synoptic problem is fundamentally unsolvable, we would then have to draw more tentatively the conclusions that have sometimes been drawn on the basis of what were earlier regarded as the assured results of synoptic studies" (*The Two-Source Hypothesis, A Critical Appraisal*, ed. Arthur J. Bellinzoni, Jr. [Macon, GA: Mercer University, 1985] 9). Such a shift is in progress (cf. France, *Matthew* 25, 29-49). It remains to be seen how long it will take for the consensus to change.

Is it not more reasonable to drop the ill-supported and dubious assumption of literary dependence and thus dispense with the insoluble difficulties it creates?<sup>98</sup> Would this not furnish a better basis for responding to the destructive conclusions publicized by the Jesus Seminar? It is futile for evangelicals to attempt responses to this Seminar when they employ the same tainted methodology.<sup>99</sup> The difference between them and the Jesus Seminar is only a matter of one person's opinion against another's. For both a gulf is fixed between historical precision and the gospel records. Subjective criticisms of the Seminar's findings are at best peripheral. Those of radical persuasion merely turn the tables and show how evangelicals are dehistoricizing just as they are, though perhaps not to the same extremes.<sup>100</sup>

The only way to objectify historical reliability is to accept the historical accuracy of Scripture throughout. J. Gresham Machen insisted on historical precision and would have been extremely perturbed if he had known evangelicals would eventually embrace historical-critical methodology. He voiced the objection of those who

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<sup>98</sup>Cf. France, *Matthew* 41-46.

<sup>99</sup>For reminders that evangelical respondents to the Jesus Seminar employ the same flawed methodology, see for example Carson, "Matthew" 15-17; Blomberg, *Matthew* 37; Wilkins, *Matthew* 8; Bock, *Luke* 9; idem, "The Words of Jesus in the Gospels: Live, Jive, or Memorex?" in *Jesus Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents the Historical Jesus*, Michael J. Wilkins and J. P. Moreland, eds. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995) 90, 99; McKnight, *Synoptic Gospels* 37-40; Gregory A. Boyd, *Cynic Sage or Son of God?* (Wheaton: Victor, 1995) 136-37, 204, 295-96 n. 13; Witherington, *Jesus Quest* 46-47, 50-52, 96, 187, 260-61 nn. 29, 30, 32. Compare these with the methodology of the Jesus Seminar (Funk *et al.*, *Five Gospels* 9-14). The Jesus Seminar's addition of the Gospel of Thomas to the sources Mark, Q, M, and L is the only exception to the parallelism in methodology.

<sup>100</sup>John Dart's article about evangelical responses to the Jesus Seminar, "Holy War Brewing over Image of Jesus," illustrates how unconvinced the radical wing remains in spite of the responses (*Los Angeles Times* [10/28/95]:B12-B13). In assessing the effectiveness of recent evangelical efforts to refute the Seminar, Dart concludes, "That traditional [i.e., evangelical] viewpoint may also be an increasingly hard sell to a skeptical American public." He adds, "Biola University's Michael Wilkins, co-editor of the first book to take on the Jesus Seminar, said it will be harder to promote orthodox Christianity in the next century, and perhaps easier for the notion of Jesus as a non-divine sage to gain a following."

in his day advocated a Christianity independent of history when he wrote, "Must we really wait until the historians have finished disputing about the value of sources and the like before we can have peace with God?"<sup>101</sup> To this he responded, ". . . If religion be made independent of history there is no such thing as a gospel. . . . A gospel independent of history is a contradiction in terms."<sup>102</sup> In an endorsement of Machen's position, Lippmann writes,

The veracity of that story was fundamental for the Christian Church. For while all the ideal values may remain if you impugn the historic record set forth in the Gospels, these ideal values are not certified to the common man as inherent in the very nature of things.<sup>103</sup>

He continues, "The liberals have yet to answer Dr. Machen when he says that `the Christian movement at its inception was not just a way of life in the modern sense, but a way of life founded upon a message.'"<sup>104</sup>

Harrisville and Sundberg correctly analyze Machen's response to Historical Criticism when they note, "Christianity is wed inextricably to the particularities of a history that are open to investigation and have the specificity and integrity to risk falsification."<sup>105</sup> Christianity in its fundamental nature is "grounded in an historical narrative; it depends upon the claims of external events. To separate the ideas and values of the faith from their history is to cut the nerve of Christianity."<sup>106</sup> Cutting that nerve is precisely what

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<sup>101</sup>J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1946) 121.

<sup>102</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup>Walter Lippmann, *A Preface to Morals* (New York: Macmillan, 1929) 32.

<sup>104</sup>*Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>105</sup>Roy A. Harrisville and Walter Sundberg, *The Bible in Modern Culture: Theology and Historical-Critical Method from Spinoza to Käsemann* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) 195.

<sup>106</sup>*Ibid.*, 201; cf. Lippmann, *Preface to Morals* 32 f.

Historical Criticism does, as Machen seems to have seen years ago. The methodology therefore has no place in evangelical scholarship.

The inerrancy of the gospel records is a guarantee that they are accurate in every detail. Divine and human elements entered into composing the biblical record. The prevalence of the divine over the human guarantees the precision of every part of Bible history.

**MALACHI 3:16: "BOOK OF REMEMBRANCE"  
OR ROYAL MEMORANDUM?<sup>1</sup>  
AN EXEGETICAL NOTE**

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In the ancient world, kings used documents to administrate their domains. They preserved some texts in the royal archives as records of administrative decisions; others were dispatched and carried by messengers to officials who would perform the actions commanded therein.

Correspondence was delivered in several ways: foot runners traversed short distances; caravans, although somewhat slow, carried the correspondence longer distances; chariot-riding messengers were no doubt the fastest. During the period of Persian domination, or perhaps earlier, Near Eastern kings built sophisticated networks of roads and relay stations,<sup>2</sup> in essence a postal system, to accommodate the movement of correspondence. With a communication infrastructure in place, they were able to expand their empires considerably.

Scripture portrays God as King. In so doing, it draws upon the trappings of kingship in order to form analogies about what God is like<sup>3</sup> and how He works. God possesses a throne, manifests attributes

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<sup>1</sup>J. Hoftijzer and K. Jongeling, "zkrn," *Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions*, vol. 1 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995) 331.

<sup>2</sup>W. L. Westermann, "On Inland Transportation and Communication in Antiquity," *Political Science Quarterly* 43 (1928):375-76.

<sup>3</sup>Mark Brettler, *God is King: Understanding an Israelite Metaphor*, JSOTS 76 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1989) 14-15.

of kingship, and gathers about Himself courtiers among whom are messengers and scribes. In His role as Sovereign par excellence, God appears as the exalted and transcendent<sup>4</sup> King who dispatches His messengers from His heavenly court to direct the affairs of His people. Isaiah the prophet, when caught up by vision into the heavenly royal court, received a commission by the enthroned Sovereign to dispatch God's missives (Isa 6:1-13). Similarly, Haggai, "the messenger of the Lord, spoke the message of the Lord" (Hag 1:12).

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<sup>4</sup>There is a correlation between God's use of administrative correspondence and His "relational distance" (i.e., transcendence) from His people. Other factors, such as a need to portray God's transcendent majesty or the agency of His priests and prophets, engage the metaphor.

"Malachi" translated means "My [i.e., God's] messenger." The book of Malachi presents God as "a great king" (Mal 1:14) by drawing upon administration imagery in a number of ways: in the first chapter, God introduces his messenger, the bearer of the book's message; chapter two portrays the priests as messengers who have strayed from the path (v. 8), leading to the recipients of God's message; "My messenger" reappears in chapter three along with "the messenger of the covenant,"<sup>5</sup> and chapter four predicts Elijah's return as a messenger.<sup>6</sup>

In Mal 3:16, the Sovereign King orders that an administrative document of a different kind be recorded. Rather than translate *spr zkrn* "book of remembrance," one might better render it "memorandum"<sup>7</sup> (or "record"<sup>8</sup>), as in Ezra 6:2 which records the actual document. The memorandum was not a public document like a decree or a proclamation but was intended for the private use of its possessor.<sup>9</sup> In the strictest sense, it preserved the details of an administrative decision<sup>10</sup> and facilitated the memory of a messenger<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Unlike the "messengers of the LORD of hosts" (2:7) who performed their priestly duties of sacrifice and teaching in violation of God's standard, the Messenger of the covenant "will purify the sons of Levi . . . so that they may present to the Lord offerings in righteousness."

<sup>6</sup>The identities and roles of the messengers is much debated.

<sup>7</sup>J. Fitzmyer, "Aramaic Epistolography," *Semeia* 22 (1981):31.

<sup>8</sup>, **rkz** in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* 242.

<sup>9</sup>Paul E. Dion, "Aramaic Words for 'Letter,'" *Semeia* 22 (1981):84. In one instance it served as an aid to the memory of one who conveyed a message orally.

<sup>10</sup>Schottroff argues that the document preserved the details of an administrative decision or event of some sort for future action (Willi Schottroff, "*Gedenken*" *im alten Orient und im Alten Testament* [WMANT 15, Neukirchen-Vloyn: Neukircher Verlag, 1964] 68, 301).

