

FOR IT STANDS IN SCRIPTURE

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ESSAYS IN HONOR OF
W. EDWARD GLENNY

EDITED BY ARDEL B. CANEDAY
WITH ANNA RASK & GREG ROSAUER

The University of Northwestern
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Saint Paul, Minnesota



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W. Edward Glenny

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Foreword

Within academic guilds it is fitting that we honor scholars who have distinguished themselves in their fields of study. Though Ed Glenny's teaching and writing career shines brightly for all who know him, a variety of factors have drawn little notice to the man whose next birthday marks the close of his 70th year on this earth. Chief among such factors is that Ed is a man with a modest, unassuming, and unpretentious demeanor who prioritizes attention to others rather than to himself. Though his scholarship is of world class and international acclaim, he is content to teach at a small Christian university where modesty characterizes his office, his salary, and his stature amongst international colleagues.

The concept of this *Festschrift* to honor Ed Glenny on his 70th birthday on April 28, 2019, was conceived during the summer of 2017 and brought to Professor Randy Nelson, Chair of the B&TS Department in September 2017. The proposal presented to Randy Nelson, who gladly welcomed it, entailed compiling essays from Ed's former students at both Central Baptist Theological Seminary and the University of Northwestern—St. Paul. After a few months of electronic conversations five members of the B&TS Department met together in January 2018 to plan and to strategize—Randy Nelson, Ruth Jostad (Administrative Assistant), Anna Rask (Adjunct Professor), Greg Rosauer (Archivist & Adjunct Professor), and Ardel Caneday (Professor of New Testament & Greek). Both Anna and Greg are UNW alumni who majored in Biblical & Theological Studies.

Thus, it is with delight that we offer this collection of essays written by several of Professor Glenny's former students at Cen-

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tral Baptist Theological Seminary (1984–1999) and the University of Northwestern–St. Paul (since 1999), graduates who have continued their own pursuits of careers in biblical and theological studies either in church ministries or in teaching careers. This volume features essays that address a variety of topics in biblical studies, most of which touch on those areas that have dominated Ed’s teaching and scholarly career.

Thanks for the cover design goes to Tyson Phipps, who is a senior at UNW majoring in both Biblical & Theological Studies and Graphic Design. For readers who may be less familiar with the large characters, LXX, that appear in the backdrop on the cover, they function as a double entendre. First, they memorialize Ed Glenny’s becoming a Septuagenarian on April 28, 2019. Second, they represent the shorthand designation of the Septuagint—the Greek translation of the Old Testament—which continues to dominate Ed’s research and writing, and which identifies him as a Septuagintalist.

Happy Septuagesimus Birthday, Ed Glenny, and may our Lord bless you with many more birthdays and years of scholarly productivity for the edification of both the church and the academy.

Ardel B. Caneday, PhD, General Editor
Anna Rask, MDiv, Associate Editor
Greg Rosauer, MA, MS, Associate Editor

Appreciations

For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.
For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.
(Isaiah 55:8–9 ESV)

I have long thought that this text should be reviewed daily, especially by those who study Scripture professionally, like pastors and professors. Not only are God’s mind and manners nearly beyond our reach (“as the heavens are higher than the earth”), they are categorically different (“my thoughts are *not* your thoughts...”). This certainly does not mean that it is futile to try to understand God, his thoughts and his ways—after all, two verses earlier, we are commanded to seek the LORD (v. 6), and the two following verses connect heaven and earth in the sense that rain and snow fall from heaven to water the earth and produce nourishment (v. 10), which is actually God’s word given to accomplish God’s purpose (v. 11). Pastors and professors have the high privilege of devoting themselves professionally (and personally) to reaching for the heavens to know and understand God better.

However, there is an important reminder and warning here: as those who deal with Scripture professionally, we have a formidable task, and we should undertake it with considerable and constant humility. A common pitfall of such privileged people is pride in what one knows (1 Cor 8:1). If God’s mind and manners

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are so much beyond ours, the implication should be an appropriately healthy humility in the study of the Bible and theology.

W. Edward Glenny is an outstanding model of just this. Ed's scholarly abilities are obvious to anyone who can read a resume. With two earned doctorates and a distinguished long list of publications, there is no doubt that he deserves a reputation as a world-class scholar. Not only this, Ed is also a pastor at heart. He is regularly speaking in churches and has provided interim pastoral ministry to many churches. Ed, thanks for your many years of faithful work in Scripture and the awesome contributions you have made to the academic realm, many local churches, and to the Church in general.

But Ed is to be congratulated not only for what he has done in his ministry of the Word, but also for how he has done it, specifically with much humility. This is not something that can be put in a resume (I guess if it could—"I am a person of great humility"—it would be self-contradictory!), but is obvious in the personal realm.

I am thankful to call Ed, not only a colleague, but also a friend. And I have always been impressed with Ed's genuine modesty regarding his world-class professional accomplishments and his refreshing unpretentiousness around others. My wife, Marilyn, and I have had the great privilege of spending many "Taco Tuesdays" with Ed and his wife, Jackie. We have learned with great delight and laughter the hazards of sticking a knife in the jelly jar in Scotland, the adventure of spending a night in a compartment with a hole in the floor on the Orient Express, how to creatively make change for a ten-dollar bill, and so much more! But we have also seen Ed's simple love for the Lord and longing to honor Him in all he does. Ed, thanks for your friendship and for being a reliable model of modesty in the pursuit of Majesty.

So, Ed, congratulations on your 70th birthday and on your many years of humble scholarship for the glory of God and the good of his people. As you will also (and much more importantly!) hear one day from our Lord, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

Daryl Aaron

Emeritus Professor of Biblical Studies
University of Northwestern–St. Paul
St. Paul, Minnesota

It is most appropriate to honor Ed Glenny, whose work in the Old Testament, Septuagint, 1 Peter, and hermeneutics has benefitted so many of us. However, it is the Christian character of Ed that stands out the most. Kind and thoughtful, his scholarship comes with a personality and gentle fairness that shows the soul and spirit that makes of an exemplary Christian leader. So I join in heartfelt congratulations for a career that has sought to honor God with scholarship and character that is a model for us all.

Darrell Bock

Executive Director of Cultural Engagement &
Senior Research Professor of New Testament Studies
Dallas Theological Seminary
Dallas, Texas

My earliest significant acquaintance with Ed Glenny’s scholarship came in 1992 when I read his essay, “The Israelite Imagery in 1 Peter 2” in *Dispensationalism, Israel, and the Church* (Zon-

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dervan Publishing House). His essay was one of many in an anthology that signaled a welcomed paradigmatic shift that was taking place among biblical scholars in the tradition self-identified as Dispensationalism. Later that same year I accepted a faculty appointment at Northwestern College in suburban St. Paul, Minnesota, where I learned that Ed's wife, Jackie, was an adjunct professor. She joined the faculty the following year.

Though I first met Ed Glenney at both national and regional annual meetings of the Evangelical Theological Society and the Society of Biblical Literature, I came to know him much better at various annual events at Northwestern College which provided occasions for professors and their spouses to socialize. At that time the Biblical & Theological Studies Department at Northwestern was dominated by senior professors who year by year were retiring. Because some members of the department had become well acquainted with Ed Glenney, some of us began to consider him as a potential faculty colleague. In 1999, we were delighted to have him join the B&TS faculty. He was a wonderful addition because of his skills in both the Hebrew of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New. He was already broadening his scholarship by working toward a second doctoral degree, a PhD in Classics at the University of Minnesota, which he completed in 2007.