<sup>11</sup>One extra-biblical example, AP 32:1 appears to have been written for a messenger (A. E. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century BC.*, ed. with translation and notes [Oxford: Clarendon, 1923] 28-30). This document type is often referred to as a "messenger text."

or ruler at a later date, often as evidence for past administrative action.<sup>12</sup> Several passages of Scripture illustrate the memorandum-document type.

In Ezra 4:15 Artaxerxes ordered a search of the archives for evidence of Judah's rebellion prior to the exile. When found, a memorandum (*spr dkrn*<sup>13</sup>) provided the impetus to stop the temple construction in Jerusalem and to prevent any further progress.

Ironically, in Ezra 6:1 Darius issued an order to search the "house of scrolls" for evidence of a previous administrative decision to rebuild the house of God in Jerusalem. A memorandum (Ezra 6:2 [hnwrkd]) was found containing Cyrus<sup>14</sup> decree to rebuild the temple. The outcome of the text's discovery was that temple construction was resumed and subsequently completed.<sup>15</sup>

Mordecai's exploits in the book of Esther include delivering King Ahasuerus from an assassination attempt by exposing the plot of two conspirators (Esth 2:21-23). But even though the two were tried and executed, Mordecai received no reward. One sleepless night Ahasuerus ordered several of his courtiers to search the royal archives for evidence chronicling Mordecai's faithful deeds (Esth 6:1 ff.). After reading the memoranda (*spr zkrn*), the king promptly rewarded Mordecai for his loyalty in protecting the monarch's life.<sup>16</sup>

In light of the evidence for the consistent use of the memoran-

<sup>12</sup>The memorandum document is widely attested in countries neighboring Israel. For example, among the Persepolis Treasury Tablets in Elamite are found many memoranda. Cf. R. T. Hallock, "A New Look at the Persepolis Treasury Tablets," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 19 (1960):90-100.

<sup>13</sup>Hebrew *zkrn* corresponds to Aramaic *dkrn* through a standard orthographic change.

<sup>14</sup>Memoranda and letters often contained other document types embedded.

<sup>15</sup>The memorandum wielded significant administrative force.

<sup>16</sup>In all three Ezra and Esther passages (cf. above) the memorandum wielded significant administrative force. This is due to the fact that memoranda were recorded to retain an accurate account of the past *so as to engage legal action* in the future (Botterweck, " ,rkz," *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. 4 [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980] 79).

dum (*spr zkrn*) and for its fairly well-defined function, the Mal 3:16 passage may be explained as follows: God's memorandum is on file in His royal archives for the great and terrible day of His visitation in battle against His enemies (cf. Malachi 4). On that day and when drawn from the royal archives, the memorandum will engage God's administrative authority to spare the pure sons of Levi. But at that time, God will burn to the very roots the "chaff" whose names do not appear in the memorandum.<sup>17</sup>

In one of Daniel's visions of heavenly splendor, the Majestic Sovereign, opened the books in judgment before His royal court:

I kept looking  
 Until the thrones were set up,  
 And the Ancient of Days took *His* seat. . . .  
 Thousands upon thousands were attending Him,  
 And myriads upon myriads were standing before Him;  
 The court sat,  
 And the books were opened (Dan 7:9-10).<sup>18</sup>

The "books" in Daniel's vision will serve the same judgmental purpose as the one in Malachi's prophecy.

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<sup>17</sup>Prior to that day, the LORD of hosts will dispatch still another messenger, Elijah. In quoting Mal 3:1, Jesus identifies John the Baptist as "My messenger" (Matt 11:10) and says "And if you care to accept it, he himself is Elijah who was to come" (Matt 11:14).

<sup>18</sup>Regarding the memorandum in Mal 3:16 and the Daniel passage Verhoef argues, ". . . these things are written which God wanted to be reminded of" and "*concerning which he wanted to do something*" (P. A. Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987] 320 [emphasis added]).

## BOOK REVIEWS

Michael Bauman and David Hall, eds. *God and Caesar: Selected Essays from the 1993 Evangelical Theological Society's Convention at Washington, D.C.* Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1994. 370 pp. \$14.99 (paper). Reviewed by Dennis M. Swanson, Seminary Librarian.

The annual meetings of the Evangelical Theological Society in recent years have grown in significance. A problem with the meetings has been a failure to provide wide circulation of the scholarly contributions, making it difficult to access them after the meetings.

In addressing that problem, the editors of this volume have assembled selected papers from the 1993 annual meeting whose theme was "God and Caesar." In selecting papers for inclusion, the editors state, "Some of the scholars who contribute to this volume are well-known and need no introduction. Others are fresh voices, eager to be heard and worthy to be heard" (5).

The papers, presented as individual chapters within the book, deal with a Christian view of government. Sixteen chapters, divided into "historical" and "practical" sections, deal with various stimulating topics, ranging from individuals as ancient as Irenaeus (27-40) and as contemporary as Rush Limbaugh (241-60). Though all the chapters are samples of excellent scholarship, a few deserve special notice. Ronald Glass' study of the Reformed struggle with latitudinarianism and establishmentarianism (79-114) is outstanding. Another important chapter is Francis J. Beckwith's study of the New Age movement and public education (285-318). As is common with scholarly papers, the chapter titles are occasionally long and cumbersome, causing some readers not to examine further the excellent material found in the essay itself. Perhaps future installments of this series would do well to use more accessible titles. Also, the book would be more useful with some indexing.

As the editors state, the work in this volume represents "some of the best political and economic thinking of one of America's premier

evangelical professional organizations, The Evangelical Theological Society" (5). The editors deserve commendation for their work in giving these papers the wide hearing they deserve. The same editors have completed a similar work for the 1994 meeting which dealt with the subject of hermeneutics. Hopefully, this collection of the 1993 papers will be the beginning of a long and well-received series.

James A. Beverley. *Holy Laughter and the Toronto Blessing, An Investigative Report*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995. 185 pp. \$10.99 (paper). Reviewed by Ted Bigelow, ThM candidate, The Master's Seminary.

James A. Beverly, Professor of Theology and Ethics at Ontario Theological Seminary, published an article entitled "Toronto's Mixed Blessing" (*Christianity Today* [September 11, 1995]), but this book is broader, including detail of the "Toronto blessing's" connection with the Association of Vineyard Churches and the Word-Faith movement. The volume's purpose is to provide "guidance through the maze of issues that emerge . . . [from] Holy Laughter and The Toronto Blessing" (8). The author is clearly a "middle of the road" advocate of the phenomenon. He neither condones nor castigates all the movement's experiences or leaders, but does point out some of its inconsistencies. On the whole, however, his "middle of the road" approach impedes his attempt to provide guidance.

In his early chapters he accepts charismatic interpretations of events, based apparently on a predilection for experiences rather than biblical interpretations of those experiences. For example, a Vineyard pastor received "a powerful renewal, including the manifestation of Holy Laughter" (14) through the laying on of Rodney Howard-Browne's hands, and John Arnott (pastor of the Toronto Airport Vineyard Church) "had been anointed by the Pentecostal Claudio Freidzon" (14). He accepts these claims at face value apart from any consideration of biblical interpretation. His endorsement of other undefined phrases such as "Christians who needed a touch from God" (14), "renewing touch of the Holy Spirit" (15), and "slain in the Spirit" (19, 21) shows an uncritical defining of spiritual experience based on evangelical buzz words, not Scripture. As he passed a "woman

waving her arms wildly" (18), Beverley credits the Holy Spirit – whom he also views as the source of the woman's frenzied behavior – with providing him safety. Yet he later criticizes foolish behaviors such as a woman "pawing the ground like an angry bull" (99).

Ultimately, the book's weakness is hermeneutical. After describing the woman who acted like a bull, Beverly writes, "What course in hermeneutics will explain this behavior? . . . It is hard enough for Christians to agree on the meaning of Scripture. Must we now spend valuable time sorting through the wilder manifestations?" (99). These words represent the broad approach of the book. Rather than comparing the religious phenomena of Holy Laughter and animalistic behaviors with Scripture, he devotes most space to the experiences themselves. Though instructing readers to have a "proper understanding of the basics . . . of the Christian faith" (30), he implies that people of a cessationist persuasion "have a lack of openness" (31) to these phenomena. He dismisses or at best minimizes the role of hermeneutics, which role is determinative in learning what scriptural authority dictates about life, including the Holy Laughter movement.

This reviewer noticed no instance in which the author answered the natural question, "Does the Bible condone Holy Laughter, barking, or animal imitations?" Nor does he respond to the fallacy of Rodney Howard-Browne and others when comparing these actions to the outpouring of the Spirit in Acts 2 and 10. Instead, he proposes ten vague and arbitrary "Tests for Truth" (25 ff.), tests that are of little value in comparison to God's guidance through exegesis of relevant Scripture.

Early in the book, Beverley commends leaders in the Holy Laughter movement for holding to "high Christology" (29) based on his "Christological Test" (26). Yet on the book's last page he notes only 143 references to Jesus in about 90 sermons at the Toronto Airport Vineyard, calling this "a lost opportunity in preaching to give a clear focus on the Son of God" (160).

In responding to John MacArthur's *Reckless Faith* and its discussion of Holy Laughter, Beverley does not put MacArthur's words in proper context and does not substantiate his rebuttals. For example, he says, "These experiences [Holy Laughter, barking like dogs, etc.] are rooted in Christian worship and obedience to biblical faith" (86). But he does not tell where or how they are rooted.

The author has an extensive bibliography of works both for and

against the movement, a bibliography that is well worth the price of the book about this recent development in the charismatic world. Subsequent to the book's publication, the Association of Vineyard Churches has disfellowshipped the Toronto Airport Vineyard Church because of the Holy Laughter activities in the Canadian church.

Marc Zvi Brettler. *God is King: Understanding an Israelite Metaphor*, JSOTS, #76. Sheffield: JSOT, 1989. 239 pp. \$43.50 (cloth). Reviewed by David C. Deuel, Associate Professor of Old Testament.

Biblical authors draw upon metaphorical language to emphasize different aspects of God's attributes and works. The present work explores what Scripture teaches about God when it presents Him as king. In Brettler's own words "to what extent and in what ways do writers project elements of kingship onto God?"

A detailed examination of the institution of Israelite kingship and its comparison with the attributes of God as king open a new type of window toward understanding the biblical God (16). But this is a complex matter for at least two reasons:

We must consider the possibility that some references to God as King predate the Israelite monarchy, in which case the Israelite monarchy could not have been the vehicle for the metaphor. Second, we must allow for the possibility that the image of God as king might have shaped human kingship rather than vice versa (14).

The first question considers the source of kingship imagery prior to the monarchy in Israel. In response, the author examines the kingship of adjacent cultures to consider their impact on the biblical presentation of God's kingship. The second question addresses the issue of archetypal meaning. Did Israel take its understanding of kingship from God's attributes and works? Not surprisingly, the author takes great pains to establish the primary basis for the metaphor in Israel's kingship, and within the framework of its historical development where possible. This is difficult because the

way Scripture records the trappings of kingship varies in clarity and detail. Brettler focuses on specific aspects of kingship imagery, giving careful attention to the manner in which biblical writers select only the details of kingship that magnify God's attributes and works. The frailties are either virtually omitted or postured in such a way as to bring honor to the Great King: "Thus most entailments of human kingship that are projected on to God convey God's superlative nature, combining the metaphor 'God is King' with the theological notion 'God is incomparable'" (163). It follows that the superlative nature of God's kingship receives emphasis by failure to project on to God expressions from the human sphere which denote royal weakness. In brief, these and other superlative expressions use the metaphor "God is King" to portray God as the overlord *par excellence*, whose kingship surpasses that of any human monarch (33).

But the metaphor's lack of correspondence in every detail is instructive. The fact that only certain of the "appellations applied to God illustrate *in what way* God was seen as king in ancient Israel" (48, emphasis added). In the interpretation (or "unpacking") of metaphors, it is tempting to go beyond the correspondences given by the text's own controls and "fill out" the picture. The biblical writer's own restrictions should serve as a warning against "creative" exegesis (e.g., illegitimate totality transfer).

Brettler commonly makes observations that are helpful to the methods and conclusions of metaphor research, even to the limitations of metaphor for representing God's true greatness:

The biblical authors were aware that even these full-fledged royal appellations fail to describe God properly. . . . These discontinuities are central to a proper understanding of God as King for they show precisely where he fails to be bound by the metaphor. . . . The use of particular royal appellations offers general boundaries for understanding God, but through morphological syntactic and contextual modifications, the biblical authors clarify that God's Kingship is qualitatively different from human Kingship (49).

It goes without saying that Brettler's work has broader implications for a biblical theology. The "figurative" dimension of language, although equal in importance to grammatical and syntactical controls, has not received proportionate attention. This apparent lack seems out of balance when one considers the amount of metaphorical language

in Scripture.

This reviewer highly recommends Brettler's work to those whose commitment to interpreting Scripture is sufficient to carry them into a somewhat unfamiliar and complex area of language.

D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, and G. J. Weham, eds. *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994. xiii + 1455 pp. \$39.99 (cloth). Reviewed by Keith Essex, Assistant Professor of Bible Exposition.

For over forty years, *The New Bible Commentary* has been a standard, one-volume, evangelical commentary on the Scriptures. This is the fourth edition and the third major writing of the commentary. The first edition appeared in 1953 and was followed by a second edition with minor revisions a year later. The Authorized (King James) Version was the translation used as the basis for the first two editions. In 1970, a third edition, a major rewriting of the commentary, appeared with the Revised Standard Version replacing the Authorized Version. Now, for this new edition the New International Version serves as the English base. It contains a rewriting or thorough revision of every article in the 1970 edition. The only contributors involved from 1953 to 1994 are Leon Morris and George Beasley-Murray. The 1994 work employed only eleven of the forty-six authors involved in the 1970 work. This is truly a new Bible commentary.

The commentaries on the biblical books are consistently well done. Each begins with an introduction, usually including authorship and date, structure, theology, and resources for further reading. The commentaries proper proceed through a book, section by section, paragraph by paragraph. As the preface notes, "we have chosen to concentrate on the 'flow' of books and passages" (vii). The comments reflect this purpose. A major distinction of this edition is its emphasis on the literary structure of the biblical texts. This is not surprising, given contemporary concern in biblical studies for the literary form of the text. Though affirming source criticism in the Pentateuch—i.e., none of the writers on the Pentateuchal books affirm Mosaic authorship of the present form of the text—and the synoptic Gospels,

the commentators unite in seeing the final form of the scriptural text as the Word of God. As Gordon Wenham states, "While the critical debate has continued, it has been widely accepted that the commentator's first job is to explain the present form of the text. . . . So what this commentary focuses on is the present final form of the text" (55). The commentaries also deal more in depth with significant passages where diversity of interpretation within evangelicalism exists.

The theological tone of the commentaries is decidedly orthodox. For instance, R. T. France comments on Matt 28:19, "The trinitarian `formula' is striking" (945), and Donald Guthrie remarks concerning John 1:1, "John must be affirming the Godhead of the Word" (1025). Moreover, the work consistently affirms the doctrine of justification by faith alone in Jesus Christ. The commentators have a common bent in emphasizing the continuity between Israel and the church. As David Wheaton writes in the introduction to 1 Peter, "Whether his readers were Jewish or Gentile Christians, Peter is keen to encourage them to believe that they are the `new Israel'" (1371). However, within the continuity perspective, the volume states both amillennial and premillennial positions. For example, Sinclair Ferguson interprets Daniel amil-lennially, while Beasley-Murray states of Revelation, "The `binding' of Satan for a thousand years coincides with the `reign' of Christ for a thousand years. . . . The kingdom over which the Messiah rules is typically represented [in the OT] as a kingdom of this world, centred in Jerusalem" (1451).

Seven introductory articles augment the commentaries. The first, "Approaching the Bible" by D. A. Carson, is a cogent introduction to bibliology and biblical hermeneutics. The article "Biblical History" by Gordon McConville assumes a late date for the Exodus (22); however, Bruce Waltke gives arguments for the early date in his introduction to Joshua (234). The other articles introduce the Pentateuch, biblical poetry, Jewish intertestamental literature, the Gospels, and the Epistles.

This volume benefits the reader in a number of ways. First, and foremost, its purpose is to lead the reader to know, love, and submit to the Bible as the Word of God. Second, it gives insight into contemporary, mainstream Anglo-American evangelical biblical scholarship. Third, this commentary is foundational to the more detailed evangelical commentaries on the individual biblical books. It will be a

valuable addition to the library of a biblical expositor.

Timothy and Denise George, eds. *Payday Someday and Other Sermons by Robert Greene Lee*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1995. 280 pp. \$19.99 (cloth). Reviewed by Alex D. Montoya, Associate Professor of Pastoral Ministries.

Timothy and Denise George have put their hearts and pens together to give the Christian reading public a series of books entitled *Baptist Classics*. From America's largest Protestant denomination, the Southern Baptists, they paint the portraits of some of their most colorful and influential preachers.

*Payday Someday* is a compilation of some of the best and most famous sermons by Dr. R. G. Lee when he was pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee. This reviewer had an opportunity to hear a cassette tape of the famous sermon by Lee called "Payday Someday," and so was pleased to see a book featuring the preacher's best sermons.

The book contains a brief biography of Dr. Lee in which the editors show the great influence he had for Christ and also upon the Southern Baptist Convention. Then it offers the reader twelve of the most effective sermons Dr. Lee preached.

These sermons are not expositions of texts or passages of Scripture. They are vintage sermons, oratorical masterpieces, framed to entice the soul into heaven rather than instruct the mind. A comparison of the written with the spoken sermon shows that much of the Dr. Lee's impact in preaching was delivery and not merely in the sermon's crafting.