Once Ed became my colleague our friendship deepened significantly. We have worked together professionally on a variety of committees, developing courses, strengthening our Ancient Classical Languages program, and engaging in many conversations about mutual interests in each other's offices. Twice, when I was in dire straits, I appealed to Ed to bring clarity and harmony to a painful situation. He provided strong advocacy for me, and his voice prevailed on my behalf to bring about peace. As much as I admire Ed's achievements in scholarship, what I

appreciate even more is how seriously he submits to the Scriptures' authority. Yes, he is an academic of the highest order, but more than this Ed is a Christian who cherishes the Bible as God's Word and who teaches the Scriptures to students with a view to their transformation. He is a minister of the gospel who cares deeply about God's people whether they are students who sit in his university classes or members of a local church who are seated in pews to hear God's Word proclaimed.

My friendship with Ed is not confined to our contacts while on the campus of the University of Northwestern. My wife and I have been adopted into a group of several of Ed and Jackie's friends from their days in college and at Central Seminary. It is over meals together, playing table games, watching college bowl games, and in conversations that I have come to know Ed even more than teaching on the same campus and in the same academic department affords.

Early on I came to realize that Ed shares my passion to approach the Scriptures as God's Word and to teach the Bible as God's saving message in the classroom and in the church. Because of this, in 2004, when I was asked to make a return trip to South India to minister to pastors, I was also asked if one of my colleagues would be willing to join us, I invited Ed who agreed to travel with us. For three weeks we traveled together, roomed together, and taught the Scriptures to pastors who had no opportunity and funds to attend either a Bible college or a seminary. Whether we gathered with Indian Christians in a mud hut, in a factory meeting room, or in a traditional church structure Ed was prepared to speak impromptu. Thus, one passage of Scripture tends to accompany my thoughts concerning Ed. It is the apostle Paul's admonition to Timothy, "Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; cor-

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rect, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction” (2 Timothy 4:2).

Thank you, Ed, for being my friend, for being my advocate in times of great need, for your extraordinary scholarship that will be a wonderful legacy for generations to come, and for your patient and enduring service to our Lord Jesus Christ to multiple generations of students. It is my delight to call you my colleague, my friend, my co-laborer in teaching and proclaiming God’s good news as it is in Jesus. Happy Birthday, septuagenarian!

A Sonnet to A Septuagenarian W. Edward Glenney on his 70th Birthday

Better is the chamber of the mournful
Say the Scriptures than the dwelling of mirth,
Where friends gather to celebrate another’s birth,
A man of seventy years, and joyful
That God has given life so plentiful
To a friend or father or spouse whose worth
Is not in years but in what God brought forth.

We laud your life of three score and ten years
Spent for others to gain no wealth or fame,
Yet richly lavished with Heaven’s kind love.
Blessed by God, we honor you with glad cheers
That strength may match your days, uphold your frame,
If God is pleased to grant all from above.

Ardel B. Caneday

Professor of New Testament & Greek
University of Northwestern—St. Paul
St. Paul, Minnesota

Dear Ed: it is a real joy for me to send this word of greeting and congratulation at a moment of grateful celebration. It's a moment to gather up all the good and happy memories that I have of our meetings and exchanges over the years. I still savour those first encounters in Cambridge in 2005 when we sat, for something like four hours, over a glass of juice in the Graduate Centre, looking out over the river, and putting our heads together over knotty problems in the Septuagint of Amos, a text on which we were both working at the time. I was happy to be able to share with you some of the fruits of my previous study, at the same time picking up new insights from you. Since then, I have followed with admiration the way in which your work with the Septuagint has developed and I rejoice at the growing number of publications, especially your commentaries on the Minor Prophets, which are making a real contribution to this important area of biblical studies. Occasional meetings at international conferences, or whenever you've been able to spend some time back in Cambridge, have enabled a precious friendship to go on growing, enhanced often by the presence of your wife, Jackie. I look forward to further such moments and meanwhile send you my warmest wishes and blessings for many more years of fruitful and faithful service.

Jenny Dines
University of Cambridge
Cambridge, England

It is with great pleasure that I offer congratulations to Dr. Glenny on the occasion of his 70th birthday and of the presentation of this *Festschrift*. Ed has made and continues to make significant contributions to the field of biblical studies. I am especially

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grateful for his work in Septuagint studies and for his passion to further our knowledge of and appreciation for the Septuagint. It has been a delight for me to work alongside Ed in the furtherance of these goals.

Over the years, I have benefited greatly from Ed, both in my work and personally. While researching and writing my PhD on the Old Greek translation of the Minor Prophets, I found Ed's work in the area to be clear, thoughtful, and helpful. During that time, I also had the opportunity to meet and befriend Ed. He was always happy to give of his time and dialogue about my research—something for which I continue to be grateful. Over the years, Ed has continued to be a dear brother, and I am thankful for his friendship.

Most significantly, Ed has shown himself, in word and deed, to be a man devoted to Jesus and to his family. He cares for the Church, and he is a man of virtue and high moral character. I have learned not only from his academic work but also from how he conducts himself and interacts with others.

Here's to you! Happy Birthday, Ed, and congratulations!

Christopher J. Fresch

Lecturer in Biblical Languages & Old Testament

Bible College of South Australia

Adelaide, Australia

So you, a Septuagintalist, are entering on 'septuagenarianism'! My warm congrats on achieving this symmetry; and if too many of your friends and colleagues have quipped along similar lines, I'd better start all over again. But first, since I've read the fast-forwarding 'Love story of two Northwestern professors', I had better get in sharp with my best wishes to Jackie as well.

Our meetings have been few and well spaced out, but precious, and we have found not only a shared interest in, and love of, the Septuagint, but also, and more significantly still, a shared commitment to the One to whom the Scriptures point, whether they are in Hebrew or Greek (or English). Since I am working these days on a heavy-duty commentary on Amos (in the ICC series), and the ancient versions are a part of my suit, there are many days when you are my companion for part of the way at least, as I turn to your volume in the Brill ‘Septuagint Commentary Series’, and to your monograph *Finding Meaning in the Text* (2009), for insight and help. The past decade or so has been a wonderfully productive period for you, with the volumes on Hosea and Micah also under your belt. These are a tremendous help—and I have the Micah volume in front of me as I write—in the understanding of the earliest Jewish translation of the Old Testament and the Bible of the early church, and my wish and prayer are that your hope, expressed in the preface to the Micah volume, will be fulfilled, and that you will be spared many days to put us further in your debt—and also to revisit Cambridge, which is not without its historic Septuagintal connections.

Hearty Congratulations!

Robert Gordon

Retired Regius Professor of Hebrew
University of Cambridge
Cambridge, England

It has been a privilege for me to work with Dr. Glennly in the Biblical and Theological Studies Department at the University of Northwestern for the past 20 years. When we both began

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teaching at the University in the fall of 1999, Dr. Glennly was already a seasoned professor and scholar while I was just beginning my first full-time appointment. As Dr. Glennly's junior colleague throughout the years, I have had ample opportunity to observe him in action in a number of different settings. Of all the important lessons I have learned from him based on this observation, two that are especially relevant to life in the Christian academy stand out in my thinking. The first has to do with the spirit that should characterize the work of the faithful Christian scholar. While Dr. Glennly's academic interests and areas of competence are wide ranging and his appetite for theological discussion at times seems insatiable, what distinguishes him as a Christian scholar—and what makes him most worthy of emulation—is his humility, which is palpable. In my estimation, Dr. Glennly is a scholar that academics like me should emulate not just because his academic accomplishments are considerable, but primarily because his scholarship is grounded in an eagerness to submit to the authority of Scripture, and it is motivated by a concern for the glory not of his own name, but of the name of the Lord of heaven and earth.