The editors intended the book to be a help to students of preaching. The last section of the book contains questions for group discussion and personal reflection. The simple fact that a man's sermons earn so much attention marks the stature of this famous preacher.

The volume is not for those looking to improve their expositional preaching, but it will bless one's soul and move a preacher to better crafting of his sermons. Non-Baptists can thank the Georges for preserving such a rich heritage.

Timothy George is Senior Editor of *Christianity Today* and Founding Dean of Beeson Divinity School. His wife is a prolific writer in her own right.

Joel B. Green and Michael C. McKeever. *Luke-Acts & New Testament Historiography*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994. 148 pp. \$11.99 (paper).

Edwin C. Hostetter. *Old Testament Introduction*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995. 106 pp. \$7.99 (paper).

Craig A. Evans. *Jesus*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992. 152 pp. \$9.99 (paper). Reviewed by Dennis M. Swanson, Seminary Librarian.

These three works are the initial installments in the proposed 14 volume series of *IBR Bibliographies*. The Institute for Biblical Research is sponsoring this set under the editorship of Tremper Longman III and Craig Evans. The series' stated purpose is to enable the scholar, minister, student, and layman to "keep in touch with the vast materials now available for research in the different parts of the canon" (Series Preface, 7). Given the almost exponential growth of theological and biblical literature, the undertaking is vast, and the publisher, editors, and individual contributors deserve commendation for their efforts.

The scope of the series includes bibliographic information for works primarily published or translated into English, with a limit of 5% for non-English titles. It numbers each entry individually, and within the author index directs the reader to that entry number (not the page number) for each title by a given author. This feature is quite helpful, but the format is not mentioned or initially apparent to the reader. The bibliographic entries include books, multi-author works, journal articles, and *festschriften*. Authors of the individual volumes have also provided brief annotations for each entry.

In terms of the layout and format, the volumes are well-conceived and quite accessible. Each subject has major sections with short introductions. This reviewer would also have liked to see an alphabetical index of the individual titles included. Both IBR and the publishers address the significant problem of maintaining currency in any bibliographic project with a commitment to "publish updates of each volume about every five years" (*ibid.*).

In any bibliography one can quibble about what is and is not included. The volumes are thorough in the selections, although it appears that there is a decided favoritism for works supporting the various historical-critical and liberal approaches to the text of Scripture.

Green's and McKeever's *Luke-Acts*, is well done and has the most thorough annotations of any of the three. The work majors in journal articles, leaving the commentary section rather sparse. The researcher will need to supplement this lack with other bibliographic resources such as Dr. James Rosscup's *Commentaries for Biblical Expositors* (Grace Book Shack, 1993). Also information on a significant new series, *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting* (the first four volumes of a proposed seven-volume set by Eerdmans now available) apparently was not available for inclusion in their work.

Hostetter's *Old Testament Introduction* is a valuable contribution and covers a wide spectrum of material. Though there is an inexplicable omission of the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Moody, 1980), the chapter on Language (43-61) is very thorough. His chapter dealing with the Old Testament Environment (78-102) is also particularly helpful.

Evans' work *Jesus* is perhaps the most disappointing of the three. He acknowledges that this work is an abridgment of his *Life of Jesus Research: An Annotated Bibliography* (Brill, 1989), with additions of materials published from 1990-91. The tone of the bibliography decidedly leans to the liberal and Bultmannian influenced segment of gospel scholarship. Conservative scholars represent an insignificant percentage of the entries. One example of this leaning is the inclusion of Eta Linneman's *Jesus of the Parables: Introduction and Exposition* (Harper & Row, 1967), a work that she herself now rejects, and the non-inclusion of her two works, *Historical Criticism of the Bible: Methodology or Ideology?* (Baker, 1990) and *Is There a Synoptic Problem: Rethinking the Literary Dependence of the First Three Gospels* (Baker, 1992), which reject both the methodology and conclusions of the various critical theories that dominate Evans' work.

This series will undoubtedly be a valuable contribution to students of biblical studies and must be recommended for the serious student. The attractive pricing will make it readily available to all and hopefully regular updates will keep the series current. This reviewer recommends that future volumes reflect more balance in the selections

and that editorial oversight insist on a more even-handed presentation of works from a conservative-evangelical perspective. He commends IBR, the general editors, and individual contributors, however, for undertaking a project that will undoubtedly become a valuable addition to individual and institutional libraries.

Philip W. Janowsky. *The Evangelical Essential. What Must I Do to be Saved?* Grisham, OR: Vision House, 1994. 132 pp. \$13.99 (cloth).  
Reviewed by James E. Rosscup, Professor of Bible Exposition.

The author pastors the Community Methodist Church in Pagosa Springs, Colorado. He spends nine chapters dealing with the way evangelicals are drifting away from biblical authority. He bemoans strange definitions of people who see themselves as "evangelical" as he sees the term widening to embrace anyone who believes in God and speaks from the Bible. Typical of the issues dividing evangelicalism are the feminist movement, pro-choice/pro-life, gay rights in which those "politically correct" assume superior intelligence and academic ability, as if they alone "get it" (13). Janowsky accounts for these by a shift in hermeneutics, made to avoid offending someone.

As the title indicates, the central issue of the book is salvation by grace through faith, a different view from that of Roman Catholicism. The book assumes the apostolic tradition of Rom 10:9 and also of the rest of the NT, especially in Paul's letters. The actual term "evangelicalism" arose during the Protestant Reformation, used by Catholics and by some later to apply to Martin Luther and his followers (20). The loyalty of evangelicalism centered in justification by faith in Paul's letters, and the sole authority of Scripture in matters of faith and practice (22). This contrasts with the Roman Catholic practice of attributing to extra-biblical church traditions the same inspiration and authority as to Scripture itself. One tradition was that a person must merit the salvation merited by Christ, through confession, penance, and good works to achieve perfection and go into Christ's presence at death, rather than to purgatory (25, 100). The Catholic church broke with the Pauline doctrine in the early centuries, but the Protestant Reformation recovered it (88). Paul's justification by

faith apart from merit was supplanted by the Roman Catholic faith plus works of supererogation (96). The wrong view sees the Sermon on the Mount as tied to the old covenant, preaching the law (62), and the necessity to be perfect to achieve salvation (Matt 5:48). This implies that Jesus taught a salvation by perfection maintained by good works to the end of life, a doctrine leading to despair (101-2). Janowsky holds that Jesus intended His teaching on perfection to bring men to condemnation, not salvation. It would destroy any hope of self-righteousness (103), so that they would look to Him who justifies by faith (Rom 7:25). Janowsky argues that the centerpiece of Christianity is not the Sermon on the Mount but Christ's resurrection (63).

The writer is not clear in some of his remarks (75-77). He contrasts the old covenant which addresses the salvation of Israel as a *nation* with the NT which sees salvation as *individual*. However, the OT has several examples of *individual* salvation by faith (e.g., Abraham, Gen 15:6; David, Ps 32:1-2; Naaman, 2 Kgs 5). Hebrews 11 reviews many such examples. God dealt with a nation, but with individuals within that nation too. The book needs to clarify this and integrate it into the total picture.

The book sees the church as "the new Israel" (78), "true Israel" or an "extension of Israel" (81). The twelve tribes in Jas 1:1 are "Christians" in general (82). The book also *seems* to leave no place for a future millennial aspect in God's kingdom program (82); it at least lacks clarity, as it focuses only on a kingdom that is "spiritual" and "eternal."

Janowsky writes against those who feel that relying on Paul's teaching is unbalanced and in error (107). One he disfavors is Richard Quebedeaux in *The Young Evangelicals* (108), but he does not spell out much to clarify the offender's case. He refers to others, not naming them or documenting (112), further creating an air of mystery. Explanation would help here. On the other hand, Janowsky sees no problem in citing such a writer as Emil Brunner (114), a neo-orthodox theologian. He cites Ernst Käsemann (118-19), also a non-evangelical. Many will wish Janowsky had cited some friends of the evangelicalism he is defending.

Janowsky thinks Clark Pinnock has watered down evangelical convictions (129). Pinnock has changed ideas of eternal punishment and made the concept more palatable to human perspectives by teaching annihilationism of those unrepentant to a postmortem offer

of salvation.

Salvation by faith is for Janowsky "the essential." Truly it is an essential! One could also argue for other strong essentials such as holiness of life as contrasted with worldliness, an awakened evangelism, a strong use of Scripture exposition in preaching, and Scripturally toned, Spirit-directed prayer. Janowsky's title might be *An Evangelical Essential*, with an early effort to set other various essentials in perspective and balance.

The jacket, inside the front cover, leaves out the word "who" in its fourth line, "anyone *who* believes. . . ."

The book certainly has its good point, stressing salvation by faith, without merit. One can affirm this with the writer and appreciate his fervor for a key essential as the present reviewer does. The author could have been clearer about who the book disagrees with among *evangelicals* and why it disagrees. This would have spared readers considerable perplexity.

W. C. Kaiser, Jr. *The Messiah in the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995. 256 pp. \$17.99 (paper). Reviewed by David C. Deuel, Associate Professor of Old Testament.

Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., formerly of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, is Colman M. Mockler distinguished professor of Old Testament at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. He argues that Messiah is at once a pivotal issue for the true identity and nature of Christianity and a fundamental aspect of promise, the thematic organizational principle or center of Scripture. Within the progress of revelation, the Messiah theme also grows into an argument of its own for "there is an apologetic case to be made for the Messiah in the OT" (232).

Hermeneutical issues play a critical role in articulating the nature and implications of the messiah theme. An interpreter should eschew *Pesher* and *midrashic* methods of interpretation and follow "a straight-forward understanding and application of the text [which] leads one to the Messiah and Jesus of Nazareth, who has fulfilled everything these texts [i.e. OT messianic passages] said about his first coming" (*ibid.*).

Following a brief survey of historical precedents for the debate, the author sets forth definitions for "messianic" and "messiah," and distinguishes futurism from eschatology in order to set the discussion on the right track. Derailments are not uncommon in the controversy due mainly to the lack of a consistent use of such terms. Kaiser then takes the discussion to the fundamental issue of Messiah in Scripture—the essential nature of biblical prophecy. He scrutinizes and rejects dual meaning, single meaning, NT meaning (a technical sense of the phrase), developmental meaning, goal meaning, relecture meaning, and theological-meaning (also a technical sense) formulations of biblical prophecy in favor of a method consistent with the essence of prophesy itself, promise.

The promise was a single one; yet it was cumulative in its net results. Indeed, its constituent parts were not a collection of assorted promises about a Messiah who was to come: instead, they formed one continuous pattern and purpose placed in the stream of history (29).

In other words, prophesy is not a random collection of unrelated passages into which later NT writers injected their content and to which they added, even imposed, an artificial unity. Nor is it a set of disparate predictions. Rather, it is a dynamic process superintended by God and through which He continually unfolded His plan in the progress of revelation. In short, prophesy regarding Messiah is not an afterthought; it is a carefully orchestrated revelatory plan.

The author argues strongly that any departure from the notion of prophesy set forth above for one or a combination of the alternatives (they are not all mutually exclusive) sacrifices the apologetical force intended by later OT or NT writers, and ultimately, the integrity of Scripture itself:

All the alleged apologetic advantages of appealing to the OT texts by the apostles and the four Evangelists of the NT become nonexistent in one stroke by these two-track hermeneutical systems of interpreting messianic passages (23-24).

The author's treatment of the alleged messianic passages in the OT stands as its own apologetic. One can dispute his interpretation of individual passages, but the NT posturing of OT passages as messianic as well as the "natural" meaning of select passages themselves is a single gargantuan argument.

Kaiser's most recent contribution to exegetical theology is a most welcome addition to the literature on Messiah. Rather than speculate on the nature of prophesy and its methods in isolation, he makes his point by allowing the passages to speak for themselves. Pastors and Bible instructors will appreciate this helpful book.

Tremper Longman, III. *Old Testament Survey*. 2nd ed., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995. 184 pp. \$10.99 (paper). Reviewed by James E. Rosscup, Professor of Bible Exposition.

This is a useful tool, often, as it updates a work published in 1991 with 19 more pages of listings, 1991–1993. It is by the Professor of Old Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary.

The book comments briefly (a few lines in most cases) on a broad spectrum of works relating to the OT: introductions, theology, history of Israel, archaeology, atlases, translations of ancient Near Eastern texts, Near Eastern history, dictionaries, biblical-theological dictionaries, concordances, grammars, text-based lexicons and interlinears, canon, the OT and the computer (one listing), and miscellaneous. Four brief appendices deal with an OT library on a budget, the ideal OT reference library, five-star commentaries (the most scholarly in his judgment), and a list of commentaries Longman has written.

Longman rarely includes books before 1960. Exceptions are usually parts of the old *International Critical Commentary* or the *Interpreter's Bible* (1950's), Keil and Delitzsch (latter half of the 19th century), H. C. Leupold's works (1942 ff.), etc. Since they are so few in number, it is strange that he includes some that are far from the best, as H. G. Burrowes, *Song of Solomon*, Banner of Truth, 1958 (originally 1853), a work that Longman holds in low regard because of its allegorism. Another is A. W. Pink's *Gleanings in Genesis*, 1922, again with comments that diminish its value.

The main aim seems to be to list works of a high value in scholarly, critical study, whether Longman agrees with their perspective or not. He leaves out many works that teachers and pastors find of much help in biblical interpretation.

Often the work's annotation offers no help on which

perspective is taken on a prophetic book, such as amillennial or premillennial. Most entries on Isaiah are an example. Longman regards J. Alex Motyer's *The Prophecy of Isaiah . . .* (1994) as "The best of a conservative evangelical approach to the book at the end of the twentieth century," and as "best in matters theological," but beyond these generalities defines nothing on the actual kind of view on prophecy it defends (127-28). Sometimes Longman shows his disfavor of premillennial interpretation. Eugene Cooper's premillennial stance on Ezekiel (New American Commentary) is "difficult to accept" (137). Some find it much less difficult than other views when they face exegetical factors and seek to apply hermeneutics consistently—for blessings as well as judgments. On Jeremiah, Longman bypasses C. L. Feinberg's careful premillennial treatment of the passages (*Jeremiah, A Commentary*. Zondervan, 1982, 335 pp.), but on Ezekiel he does include Feinberg's good but less valuable work. On Zechariah, no premillennial effort finds a place.

Longman does helpfully alert readers (if they need this) to some things, as J. Goldingay's sometimes radical views on Daniel (*Daniel, Word Biblical Commentary*). Goldingay holds that Daniel 1–6 present fictitious stories. Longman's comment does not mention that Goldingay sees the fourth empire (Daniel 2, 7) as fulfilled in intertestamental times. While complimentary in part on Leon Wood's *Daniel, A Commentary* (143), Longman prefers E. J. Young's "theological perspective," apparently his amillennial view.

In some areas, one wonders why books are omitted. An example is archaeology. Only two works appear in such an important area, with no mention of E. M. Blaiklock and R. K. Harrison, eds., *The New International Dictionary of Biblical Archaeology* (Zondervan, 1983, 485 pp.); Amihai Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible* (Doubleday, 1990, 576 pp.); Keith N. Schoville, *Biblical Archaeology in Focus* (Baker, 1991, 511 pp.); or Edwin Yamauchi, *Persia and the Bible* (Baker, 1990, 580 pp.). These works are not listed even under "Near Eastern History."

Under biblical-theological dictionaries, Longman includes encyclopedias, yet mentions only W. A. Elwell, ed., *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 2 vols. (Baker, 1988). Why is there no mention of the *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* or the *New International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*? Works on manners and customs and on chronology gain no place.

Longman has a greater confidence in the Word Biblical Commentary as being evangelical than some do. He says that of the entries in this set, "most clearly are" evangelical (57). He writes from the perspective of acknowledging a very broad range of scholars who regard themselves as evangelical.

Certainly the book offers much help as far as it goes. A more vigorous attempt to include works from 1991 on would be of far greater help. Also, for the many who have access to biblical libraries, more of the contributing older works could be present. Many of the annotations would offer more help if more definitive, even if still concise. As an overall assessment, the work is of substantial assistance on many OT books, and hopefully, future editions can make it much better.

Jeffrey J. Niehaus. *God at Sinai: Covenant and Theophany in the Bible and Ancient Near East*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995. 426 pp. \$18.99 (paper). Reviewed by David C. Deuel, Associate Professor of Old Testament.

Jeffrey J. Niehaus, Professor of Old Testament at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, writes to explain biblical glory theophany. His method explores the OT data "against the background of similar ancient Near Eastern thought" (16).

A theophany is an appearance of God. God has appeared on many occasions and in various forms or manifestations. "What Israel knew of God, it knew through his own self-disclosure" (17) "As God of all creation, the God of the Old Testament could appear whenever and wherever he chose" (18). Unlike the alleged gods of the nations, Yahweh *only* appeared when and where he chose (20). God appears for a purpose, accomplishes that purpose, then disappears (21).

The two primary reasons for God's visitation are to save and to judge. Later biblical writers call these "the mighty acts of God" (cf. Job 40:6-14). Niehaus concludes by implication that "*the mere revelation of God both saves and judges*" (24). God's appearance or theophany in the OT is not merely an apparition. It is not neutral; it is *defining*. So it was when God revealed himself to Moses: "Do not come any closer . . . take off your sandals, for the

place where you are standing is holy ground" (Exod 3:5). This self-revelation of a holy God, in essence, "defines Moses immediately" (24). God subsequently reveals His name to Moses: "I will be what I will be" points to the fact that "only God is essentially self-determining" (24, emphasis added). The Exodus 3 theophany "envisioned Yahweh's *deliverance* out of Egypt and his *judgment* of Pharaoh" (24). The author concludes, "In Yahweh's first appearance to Moses a collocation was made between Yahweh's self revelation and his role as Savior and Judge" (25).

The primacy of Mt. Sinai as the "proto-theophanic" appearance of God is without question:

The Sinai theophany is taken as a touchstone for prior and subsequent glory theophanies in the Bible because the Sinai event was constitutive in Israel's history and crucial in salvation history. As God came to Sinai in the clouds to impart his law, so he will come again on the clouds of heaven to judge those who have broken that law (16).

Later biblical writers would look back upon, allude to, and quote the Sinai passages, oftentimes elaborating known points of theology or introducing new ones.

In the remainder of the book, the author compares biblical theophany with ancient Near Eastern parallels, then examines the Pre-Sinai, Sinai, and Post-Sinai theophanies. Within the last category he subgroups the discussions into Historical and Prophetical, Psalms and Prophets, and NT and beyond.

The book examines an issue that spills over into other areas of theological study. Its implications for the incarnation and the Spirit's presence and role deserve individual treatments that reach the pew, for the basic issue of what it means for God to "visit" or be present is crucial to the life of faith.

This reviewer appreciates Professor Niehaus' careful research and recommends the book highly.

Mark A. Noll. *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994. 271 pp. \$19.99 (cloth). Reviewed by Trevor Craigen, Associate Professor of Theology.

The preface describes this book as a "historical meditation in

which sermonizing and the making of hypotheses vie with more ordinary exposition" (ix). Then, on the same page, Noll adds what is obvious from the opening salvoes in the first chapter that the book "is meant to incite more than it is meant to inform." An accurate evaluation indeed! The author's gripe (and that is the best term to use) is that no recognizable evangelical mind exists. This is the scandal about which he writes. It deeply disturbs him that modern American evangelicals have miserably failed in sustaining intellectual life. But when all is said and done and this failure has been charted in chapter after chapter, one has to ask, "What are you looking for, Dr. Noll? Do you want evangelical writers to gain recognition by the academia of the day as making a significant contribution to their fields of study? In fact, has the modern academic world shown an ungrudging willingness even to consider seriously research done by evangelicals?" Noll causes such questions, yet he himself acknowledges in the first chapter a rich theological harvest from the pen of "different subtraditions" within evangelicalism (7). Yes, he did explain that he wants an effort made to think like a Christian—i.e., to think within a Christian framework—in all areas of modern learning (7). But is it really true that evangelical writing has not done so?

The opening chapter provides definitions of "The Life of the Mind," "Evangelical," and "Anti-Intellectual," and sketches the cultural, institutional, and theological aspects of the Scandal. Unfortunately it also alerts the reader to Noll's bias against and summary dismissal (a) of those who hold to creation without allowing scientific theories to cloud their exegesis of special revelation and (b) of those who carefully study prophecy trying to bring it to bear upon current events. The areas of Bible and science and prophecy deserve earnest study, and good students and researchers in these areas are not less than intelligent or far less responsible than previous generations of writers. Do not tar all with the same brush, Dr. Noll, for many write well and thoughtfully on these issues.

Is it really right to view careful research done by "creationists" to be a sad tale of a fatally flawed interpretive scheme totally unendorsed by responsible Christian teachers of church history? One wonders if Noll ever considered objectively the outstanding contributions made by the highly qualified members of the Creation Research Society and the Institute for Creation Research. Are such writers deemed anti-intellectual fundamentalists who are

irresponsible? Are these really those who are "bereft of self-criticism, intellectual subtlety, or an awareness of complexity" so that "they are blown about by every wind of apocalyptic speculation and enslaved to the cruder spirits of populist science"? (14). No *objective* appraiser of the evangelical scene could ever draw such a conclusion. The criticism is unfounded and indicates Noll's utter subjectivity. The opening chapter, therefore, causes the reader to begin immediately to wonder about the integrity of the analysis given in the succeeding chapters. But then, since the book is a historical meditation and sermonizing, perhaps the loss of objectivity is excusable. Yet when the book clearly implies that modern creationism arose from an attempt to present Ellen White's Seventh-Day Adventist literature as *the* framework for studying the history of the earth (189), the discerning reader must shake his head in disbelief, and wonder if the author has an axe to grind.

The book is easy to read and with its rapid survey of a broad span of church history forces the reader to recall names, books, and events of the past, and to reflect on whether Noll's assessment of their contribution or influence really is accurate. In all probability this book calls for a whole review article – if not another book – instead of a brief review such as this. Are those who practice normal historical-grammatical interpretation guilty of a "misplaced Baconianism" or of indulging in a Manichaeian attitude toward knowledge about the natural world? Are creationists guilty of deductive dogmatism which in some non-scholarly way forcibly and simplistically reads the Bible onto the natural world and into the metaphysical issues posed by modern theories of evolution?

Speaking of "theories of evolution" should have caused Noll to realize that what is still theoretical, and thus unproven, could never redefine, amend, and otherwise tamper with the factual statements of the historical narrative in the Genesis account. The history of science shows that theories of origins come and go and thus cannot determine any age's interpretation of God's special revelation. Noll's evaluation of creation-science as having done much damage to the evangelical mind in preventing clear thinking about human origins, the age of the earth, and the mechanisms of geological and biological change (196) is, frankly, unacceptable. Of course, he is not obligated to accept creation-science if he chooses not to, but then neither must creation-scientists listen to him. An irenic spirit can prevail, but this does not

mandate an endorsement of his views.

This reviewer has focused predominantly on creation-science issues, but similar reactions arose in reading of other chapters, particularly "The Intellectual Disaster of Fundamentalism" and "Political Reflection." The reader will ask himself, "Is that so?" "Are you not overstating the case or showing unnecessary bias?" "Are you not too quickly creating a caricature or stereotype?" and "Are you not exhibiting a distinct dislike for dispensational and premillennial writers?" Perhaps one could conclude that the author has expressed his irritation and frustration with an evangelical world that will not kowtow to an unregenerate world's views, theories, and conclusions, but reserves the right to challenge, research, and think without losing the authority of biblical revelation in its thinking. This does not constitute anti-intellectualism or something less than a Christian mind.

Thanks to Professor Noll for his "inciteful" book. It will motivate readers to analyze the history of ideas, biblical themes and their ethical impact, creation-science, and prophecy, but it is doubtful that significant and substantial mergers of the differing convictions and views will occur. Reactions to his book will linger for years to come. Hopefully, it will be the catalyst to cause a serious, non-caricaturing re-consideration of the value of creation-science, of premillennialism, of fundamentalism, and of presuppositional apologetics and to make evangelicals realize they need not be ashamed of the wealth of material they have from good thinkers in their ranks.

Robert A. Peterson. *Hell on Trial: The Case for Eternal Punishment*. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1995. 258 pp. \$12.99 (paper). Reviewed by James E. Rosscup, Professor of Bible Exposition.

This book provides the most careful, recent, overall theological argument for eternal punishment of the unsaved that the reviewer has seen. Peterson is Professor of Systematic Theology, Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis. His book has forewords by John MacArthur, Jr., and David F. Wells. It is a lucid, cautiously argued thesis for the orthodox view of conscious, endless punishment. The author is courteous to those with whom he disagrees, but pleads

firmly for the view he is convinced the Bible teaches.

Peterson has twelve chapters. His introduction sets the issues in competing views: life after death is improbable, universalism, a postmortem chance to receive the gospel, annihilationism, and unbelievers suffering eternity in an endless, conscious way in hell. Then he devotes Chapters 2-5 to Bible teaching on the subject (OT, Jesus, apostles), 6-7 to views of key figures in church history, 8-9 to a critique of opposing views, 10 to a topical summary of Bible teaching, 11 to the relationship of eternal punishment with other tenets of the faith (e.g., God, sin, Christ's saving work, heaven). Chapter 12 deals with three difficult questions: What about purgatory? What about the fate of those who never heard the gospel? and What happens to babies who die?

He argues that two texts give a clearer OT picture of the final destiny of the wicked, Isa 66:22-24 and Dan 12:1-2. Isaiah speaks of the ungodly when they are dead corpses suffering for ever, using an image of maggots that do not die and a picture of fire that does not go out. Daniel speaks of God's raising the godly to never-ending life, but the ungodly to never-ceasing disgrace.

The author deals in detail with words of Jesus, who said more about the fate of the wicked than anyone else in Scripture (54). He takes up various passages from Matt 5:21-22 to 25:46. Among his points are these: God rules the final destiny of the unsaved (10:28) which is for those who rejected God (7:23; 8:11-12) and involves pain (13:30, 40-43) pictured by such things as a fiery furnace. In 18:6-9, hell is a fate worse than drowning in the sea with a heavy millstone weighted to one's neck.

In 2 Thess 1:9, Peterson reasons that "eternal destruction" means never-ceasing destruction, not annihilation. The next words, in v. 9, suggest this: ". . . and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power." Separation from the Lord, he argues, presupposes that people still exist (81).

In Rev 14:9-11, Peterson reasons that smoke rises perpetually because the fire has not used up its fuel; the picture would have smoke cease if the fire went out (88). "No rest day or night" (v. 11) means "no relief at any time," not "no relief so long as their suffering lasts," as though pain were only temporary. The lake of fire lasts "day and night forever and ever" (Rev 20:10). Peterson discusses Rev 22:15 also. The ungodly enjoy eternal life in the New Jerusalem, whereas "outside

are the dogs," the unsaved, continuing to exist but cut off from God's gracious presence (198).