The second lesson I have learned from Dr. Glennly—one that I struggle to faithfully appropriate in my own life—is related to the deportment that should characterize a Christian scholar when working in an academic context, especially in an important department of a Christian university. Throughout the 20 years that I have known and interacted with Dr. Glennly, he has made obvious efforts to treat his colleagues the way he would like his colleagues to treat him. Not only has he demonstrated a sincere interest in their work and been solicitous of their opinions, but he has also interacted with them in a consistently gracious, even deferential fashion, especially when difficult or contentious matters were being discussed or when tensions that had erupted

were being addressed. Without fail, Dr. Glenny has honored his colleagues by being quick to listen and slow to speak or pass judgment, and to the best of my knowledge, he has never spoken disparagingly about any member of the department, or about any other person for that matter, whether theological friend or foe. All in all, Dr. Glenny has proven himself to be not just a Christian gentleman of the first order, but a friend who treats his colleagues with honor and dignity, and this, I would suggest, is one of the primary reasons we all appreciate and respect him so much.

Paul Kjoss Helseth

Professor of Christian Thought

University of Northwestern–St. Paul

St. Paul, Minnesota

It was 1994 when I first became a full-time biblical studies professor at the University of Northwestern–St. Paul, a beloved institution where Dr. Jackie Glenny had started as a professor of communication studies just one year before me. Institutional service brought me to work on a committee with Jackie where I learned that her husband, Dr. W. Edward Glenny, was a biblical scholar who was then serving at nearby Central Seminary. I got to know Ed further through colleague connections and at conferences, and eventually we were able to attract Ed to a full-time teaching position on Northwestern's faculty in 1999. Then as colleagues at the same institution, I greatly benefited to be in more regular contact with Ed and to share in the ministry of God's Word with him.

In the professoriate, the universal triumvirate by which all faculty in all disciplines are measured is "scholarship, teaching,

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and service.” Some institutions may well emphasize one of these measures more than others; and most faculty will confess that they frequently drop at least one of these three more often than they would prefer. But anyone who knows Ed Glenny knows that he is an excellent juggler of these three aspects of professorial life.

For Ed as a biblical and theological scholar, I suspect that what tightens his grip on each of these three professorial roles is his love for Scripture as the Word of God. Because he loves the Bible as God’s Word for humanity, Ed has been a life-long learner in his scholarly pursuit to understand Scripture. His six educational degrees, including two doctorates, and his steady stream of scholarly presentations and publications say something about his ongoing interest in scholarship. Because he knows the Bible as God’s Word remains applicable to life today, Ed is a beloved teacher of students. As one recent student remarked, “Dr. Glenny makes complicated concepts understandable. He works with students to make sure no one gets far behind or lost. He will take extra steps to help struggling students. He is very funny and personable.” And beyond the regular service to his institution (like advising students, work on committees, etc.), because he recognizes the Bible as God’s Word for the church, Ed remains in service to various local church ministries as well. That’s right: in addition to teaching in the classroom, on weekends he can often be found preaching in local pulpits. Studying for himself and teaching for students is not sufficient for Ed; he must be preaching the Word of God to God’s people in the church.

Ed’s balance of professorial effectiveness is truly admirable: world-renowned scholarship (particularly in Septuagint and New Testament studies), praise-worthy teaching (for decades now, including 20 years at Northwestern!), and persistent service

to his institution and to the local church (whew!). And anyone who knows Ed Glenney can't speak about him for long without mentioning words like "humble," "friendly," "inviting," and "encouraging." That is the Ed I have known for almost 25 years, a man respected, admired, and loved by many.

Thanks, Ed, for your friendship, mentorship, and modeling, and for your tireless and multifarious service to our Lord Jesus Christ. Perhaps as you enter your 71st year, you can pray with the writer of the 71st Psalm (here are vv. 14–18 ESV):

But I will hope continually
and will praise you yet more and more.
My mouth will tell of your righteous acts,
of your deeds of salvation all the day,
for their number is past my knowledge.
With the mighty deeds of the Lord GOD I will come;
I will remind them of your righteousness, yours alone.
O God, from my youth you have taught me,
and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds.
So even to old age and gray hairs,
O God, do not forsake me,
until I proclaim your might to another generation,
your power to all those to come.

With admiration, love, and respect,

Douglas S. Huffman

Professor and Associate Dean of Biblical and Theological Studies
Talbot School of Theology at Biola University
La Mirada, California

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I wish to join numerous others in congratulating Ed for achieving the age of seventy—not just because of the accumulated years but because it represents his extensive Christian commitment to teaching and scholarship at Northwestern. I first met Ed while he was a doctoral student at the University of Minnesota, noting at the time his interests in the Septuagint, and wanted to commend him (as well as commiserate) for tackling a second doctorate mid career. However, the time that I remember most with Ed, along with his wife, Jackie, was in a week-long trip that a number of us took to Turkey. Ed and I had an exciting time hunting out and lingering over numerous Greek inscriptions at the various cities that we visited. There were numerous incidental inscriptions on columns strewn around the various sites, but also the incredible nearly intact inscriptions lining the various walls of a city like Aphrodisias. Ed and I would try to read as many as quickly as we could, while the guide tried to hurry us along with the others to see another ruined temple. We clearly were in the minority of those wishing to ponder the inscriptions. The trip provided a great opportunity for my wife and me to get to know Ed and Jackie as discussion of inscriptions turned to other common interests we had in biblical studies, C. S. Lewis, and related topics. Thus, when the opportunity arose while editing the Brill Septuagint Commentary Series, I was overjoyed when Ed enthusiastically proposed to write a number of the volumes on the minor prophets. Ed's scholarship is always careful and well-considered, and has provided a model for other contributors of how to write commentaries on relatively short books within the Greek Old Testament canon. When my niece decided to attend Northwestern, I made sure to tell her to look up Ed and Jackie when she was there. Knowing they were there, I was confident she would receive a great education at North-

western—and she did. I wish Ed many more healthy and productive years at Northwestern, and I am thankful for his friendship over the years.

Stanley E. Porter

President and Dean

Professor of New Testament

Roy A. Hope Chair in Christian Worldview

McMaster Divinity College

Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

I will never forget the day in 2015 that I saw Ed from a distance, walking towards me across Jesus Green in Cambridge, England. We were throwing my son's second birthday party in a park. Ed was not only kind enough to take the time to walk across town and join us at such an event by himself (Jackie was traveling), but also to bring presents. The name W. Edward Glenny had been familiar to me for years by then through his work in Septuagint studies, which played no small part in drawing my own interest to that discipline. We had even spoken personally at a conference or two. But it wasn't until I was working on a doctoral dissertation in Septuagint studies at the University of Cambridge that my wife and I had the good fortune of getting to know both Ed and Jackie during their joint sabbaticals there. Ever since then I have come to recognize that Ed embodies that rare combination of ardent scholarship, honest humility, and genuine concern for others. His careful thinking, pursuit of academic rigor, and generous spirit of collaboration have been and will continue to be a model towards which I aspire in my own vocation. Thank you, Ed, for your example, your encour-

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agement, and your friendship. And a very happy birthday to you from the Ross family.

William A. Ross

Assistant Professor of Old Testament
Reformed Theological Seminary
Charlotte, North Carolina

Please accept my sincere congratulations on reaching this milestone birthday and on your career of faithful and fruitful service to God, the church, the academy, and to the institutions where you have taught as well as to the hundreds and hundreds of students to whom you have ministered.

Thank you, too, for demonstrating the character of Christ to those you touch, including us, your fellow teachers. It is an honor to work alongside you and a pleasure to interact with you. Your character confirms the validity of what you believe and say.

Boyd Seevers

Professor of Old Testament Studies
University of Northwestern—St. Paul
St. Paul, Minnesota

It is such a pleasure to congratulate W. Edward Glenny on his 70th birthday. As adviser of Ed's *second* doctoral dissertation, I know as well as anyone what a careful, independent, and impactful scholar he is. His insights on Septuagintal translation have contributed more to Biblical Studies than his characteristic modesty might ever suggest. I also know Ed to be a devoted

husband and father, a dedicated churchman, and an effective teacher. I am honored to join others in greeting Ed on his sterling career.

Melissa Harl Sellew

University of Minnesota

When we are inspired by excellence, it touches our hearts, lifts our souls, and allows us to feel the joy found in God's creative perfection. A spark is lit within us to use our own giftedness and to know God more deeply through the process. Dr. Ed Glenny has been one of the individuals in our academic community at the University of Northwestern–St. Paul who has inspired us through his scholarly pursuit of learning.

Ed's scholarship, teaching, and service as a faculty member are closely integrated and deeply grounded in his love for God. His high regard for Scripture and his desire to explore its depths are evidenced through his prolific publications on both Old and New Testament topics. Similarly, his desire to nurture a passion for Scripture in others is clearly seen in his roles of teacher and mentor. Investing in future generations is a hallmark of Ed's legacy in his work as a faculty member and in his ministry to a variety of church communities. One return on that investment is seen in the many students represented in this publication who have been influenced by his scholarly work.

A life of scholarship is demanding of scholars and their families as it requires sacrifice and focus. This is especially true when both spouses are engaged in scholarly work in different fields. Therefore, this tribute would not be complete without expressing our deep appreciation to our faculty colleague, Dr. Jackie Glenny, for her support and encouragement of Ed as he engaged

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in research and writing. We know that the commitment to mutual support has been a driving force in Ed and Jackie's academic pursuits.

Ed, it is with joy that we celebrate your ongoing scholarly work. Your contributions in scholarship, teaching, and service have inspired this learning community in ways you may not even recognize. Our understanding of Scripture has been deepened, our own scholarly endeavors encouraged, and our students launched to new heights of accomplished study. Your humble servant attitude will tend toward counting others "more worthy" of the recognition, but we know with certainty that our Lord has brought you into this community and blessed the work of your heart, mind, and soul in ways that have touched us deeply. Thank you for continuing to live out the command to "love the Lord your God with all of your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Matthew 22:37 NIV).

May our Lord be glorified through the publication of this *Festschrift*, which honors a servant's work well done and a community inspired to greater service.

Dr. Janet Sommers

Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs
University of Northwestern–St. Paul

Dr. Susan Johnson

Dean, College of Professional Studies
University of Northwestern–St. Paul

It is a joy to contribute to this volume of essays in honor of Dr. Ed Glenny. It was a privilege to serve as Dr. Glenny's research assistant in 2009, when he was preparing the manuscript for his

monograph, *Finding Meaning in the Text: Translation Technique and Theology in the Septuagint of Amos*. Dr. Glenney has been an encouragement and scholarly mentor figure to me on a number of occasions over the past ten years. He attended my first academic paper presentation at the regional SBL meeting in 2010, graciously fielded Septuagint questions during my PhD studies, and offered me publishing advice on several occasions. We also shared time together at the Tyndale House in Cambridge in 2013. Thank you, Dr. Glenney, for your friendship and your example of faithful biblical scholarship.

Brian J. Tabb

Managing Editor of *Themelios*
 Academic Dean & Associate Professor of Biblical Studies
 Bethlehem College & Seminary
 Minneapolis, Minnesota

Ed Glenney's vigilant, detailed scholarship is a thing of beauty. His commentaries on the Septuagint as found in Codex Vaticanus are truly innovative. But his work in the Petrine Epistles and the use of the Old Testament in the New has impacted me the most. Further, it has been my privilege of laboring with him on a doctoral dissertation committee. This has allowed me to see Ed's scholarship in a way that few ever get to behold. I simply cannot begin to express my deep appreciation for his insights, his humility, his reverence in handling the Sacred Text, and his nurturing of a future scholar. Having witnessed these things firsthand, I have gotten a glimpse of the kind of mentor he must be.

Festschriften are written by colleagues and notable scholars. This one is no exception, but it has an additional feature that undergirds the whole thing: it is written *entirely* by the honoree's

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former students. This bears witness to the man's faithfulness to his calling as a professor of the *Bible*. I can think of no higher praise than this: Ed Glenny is the embodiment of 2 Timothy 2:2. The legacy he leaves behind in print will someday fade, but his legacy in the lives of his students will bear fruit for many generations. Thank you, Ed, for being a model mentor, and for running the race well.

Daniel B. Wallace

Senior Research Professor

New Testament Studies

Dallas Theological Seminary

The Life and Career of W. Edward Glenny

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William Edward Glenny was born April 28, 1949, the first of three children to William and Geraldine Glenny. His parents reared him and his younger siblings, Richard and Margaret, on their rural farm near Winnebago, Illinois, west of Rockford. His middle name, Edward, came to distinguish him from his father. From childhood he and his siblings regularly attended church at First Baptist Church of Rockford.

Ed attended and graduated from Pecatonica High School where he excelled in football. Pecatonica lies west of Winnebago, with a population of about 1,500 when Ed was born and increased to about 1,700 by 1967 when he left home for college at the University of Washington where he had received a full scholarship to play football. During his first year he became too ill to play. He completed the academic year and returned the next fall, but once again he became so ill that he returned home to Illinois to recuperate. While Ed lay in his sick-bed his teammates of the Washington Huskies traveled to play the Badgers of the University of Wisconsin. He was too ill to make the trip to watch the game, so his parents made the journey to attend the game in Madison, Wisconsin, without him.

Ed completed his second year at the University of Washington. After seeking medical advice concerning his physical condition, the physician assured Ed that there was no physical ailment troubling him but that he was fighting a battle in his mind. Ed knew that the battle he was engaging was a fight against

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the Lord's call upon him. He made the decision to discontinue attending and playing football for the University of Washington. Difficult as the decision was, he knew that it was the proper choice.