Chapter 6 seeks to show that eternal punishment was the church's predominant conviction from early days through the Reformation, as in Tertullian, Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, and Calvin. Origen was one who defected, choosing universalism. In the 18th to 20th centuries most scholars held to eternal punishment (e.g., Jonathan Edwards and W. G. T. Shedd), but some held annihilationism (e.g., William Whiston; Friedrich Schleiermacher).

Chapter 8 offers detail on universalism, particularly responding to John Hick's idea, "justice demands that God win all to Himself" (140). Peterson also argues against the postmortem evangelism and conversion of Clark Pinnock, who believes that all without a *desire* to repent face annihilation (151). This takes Peterson to such texts as 1 Pet 3:19-20, where a further offer of the gospel would clash with 4:17-18, which teaches that those who do not obey the gospel will face an awful destiny. Another passage is Heb 9:27, death and after it judgment, which is not, as Pinnock sees it, an opportunity to receive grace (151).

Annihilationism is the topic in Chapter 9. Peterson answers what he rates as the best four books for the theory: H. E. Guillebaud, *The Righteous Judge* (1941); Basil Atkinson, *Life and Immortality* (1960's); LeRoy Froom, *The Conditionalist Faith of Our Fathers*, 2 vols. (1965-66); and Edward Fudge, *The Fire That Consumes: A Biblical and Historical Study of Final Punishment* (1982). Peterson feels that John R. W. Stott pulls together the logic for annihilationism well (Stott with David Edwards, *Evangelical Essentials*, 1988, pp. 312-20). Peterson responds to the five main arguments: vocabulary of destruction, hell-fire imagery, God's justice, universalist texts, and conditional immortality.

"The Case for Eternal Punishment" comes in Chapter 10. Crying and grinding teeth show pain related to fire (Matt 13:42, 50). Hell is also a place of darkness and separation (8:12; 22:13; Luke 13:28); being cut in pieces, i.e., in extreme pain (Matt 24:51; cf. Deut 32:41; Heb 11:37); and death/destruction while conscious (Matt 10:28; Rom 2:12). Revelation 20:7, 10 mention torment day and night forever and ever after the thousand years, apparently eternal in contrast to a long period of time; the "beast" and "false prophet" are in the fire already a thousand years before the devil also is cast in. Contending for hell being eternal, Peterson argues the more natural view in the parallelism

of Matt 25:46: the wicked go to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life. The punishment side of the contrast is eternal—i.e., endless just as the bliss side is (196). Teaching on hell should stir in people a desire to escape such a fate, leading to a greater boldness in evangelistic zeal (201).

Copious notes appear at the end of each chapter, in addition to indexes to Scripture, names, and topics at the volume's end. The book updates discussion on the subject, gathers many arguments on different passages, and is the best work on the orthodox view related to the recent debate. Every serious student of Scripture ought to read it and think soberly about its relevant aspects.

John Sailhamer. *NIV Compact Bible Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994. 608 pp. \$14.99 (cloth). Reviewed by Keith Essex, Assistant Professor of Bible Exposition.

"The purpose of the commentary is . . . to show how the Bible fits together and how the parts fit the whole" (7). This is how John Sailhamer, formerly Professor of Old Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and presently Scholar in Residence at Northwestern College, describes his purpose in writing this new commentary. His desire is that the reader of the Bible see the great themes in the Bible and how these themes develop throughout the whole of the Scriptures. Although this commentary uses the New International Version as its basis for comments, the author substitutes his own translations when he deems it necessary.

Sailhamer never explicitly states what he thinks the unifying theme of the Bible is. However, his emphasis seems to be that the theme that unites the Scriptures is "the universal reign of the future Davidic king whom the Old Testament anticipates and the New Testament identifies as Jesus Christ." From Genesis to Revelation, Sailhamer continually speaks of the coming kingdom. For example, when commenting on Genesis 12, he states, "The way of life and blessing . . . is now marked by Abram and his seed. . . . This one seed who is to come to whom the right of kingship belongs, will be the 'lion of the tribe of Judah' (cf. [Gen.] 49:9)" (25). Concerning the book of Daniel, he affirms, "The eternal Davidic kingdom is pictured as a

divine kingdom that rules over all the earth and puts an end to the kingdoms of humankind" (241). At his first advent, "Jesus came to establish the kingdom promised in the OT prophetic literature . . . a visible, universal rule of the Messiah" (444). And at his second advent, in fulfillment of Daniel 7, Jesus will bring "first judgment, then the kingdom" (598). Sailhamer subsumes all the other themes of the Bible (e.g., blessing, life, seed, covenants, land, judgments, salvation) under the dominant theme of Jesus and his coming kingdom.

One of the strengths of this compact commentary is the fact that it does concentrate on the "big picture." However, at times its brevity leaves the reader wishing for a fuller explanation of some statements. For this reviewer, a further clarification of the relationship between the kingdom and the church would have been helpful. Sailhamer states that because Israel rejected the kingdom at Christ's first coming, "that kingdom . . . would begin in a small, almost imperceptible, form" (444). This was something that was not a part of the OT view. During this age, the church equals the kingdom of God. "The establishment of the church and the spread of the Gospel is intended to be understood as the beginning of the reign of the kingdom of God" (497). The kingdom has been established, but not yet restored to Israel. He does not explain how the church is the kingdom. However, he does affirm the pretribulational rapture of the church (600) and the future establishment of Christ's earthly kingdom (593).

A number of jarring errors in presentation mar the excellence of this commentary's content. Foremost among these are many mistakes in the outlines which accompany the text. For instance, point "A" on p. 11 needs correcting to "(1:1-2:24)" (11). The discussion of Esther needs a point "D" for the section "5:9-9:17" (310). In 2 Corinthians, division "III" should read "(2:14-9:15)" (540). Many more of such mistakes appear. Further, on p. 356, the author refers to a unit on "Wisdom Literature." The commentary has no such unit. Hopefully, subsequent editions will correct these errors and others.

In spite of these shortcomings, the commentary will help the reader get a good grasp of the "big picture" of the Bible. A small investment will return rich dividends.

Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995. 166 pp. \$10.99 (paper). Reviewed by Alex D. Montoya, Associate Professor of Pastoral Ministries.

The eternal destiny of the heathen has always been an intriguing question for Christians. Do the heathen need to hear the gospel to be saved? This is the question debated in *What About Those Who Have Never Heard?*. John Sanders, an instructor in theology and philosophy at Oak Hills Bible College, has edited this concise book to show the various positions on the ultimate destiny of those who have never heard. The format of the book presents the three most popular positions held by the Christian church, and subsequent rebuttals of each position by the other two.

John Sanders, one of the writers, advocates the position known as *inclusivism*, which holds that God saves people only because of the work of Christ, but people find salvation without knowing about Christ. God grants them salvation if they exercise faith in God as they know Him revealed through creation and providence.

Gabriel Fackre, Professor of Theology at Andover Newton Theological School supports a second position called *divine perseverance*. Fackre argues that those who die unevangelized receive an opportunity for salvation after death. It says that "God condemns no one without first seeing what is his or her response to Christ" (13).

The third view, called *restrictivism*, has as its advocate Ronald H. Nash, Professor of Theology and Philosophy at Reformed Theological Seminary. Nash argues that God provides salvation only in Jesus Christ, making it necessary to know about the work of Christ and exercise faith in Jesus before one dies to receive salvation. "God has divinely appointed the means of salvation, and that is exclusively through the preaching of the gospel – there is no other possibility" (12).

The merit of this work is its clear presentation of each view and the subsequent rebuttal by its opponents. It does much to help the reader think through the issues and clarify positions based on Scripture and/or logic. The reviewer profited much from the analysis of the texts offered in support of each position, and found help to clarify further his restrictionist position. This is a helpful tool for those concerned about world evangelism.

Eugene Seals and Matthew Parker, eds. *Called to Lead*. Chicago: Moody, 1995. 196 pp. \$12.99 (paper). Reviewed by Alex D. Montoya, Associate Professor of Pastoral Ministries.

*Called to Lead* is about African American leaders and its purpose is to inspire the next generation of African American leaders. The authors are both leaders in the black community. Eugene Seals is Founder and President of Quality Publishing Systems in West Bloomington, Michigan. Matthew Parker is President of the Institute for Black Family Development, and a consultant to a number of Christian organizations.

The list of contributors is a Who's Who of leaders in the Black Community. Some of the chapters and contributors include,

"A Call to Leadership Is a Call to Character" by Charles Ware

"Filling the Leadership Vacuum" by John M. Perkins

"Prayer is Leadership" by Joseph C. Jeter, Sr.

"Called to Lead Existing Organizations" by Eugene Seals.

The book also includes a number of chapters written by African American women such as Delores L. Kenney-Williams, Sherry Sherrod Dulree, and Beverly Yates.