Ed enrolled and transferred to a much smaller institution, Pillsbury Baptist Bible College in the small town of Owatonna, Minnesota. There, he began biblical studies and Koine Greek, which marked a considerable change in the direction of his life. With his health restored, he played football for the Pillsbury Comets until he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1972. It was at Pillsbury that Ed also met his future wife, Jackie Anderson from Westbrook, Minnesota, a small town north of Worthington. They dated on and off for two or three years until Ed graduated. This relationship took a prolonged hiatus, however, while Ed attended Central Baptist Theological Seminary in Minneapolis. As a young seminarian Ed added service as a youth pastor (1973–1975) to his short-term missionary experience in France. In the meantime, Jackie graduated and became a high school teacher in Minneapolis.

During his senior year of his studies toward the Master of Divinity degree, Ed renewed contact with Jackie. He did not know how to contact her but knew where she was teaching in Minneapolis, so he arrived early one Tuesday morning at her classroom door to meet her when she arrived to teach. That evening they went on a date and then again on Thursday evening of the same week. It was on that date that Ed said, "I suppose you're wondering why I've asked you out." Jackie was prepared to say, "Let's date or go our separate ways," when Ed reached into his pocket to retrieve a diamond ring as he proposed marriage. They were married within a few weeks in 1975.

Upon receiving the MDiv, Ed began to teach at his alma mater, Pillsbury College. While teaching Bible, Greek, and

Christian Education courses, he also studied at Central Seminary toward the Master of Theology degree besides serving as an assistant coach of the college's football team. In April 1979, Britany was born to Ed and Jackie. Two years later, in July 1981, the young professor and his wife welcomed Courtney. When Ed completed the ThM in 1982, the young family moved to Dallas, Texas, where Ed began studying toward the Doctor of Theology (ThD) degree at Dallas Theological Seminary. He focused his research on how the New Testament uses the Old with Darrell Bock as his advisor. His dissertation—"The Hermeneutics of the Use of the Old Testament in 1 Peter"—set Ed on a path of study that has often returned to feature 1 Peter in his academic presentations, publications, and sermons.

Ed completed the ThD in 1987 while teaching at Central Seminary after accepting a faculty appointment in 1984. There he served as Associate Professor of New Testament and Bible Exposition until 1988 when he received a promotion to Professor of New Testament. During his tenure at Central Seminary, Ed also taught courses at the campus extension in Arad, Romania. He also served as interim pastor at Parker's Lake Baptist Church (1986–1987), Rockford Baptist Church (1987), First Baptist Church of River Falls, Wisconsin (1991–1992), and as interim preacher at Chisago Lakes Baptist Church (1997–1998) and at Twin Cities Chinese Christian Church (1998–1999).

Among those within the biblical scholarship guilds—Evangelical Theological Society (ETS), Institute for Biblical Research (IBR), and Society of Biblical Literature (SBL)—two scholars made others aware of Central Baptist Theological Seminary, Ed Glenny and his Old Testament colleague and friend, Michael Grisanti, who now serves on the faculty of The Master's Theological Seminary in California. Since receiving his faculty appointment at Central Seminary in 1984, Ed has regularly

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attended and presented at the annual national meetings of the ETS and frequently at the annual regional meetings of the same. He also makes frequent academic presentations at both the national and Upper Midwest regional meetings of the SBL. More recently Ed has become an active presenter and panelist at the meetings of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies.

Partly because of Jackie Glenny's teaching presence at Northwestern College since 1993, but also because of our knowledge of Ed through his publications and presentations, we members of the Biblical & Theological Studies Department at Northwestern were delighted to invite him to travel with us to attend the annual meetings of the ETS in Jackson, Mississippi, and then travel on to New Orleans to attend the meetings of the IBR and SBL in late November 1996. Besides being a memorable trip in its own right, traveling together provided an occasion to become more familiar with Ed because some of us had an eye on him with a view to inviting him to join the faculty of the B&TS Department at Northwestern.

That year winter arrived early and with a vengeance. Our Northwest Airlines jet scheduled to fly to Memphis, Tennessee, where Ed and his Northwestern friends would catch a connecting flight to Jackson, Mississippi, waited in line on the tarmac for deicing at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport for more than three hours. Of course, we patient flyers found ourselves stranded in the Memphis airport past midnight after missing the flight to Jackson. All agreed to continue traveling. So, we intrepid voyagers rented a van to drive to Jackson where we arrived at 5:00 a.m., in time for the beginning of the conference but hardly prepared to listen to academic presentations capable of inducing sleep for even caffeine-laden folks.

Once the ETS conference ended the survivors of the harrowing first leg of our travels set out for New Orleans, which should have been a three-hour drive. As David K. Johnson, Chair of the B&TS Department, drove the van, without warning it began to lurch with the engine sputtering. Suddenly, the vehicle stalled. There we sat, stranded on the narrow shoulder of a heavily traveled interstate highway in the middle of bayou country, sandwiched between vehicles racing by within inches on the left and a concrete barrier on the right side, which some surmised was there to prevent alligators from climbing out of the swamp and onto the roadway.

Much to the surprise of all, unexpectedly an angel who was piloting an empty charter bus heading to New Orleans stopped to assist. His urgent expressions concerning how dangerous the situation was and his eagerness to transport the stalled travelers directly to the door of our hotel in New Orleans sufficed to convince all that he was heaven-sent. Rescued, everyone turned to humor, reflecting on our traveling woes. The adventure of November 1996 became remembered as the B&TS Department's version of the Steve Martin & John Candy movie, *Planes, Trains, and Automobiles*. Little did Ed Glenny realize that his understated, jovial, and calm response to the unwelcomed events did not go unnoticed. It was evident that a man of such character, given what was already known of him, should be vigorously pursued to join the faculty of the B&TS Department.

In July 1997, Ed's colleague and close friend, Michael Grisanti, left Central Seminary to begin teaching at The Master's Seminary in Sun Valley, California. His colleague's absence at the seminary and his wife's presence at Northwestern doubtless influenced Ed to pursue a faculty position and accept an appointment at Northwestern in 1999. Students welcomed Ed's presence in the classroom. His colleagues appreciated his reliable

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contribution to the strengthening of the curriculum for both the Biblical & Theological Studies Major as well as the General Bible curriculum, which serves the entire student body at Northwestern. With Ed's addition to the faculty, the B&TS Department developed the Ancient Classical Languages Minor, featuring yearly instruction in Koine Greek, biennial teaching of Ancient Hebrew and Latin, and the occasional teaching of Egyptian Hieroglyphics. Since his arrival at Northwestern, the Book of Revelation and Biblical Theology have been Ed's signature courses.

After joining the faculty at Northwestern, Ed became prolific with both professional presentations and publications even as he pursued a second doctoral degree, a PhD in Classics at the University of Minnesota, which he completed in 2007. Presentations at the annual meetings of the ETS and SBL elevated his profile and prompted various scholars with common interests to extend invitations to Ed to contribute essays to thematic anthologies, to *Festschriften*, and to commentary series. Given his continued exegetical work in 1 Peter since writing his dissertation, he accepted a contract to write a commentary on 1 Peter for the Evangelical Exegetical Commentary Series published by Lexham Press. This commentary has become a multi-year writing project given Ed's commitment to a multi-volume project of writing commentaries on the Minor Prophets in the Septuagint Commentary Series for the prestigious academic publisher, Brill, which is part of a major project edited by Stanley Porter, PhD, Principal of McMaster Divinity College, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. This commitment has opened fresh horizons for Ed, with invitations to make presentations at the meetings of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies (IOSCS). To date, Ed has published four books on the LXX-Minor Prophets: a monograph on translation technique in

Amos (2009), and commentaries on Amos (2013), Hosea (2013), and Micah (2015). These commentaries feature both the translation techniques and the theological interpretation of those who translated the prophets from Hebrew to Greek.

Blessed by being awarded the J. Edwin Hartill Endowed Professorship for two sequential terms (2011–2012 & 2013–2015), which reduced by half the number of courses he taught during those years with a sabbatical semester of study at Tyndale House, Cambridge (UK), sandwiched between, Ed was able to devote concentrated periods of research and writing that he has presented at recent triennial international meetings of the IOSCS. Such uncommon opportunity for a professor at a small Christian university was matched with uncommon productivity as Ed's industriousness brought to completion three commentaries for Brill during this period.

During the UNW honors and awards event on May 11, 2018, President Alan S. Cureton presented Ed Glenny with the Faculty Excellence in Scholarship Award for his outstanding scholarly achievements. Each year members of the faculty at Northwestern can nominate their colleagues for this award bestowed by the faculty. With the following words of commendation Randy W. Nelson, Chair of the B&TS Department, nominated Ed Glenny who has distinguished himself as a scholar both at Northwestern and in the biblical and theological guilds.

Few university professors are as consistent and prolific in their publications as Dr. Glenny. His commitment to scholarship can be seen in scholarly books and articles published in peer-review journals.... Dr. Glenny has a wide range of scholarly interests in the field of Biblical Studies, both Old Testament and New Testament. His early research was in the area of hermeneutics, especially typology. Since earning his second doc-

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torate in 2007, Dr. Glenny's greatest contributions have been on the study of the Septuagint (LXX), the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible.... Based upon his ambitious proposal for a rigorous writing plan, Dr. Glenny was awarded the J. Edwin Hartill Professor, 2011–2012. This award was the result of voting by B&TS faculty and the recommendation of an outside reviewer. Because he completed his writing projects and had many more in the works, Dr. Glenny was again awarded the J. Edwin Hartill Professor, 2013–2015.... Dr. Glenny is well respected by his colleagues in the Department of Biblical & Theological Studies and in other academic departments at Northwestern.... He was also awarded Visiting Scholar, Faculty of Divinity, Cambridge University (spring 2013).

Amidst his busy schedule of teaching courses at the University of Northwestern–St. Paul and his several publishing contracts that call for research and writing, Ed has always maintained a close connection with the ministry of the church. His love for the Scriptures as God's Word is evident in his teaching and writing but also in his regular preaching in local churches. Throughout his career Ed has served many churches in the greater metropolitan area of the Twin Cities as an interim pastor. Prior to Ed's becoming my faculty colleague at Northwestern and while Ed was serving as interim pastor at Chisago Lakes Baptist Church (Chisago City, Minnesota) my father, Herbert V. Caneday who was a member of the church, passed away January 30, 1998. At my urging, the family requested that Ed have a role in officiating in my father's funeral service which he did admirably. Throughout the past twenty years Ed has served no fewer than nine churches as interim pastor, including Chisago Lakes Baptist Church a second time in 2008–2009.

My own exposure to Ed's friendship, teaching, and preaching confirms why he is well received among students at Northwestern. On my invitation, Ed joined me with two other ministers who taught and preached the Scriptures throughout South India for three weeks in July–August 2004. I had the privilege of hearing him teach God's Word to Indian pastors in retreat centers and to congregations in church buildings constructed from mud and thatching. His ministration of the Scriptures was heartily welcomed by all. At Northwestern, Ed's pastoral qualities are also evident in his initiation and leadership of the Bread of Life chapel sessions conducted in the beautiful Nazareth Chapel and hosted by the B&TS Department several times each semester. These alternative chapel sessions are available for students who desire deeper exposition of Scripture on featured themes.

To all who know him well, Ed Glenny is (1) a scholar who advances biblical knowledge and understanding first for himself and for all who read his writings or hear him lecture, (2) a churchman for whom all knowledge of the Scriptures is acquired in vain unless it is implemented in the transformation of character, and (3) a gentleman who is of the highest Christian character. Doug Huffman, former chair of the B&TS Department at the University of Northwestern–St. Paul and now Professor & Associate Dean of Biblical & Theological Studies at Biola University, aptly observes, "Ed's balance of professional effectiveness is truly admirable: world-renowned scholarship (particularly in Septuagint and New Testament studies), praise-worthy teaching (for decades now, including 20 years at Northwestern!), and persistent service to his institution and to the local church (whew!)." All who know Ed Glenny acknowledge him to be godly, humble, kind, gentle, approachable, friendly, and encouraging.

Some Reflections on the Old Greek of Psalm Four

John Screnock

At the start of my undergraduate education in the fall of 2002, I took Greek with Ed Glenn. The class had a vibrant and nurturing atmosphere, owing principally to Ed's teaching style—though the enthusiasm of my peers helped. He was particularly winsome and birthed in many of us a love for ancient languages and biblical studies. My path of study took me next to Ancient Hebrew, and soon after I naturally fell in love with the Septuagint (Old Greek or OG) as a place where Hebrew and Greek collide. During my graduate studies and now in my early career, Ed has been a significant source of encouragement and support. He has also been a wonderful interlocutor for my work on the OG, whether in print or in private conversation. I am lucky to be among Ed's students and friends, and I am honored to contribute to this volume in his honor.

My work on the OG focuses on its value for textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible (HB);¹ in the texts that I work with (e.g., Exodus and Psalms), my inclination is to look to the Hebrew *Vorlage* to explain phenomena in the OG. In contrast, Ed's work looks to the translator and his work to explain the OG phenomena. Though the difference may stem primarily from our respec-

tive corpora (Ed works on the Minor Prophets), Ed has pushed me to give greater weight to the translator. In the following reflections on some readings in OG Ps 4, I attempt to pay significant attention to both sides of the coin.² Old Greek Ps 4, like all texts in the OG, is wonderfully complex. In this piece of ancient translation, we find phenomena related to language (Hebrew and Greek), scribal copying (of the HB and OG), translation practice (from “literal” to “free”), and interpretation, all vying for our attention in a short space of text.

1. Psalm 4:7³

While the Greek of Ps 4:7 follows the Hebrew closely in most respects, there is an apparent discrepancy where the OG translates נָסָה with ἐσημειώθη (“it was given as a sign”). This is amplified because the word נָסָה is itself difficult in the Hebrew. The second stich of Ps 4:7 echoes the priestly blessing of Num 6:24–26:

נָסָה-עֲלֵינוּ אֹר פָּנֶיךָ יְהוָה

Lift up the light of your face upon us, LORD.

None of Ps 4 is extant in the Dead Sea Scrolls, leaving the Masoretic Text (MT)—given above—as the only Hebrew witness. The verb נָסָה is not entirely straightforward; the exact form is found nowhere else in the HB. Given the context, and the lack of alternative explanations, this is an imperative of the verb נָשָׂא (“to lift up”). While the imperative, as a I-נ verb, usually drops the initial radical נ and takes the form שָׂא, the form נָשָׂא is attested in Ps 10:12, and some I-נ verbs regularly take this form (e.g., נָטָה, “stretch”). The interchange of ס and ש is not infrequent, and even more so the interchange of ה and א, especially

with an *a*-vowel at the end of a word. Though it is improbable, it seems the improbable has occurred here: the strange form **סִפְּנִי** is used, **ס** is written for **פ**, and **פ** is written for **ס**. Though it is possible to speculate other interpretations of the data,⁴ this theory is most compelling and reasonable.