Written in a popular, down-to-earth style, its design is to encourage the layman as well as the existing leadership. It is a book to inspire black Americans to take charge of their lives and of their institutions.

Non-blacks can profit much from this little glimpse at the life and times of black leadership. Some of the principles described apply to any culture and serve anyone interested in becoming a leader. Here is a welcome contribution to Christian leadership preparation.

Timothy A. Turner. *Preaching to Programmed People*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1995. 150 pp. \$7.99 (paper). Reviewed by Alex D. Montoya, Associate Professor of Pastoral Ministries.

Preachers today must strive to be relevant, and relevance is often set by the media, or more specifically television. *Preaching to Programmed People* is a book about a generation of Americans raised on television. The author Timothy A. Turner is both a pastor and a

lecturer on the media, the family, and preaching. The book contains two sections:

First, "What Has T.V. Done to Preaching?" including five chapters:

1. T.V. Has "Captured" Your Congregation
2. The T.V.-Conditioned Mentality
3. T.V. Refashions People
4. Seven New Kinds of Listeners
5. The T.V. Pulpit and the Electronic Pew

Second, "What Should Preachers Do About T.V.?" which provides answers to questions in the first section:

6. Capitalize on T.V.
7. T.V.'s Achilles' Heel and Preaching's Power
8. Purge Boredom Factors
9. Preaching to Programmed People
10. Media-Relevant Preaching
11. Media-Proof Your Message
12. Media-Proof Your Church

Turner offers a refreshing alternative to those who advocate sermons short on time and short on content. His premise is that preaching today has an articulate and sophisticated competitor, and that preachers must understand it and use it to the gospel's advantage. Preachers who wish to minister to a contemporary generation will find help in these insights.

Warren W. Wiersbe. *Be Decisive: Taking a Stand for the Truth*. Wheaton: Victor, 1995. 207 pp. \$7.99 (paper). Reviewed by Dennis M. Swanson, Seminary Librarian.

Continuing this well-known and appreciated series of OT studies, Wiersbe has brought his skills of clarity and synthesis to bear on the Book of Jeremiah. As with all of the books in the "Be" series, it is primarily designed for use in Bible studies or Sunday School. A leader's guide is available to facilitate using this book's thirteen chapters as a Bible study resource.

Wiersbe's comments revolve around the main thematic issues of Jeremiah, with some lessons covering as many as five chapters.

Though his comments are sometimes brief and often bypass entire passages, the work is by no means superficial; the comments have the support of sixteen pages of notes, a remarkable feature for a book of this type. Wiersbe's strength lies in his ability to synthesize in a clear, easy-to-read style an enormous amount of background material, Scripture cross-references, comments from other writers, and his own thoughts.

His study of Jeremiah emphasizes the decisive leadership of the prophet and his tireless efforts in proclaiming God's message to a rebellious nation. The lessons Wiersbe brings out will serve the reader well, whether he is a pastor dealing with discouragement in the ministry or a layman seeking to understand the flow of the "weeping prophet's" writing. This reviewer highly recommends the book.

William H. Willimon and Richard Lischer, eds.. *Concise Encyclopedia of Preaching*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1995. xxi + 518 pp. \$32.95 (cloth). Reviewed by Dennis M. Swanson, Seminary Librarian.

In continuing their tradition of excellent reference works, the publishers have produced an important work on homiletics and preaching. The editors provide articles ranging in subjects from the "theological reflection on the meaning of authority in the pulpit to the twinge of anxiety experienced by every preacher who stands to speak" (vii).

The articles extend in size from a few paragraphs to 27 pages for the entry on "The History of Preaching." For many entries on individual preachers, the editors have included a "representative" sermon excerpt to illustrate their messages. This is an admirable goal and an interesting feature, but the excerpts are generally too short and have insufficient background information to help in evaluating the sermonic style of each preacher. Each entry concludes with the author's name and a short bibliography.

Article subjects are wide-ranging, the ones on liturgy, rhetoric, history, and homiletics being the work's strength. Those unfamiliar with preaching traditions from liturgical and liberal backgrounds will derive great benefit from this volume. Articles dealing with

communication and homiletic theory also provide much insight. Though the book contains some articles about Puritan preachers and those of the Calvinistic tradition, its discussion of preaching from Reformed tradition is particularly weak. The absence of references to some standard evangelical works on preaching is noticeable, particularly D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones' *Preaching and Preachers*, Warren Wiersbe's *Preaching and Teaching with Imagination*, the Westminster Seminary faculty's *The Preacher and Preaching*, and The Master's Seminary faculty's *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*.

These minor criticisms aside, the volume will benefit the reader and will become a standard reference work in the area of homiletics.

Davis A. Young. *The Biblical Flood: A Case Study of the Church's Response to Extrabiblical Evidence*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995. xiii + 327 pp. \$19.99 (paper). Reviewed by Dennis M. Swanson, Seminary Librarian.

The author, professor of geology at Calvin College, has collected an impressive array of information on the history of interpretation of the Genesis flood account. He chronicles the interpretation of the flood in Christian and Jewish thought with an emphasis on how Christians have interacted with "extrabiblical" evidence related to the flood.

Young categorically rejects the notion of a "universal flood," interpreting Genesis 6–9 instead as "language to describe an event that devastated or disrupted Mesopotamian civilization" (312), i.e., a local flood. Young reaches this conclusion based entirely on "scientific evidence," that is, data from various disciplines including geology, paleontology, and zoology. This reviewer sees two flawed assumptions underlying Young's conclusions: (1) *General Revelation* is self-defining in terms of its scope and authority apart from *Special Revelation*, and (2) *General Revelation* has sufficient authority to inform and correct *Special Revelation*.

Young includes in general revelation all types of human intellectual pursuits leading to the discovery of "truth." Discovery of truth is revelatory and falls into the category of *general revelation* or as Young often calls it, "extrabiblical evidence" (xi). This expanded view

of general revelation is the foundation for various "integrationist" proposals, which the author favors. In the final chapter he calls for an exegetical methodology that integrates "discoveries" in various academic disciplines with Scripture as equals (313). Thus general revelation has the authority to inform Scripture or even correct it (308).

Admitting that Christians for 1700 years have interpreted Genesis 6–9 to refer to a global flood, Young declares on the basis of his view of general revelation, "The extrabiblical data pertaining to the flood have been pushing the church to develop a better approach to the flood story and indeed to all the early chapters of Genesis" (310). He admits that some years ago he believed that the "biblical data favor an essentially global flood" (272); but elsewhere concludes, "The cumulative pressure of general revelation can be ignored for only so long" (309).

He spends considerable space discussing John Whitcomb's and Henry Morris' *The Genesis Flood*, but does so at a superficial level. He calls their conclusions "obviously incorrect" (311), based on "untested and untestable speculations that have a more solid grounding in the imagination than in God's creation" (265), and their handling of the evidence "highly prejudicial" (262). Yet he never interacts with their substantive discussions. Young also mistakenly contends that only "Whitcomb and Morris have attempted to address the serious problems posed [by a global-flood view] of biogeography and anthropology" (265), ignoring the extensive work of scientists from such institutions as the *Creation Research Society* and *The Institute for Creation Research*.

Pejorative terminology and a condescending spirit characterize Young's summary of the views of modern commentators who favor a universal flood (280-93). He also displays a consistent antipathy towards "flood geology" and the notion of a "young earth." He refers to flood geology as a "pseudo-science" (215) and "reactionary science" (244), in which "scientific competence, sophistication and integrity" are lacking (266). He describes the proponents of flood geology as those who are "typically self-taught and lack the requisite qualifications for discussing geology" (244). This animosity is clearly visible on pp. 274-76 where he introduces a discussion between Stephen A. Austin of ICR and Donald Boardman of Wheaton College, but he expounds only the conclusions of Boardman. As another reviewer has noted, Young has also mishandled the works of Gerhard Charles Aalders and Oswald T.

Allis (David J. Engelsma, *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal* 29/1 [November 1995]:59-60), saying they are "agnostic about the extent of the deluge" (293).

Young has opted for a dichotomy between Scriptural declarations on matters of faith (theology) and matters touching other disciplines (science, history, etc.). He states, "The doctrine of the Trinity, the doctrine of providence, the two natures of Christ, and the concept of God's saving grace in Christ" must be affirmed "no matter what—simply because Scripture teaches them" (308). However, Young is just as ready to recommend the abandonment of the "traditional interpretation of the Bible in the face of a mass of conflicting extrabiblical evidence when the issue is a matter of a more historical, geographical, or scientific character" (*ibid.*). He admits that the NT presents the flood as unique and global and Noah and the flood as historical, but he strongly implies that the NT is in error on those points (15, 29-30).

Scholars and theologians who properly understand the nature and scope of general revelation as presented in Scripture and the inter-relationship between special and general revelation must address the questions raised by *The Biblical Flood*. Though Young calls for a "re-interpretation" of the Genesis flood account, this reviewer thinks that his re-interpretation is simply a rejection of the historicity and reliability of Scripture and of the historic Christian view of the doctrine of inspiration.