The fact that this spelling of the verb was in widespread use is reflected in the OG's translation, which appears to stumble over the verb:

ἐσημειώθη ἐφ' ἡμᾶς τὸ φῶς τοῦ προσώπου σου,
κύριε.

The light of your face was given as a sign upon us,
Lord.

The words of the Greek correspond closely to the Hebrew in all respects except the initial verb. Significantly, the verb **σημειώω** (“to give a sign”) is only ever used here in the OG. How did the OG arrive at an aorist passive third person verb (**ἐσημειώθη**) for the MT's imperative **סִפְּנִי**, and why was the verb **σημειώω** used?

1.1 The Old Greek Ps 4:7 as Translation

In this case, it seems likely that the translator's source text had **סִפְּנִי**, as in the MT. If this were the case, one can easily imagine the translator being unsure of what to do with the unique form. Based on his translation, he evidently did not understand it to derive from the roots **נָס** (“to flee”) or **נָסָה** (Piel “to test”).⁵ Instead, the translator connected the verb to the noun **נֵס** (“banner, standard, sign”).⁶ This was probably an intuitive connection—or even possibly an intentional strategy for dealing with a difficult word.⁷ If the former, the translator may have drawn—intuitively, not conscientiously—on the relationship of some *qill* pattern nouns to their corresponding verbal roots: as **קָלָה**

(“grace”) is the result of the action חנן (“to be gracious”),⁸ so too the noun נִס (as “sign”) may have been (seen as) a denominative noun from an unattested root נסס, meaning “to signal” or “to give a sign.”⁹

The connection to נִס (“sign”) seems likely. But why did the translator render the consonants נסה as a passive verb? The reasons are not entirely clear. If the verb were active in Hebrew and the noun phrase יְהוָה (“LORD”) were the subject, it would be difficult to view אור פְּנֵיךָ (“light of your face”) as the object of a verb meaning “to signal.”¹⁰ Yet, the OG’s understanding of אור פְּנֵיךָ as the subject of a passive verb implies that with an active verb אור פְּנֵיךָ could have been the object—the subject of a passive verb is the object of the corresponding passive.¹¹ The OG, then, must have understood our hypothetical verb נסס to mean “to *make something into* a signal.” Perhaps the OG began by understanding יְהוָה to be a vocative (κύριε) and needed אור פְּנֵיךָ to be the subject (τὸ φῶς); or perhaps the OG translated word-by-word, without an eye to the end of the verse, and did not consider the possibility that יְהוָה could be the subject. Either way, with אור פְּנֵיךָ as the subject, the verb was consequently understood as passive. The interpretation of אור פְּנֵיךָ (“light of your face”) as the subject of the verb rules out the possibility of taking the Hebrew verb as an imperative; instead, it is understood as *qatal* and past tense (thus the Greek aorist is used).

All these contextual considerations beg the question: how could the OG take the consonants נסה to be a passive *qatal* verb from the root נסס? The initial נ of a Nifal geminate verb would not assimilate in the *qatal* form;¹² such a form would be written ננס. Perhaps the translator did not know this, or perhaps he “fudged” because the text was difficult. Then again, it is possible that the translator, again *via* intuition, viewed the root as נסה, given that geminate verbs sometimes have III-ה by-

forms.¹³ The Nifal *qatal* form of this root would be נִסָּה (‘‘it was made a signal’’), consistent with the consonants of the MT’s text. The intuitive analysis of the unknown form נִסָּה, then, would have followed several concurrent steps—an association with the noun נֵס (‘‘banner, signal, sign’’), semantics following the relationship of some *qill* nouns to their corresponding roots, and finally the interchange of a geminate root (נִסַּס) with a III-ה by-form (נִסָּה).

All things considered, it is more likely that the OG did not make all of these grammatical associations—even intuitively—in trying to deal with what was a difficult text. Rather, not knowing what to make of the spelling in context, he did his best by choosing something that both works contextually but also shows some etymological fidelity to the source text. This required him to skirt around some aspects of the grammar, but he had little other choice.

One interesting implication of this example is that the translator here was reading the Hebrew source *himself*. Theo van der Louw has argued that the translation of some books of the OG came about by one person reading the Hebrew text aloud and *another* person translating based on what they hear.¹⁴ While the theory has merit in other cases, in this example the person who translated into Greek must have been the same person who read the Hebrew. Otherwise, the translator would have heard *nissā* (if Nifal *qatal*) or *nāsā* (if Qal imperative) and would have assumed the root נִשָּׂא—in this context, the root נִסָּה would be indistinguishable.

1.2 The Old Greek Ps 4:7 as Witness to the Hebrew

If one wanted to venture beyond the MT’s text in search of a *Vorlage* for OG’s σημειώω (‘‘to give a sign’’), one would need to look to related nouns for translation evidence—because σημειώω

occurs only here in the OG. Though the evidence is somewhat sparse, the noun σημεῖον (“sign”) is rigidly paired with אֹת (“sign”) in the Psalms—אֹת is translated only by σημεῖον, and σημεῖον is never used to translate any other word.¹⁵ One might, then, consider reconstructing a verb of the root אָוַה (“to sign, mark”). However, another related noun, σημείωσις (“indication, notice”), also provides important evidence. It occurs just once in Ps 60:6, where it translates the only occurrence of נִס (“banner, standard, sign”) in Psalms. Furthermore, the translation of נִס outside of Psalms is important, since OG Psalms sometimes looked to books in the OG Pentateuch for lexical equivalences. In OG Numbers, the three occurrences of נִס are all translated by σημεῖον.¹⁶ If one were to speculate about a retroversion for the verb σημειόω, then, the (scanty) evidence points to a verb related to נִס. If the MT’s text had something other than נִסָּה, I would decline to retrovert a *Vorlage* in this instance, because there is insufficient data. But as it is, our extant Hebrew evidence suggests that נִסָּה was in the OG’s *Vorlage*.

2. Psalm 4:3

Psalm 4:3 is significantly different between the Hebrew and the Greek. The Hebrew text is extant only in the MT:

בְּנֵי אִישׁ עַד־מָה כְּבוֹדִי לְכֹלֶמָּה תִּאְהָבוּן רִיק תִּבְקָשׁוּ
כִּזְב

Sons of man, how long [will] my glory [be] for
reproach? You love vanity, you seek a lie.

The first stich lacks a verb, though it is possible to read a covert copula (“to be”). The *lamed* preposition in לְכֹלֶמָּה seems best read as communicating *transformation*, whether “for reproach”

or “as reproach;” the point is that the “sons of man” turn the psalmist’s glory into reproach (perhaps only in their estimation, or they denigrate the psalmist’s reputation within the community broadly). Alternatively, *lamed* could be understood to communicate direction or goal here: the “sons of man” cause the psalmist’s glory to lead to or result in reproach. The second stich has overt verbs, but may potentially be gapping עַד־לְמָה from the first stich: “[How long] will you love vanity and [how long] will you seek a lie?”

The OG clearly derives from some version of the Hebrew as found in the MT.¹⁷ However, whereas OG Psalms usually corresponds to the MT quite closely, there is significant difference in the middle of the verse:

υἱοὶ ἀνθρώπων, ἕως πότε βαρυκάρδιοι; ἵνα τί
ἀγαπᾶτε ματαιότητα καὶ ζητεῖτε ψεῦδος;

Sons of man, how long [will you be] heavy-hearted?
Why do you love vanity and seek falsehood?

Instead of the psalmist’s glory and reproach, the OG refers to the psalmist’s opponents as heavy-hearted, and asks *why* (ἵνα τί) they behave as they do. Placing the OG alongside the MT, most aspects of the texts pair in a manner typical in the Psalms. The words that do not align are כְּבוֹדִי לְכָל־מָה (“my glory for reproach”) and βαρυκάρδιοι ἵνα τί (“heavy-hearted, why”).

2.1 The Old Greek Ps 4:3 as Translation

Septuagintalists and text critics, when confronted by the data in this verse, conclude that the OG read a Hebrew text at variance with the MT. Before exploring that possibility, however, how might the OG be explained as a translation of the MT? If כְּבוֹדִי לְכָל־מָה were in the OG’s *Vorlage*, it would not have been

difficult for the OG to translate it isomorphically: in the OG, כְּבוֹד (“glory”) is nearly always δόξα (“glory”), simple prepositions like *lamed* are represented by a preposition, and the noun כָּלָמָה (“reproach”) and related verb כָּלַם (Niph “to be humiliated,” Hiph “to humiliate”) are regularly translated by ἐντροπή (“humiliation”), ἐντρέπω (“to put to shame”), and καταισχύνω (“to dishonor”). Something like δόξα μου εἰς ἐντροπήν (“my glory for humiliation”) is what would be expected for כְּבוֹדִי לְכָל־מָה.

Based on translation evidence elsewhere, it is clear that the OG translator understood the individual Hebrew words in the phrase.¹⁸ Did they make sense, however, together in their context in Ps 4? The lack of a verb in the first stich could have made the text difficult to the translator. The initial noun phrase and interrogative are rendered in Greek with a noun phrase and interrogative; following these two phrases, the translator faced yet another noun phrase, without a verb to glue the elements together into a meaningful utterance. If this were the case, the translator could draw on at least two different strategies. First, he may have ignored the difficult Hebrew and filled in the blanks from context within the Greek target text.¹⁹ In other words, the translator may have taken the Hebrew he understood—“sons of man, how long ... you love vanity, you seek a lie”—and filled in the ellipses in Greek. In the preceding verse, the psalmist alludes to his “distress” and asks God to heed his prayer. Given the near context, then, the translator would naturally read the “sons of men” as adversaries, filling in the blank before their “loving vanity” with appropriately negative content. There is a strong tradition of negative figures in the HB having stubborn hearts (e.g., Pharaoh), and the theme appears also in the Psalms (95:8; 119:70). Calling the “sons of man” hard of heart, then, would be one way to smooth over the difficult section of this

verse. Notably, the word βαρυκάρδιος (“heavy-hearted”) occurs nowhere else in the OG,²⁰ perhaps suggesting that the translation is “free” or target-oriented at this point.

A second strategy, which could be used in tandem with the first strategy of contextual smoothing, is etymologizing.²¹ If the translator did not know how to plug the second noun phrase, כְּבוֹדִי (“my glory”), into the clause, he may have looked for other senses connected to the root כִּבֵּד. The verb is used to describe the dulling of the senses—the eyes or ears, for example—and, by extension, the dulling of the conscience—whether using language of ears or heart (Gen 48:10; Isa 6:10; 59:1; Zech 7:11). This is the verb that is used to describe the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart in Exodus. The translator may have looked to these connections to come up with a Greek translation of the difficult text.

If the translator were familiar with biblical poetry, particularly in the Psalms, it may have been natural for him to adjust the feel of the second stich from a declarative statement (“you love vanity”) to a rhetorical question that implies the same sentiment (“why do you love vanity?”). Similar rhetorical questions are used, for example, in Pss 2:1; 10:1; 43:2; 44:24–25; etc.

2.2 *The Old Greek Ps 4:3 as Witness to the Hebrew*

A more straightforward explanation of the OG is that it read the Hebrew כְּבוֹדִי לִבִּי לִמָּה (“hard of heart”)—at the end of the first stich, and “why” at the beginning of the second stich—instead of MT’s כְּבוֹדִי לְלִמָּה (“my glory for shame”).²² The two readings are extremely close from a text-critical perspective. Though spaces between words were used in manuscripts during the Second Temple period, these spaces were often inconsistent—thus the different divisions in these two readings. The use of *matres lectionis*, like ו in כְּבוֹדִי, were not consistent during this

period—thus כְּבוֹדִי could be written כבדי. Finally, the letters ב and כ were often mistaken for one another, thus the ב in OG's לְכַלְמָה versus the כ in MT's לְכַלְמָה.

This reconstruction of the OG's Hebrew *Vorlage* is not just a nifty solution to the discrepancy between the OG and the MT. Even if there were no Hebrew evidence extant for this verse, the translation data from the rest of OG Psalms would suggest this reconstruction. “Heart” (לֵב) is nearly always translated by καρδία, and where the root כבד does not have the sense of “glorify/ied, honor/ed,” it is translated with the root βαρυ* (Pss 32:4; 38:5). So while βαρυκαρδιος is a *hapax legomenon*, the Hebrew it most likely represents—following these translation patterns—is לֵב, כְּבוֹדִי, itself a *hapax legomenon*. For the last word of the phrase, לְמָה is nearly always translated by Greek ἵνα τί or διὰ τί. Based on translation evidence alone, then, כְּבוֹדִי לֵב לְמָה is the most likely Hebrew behind the Greek.

Did the translator—or the person reading the text aloud to the translator—misread the consonantal Hebrew text, committing scribal errors of graphic confusion and word mis-division?²³ Or, was he simply reading the Hebrew text as it was written in his source? This is often a difficult question to answer.²⁴ Pietersma points to the fact that “[OG] clearly knows the meaning of כלמה, which he regularly (six times) renders by ἐντροπή (‘embarrassment’/‘disgrace’),” to argue that the OG's *Vorlage* must not have had the MT's כלמה.²⁵ However, even though the OG would not have struggled with the word כלמה, this does not rule out that he misread the כ as a ב: when reading a text, the mind processes whole words, not individual letters.²⁶ The larger interpretation of the phrase and division of words, therefore, would have been a much greater factor than the identification of a single letter as כ or ב, with contextual pressures pushing him to read למה לב without scrutinizing the second letter.

Regardless, Pietersma is correct that the variant probably stems from a *Vorlage* that differs from the MT, and that the translator did not misread the Hebrew. This is because the Hebrew reading behind the OG here is likely an earlier reading than the MT.²⁷ The MT is a little strange, while the OG's reading fits contextually and poetically. MT's clause **בְּנֵי אִישׁ עַד־מָה כְּבוֹדִי לְכָל־מָה** ("sons of man, how long my glory into shame") lacks a contextually appropriate verb—whether explicit or elided. There is no verb in the preceding line that is gapped (as is common in Hebrew poetry), and context does not indicate to the reader what the verb ought to be (including a copula "is").²⁸ The following clause, **תֶּאֱהָבוּ רֵיק** ("you love vanity"), also seems to be missing an element. It is possible that **עַד־מָה** ("how long") is gapped from the earlier clause; however, together with the missing verb in the preceding clause it raises red flags.

The OG's *Vorlage*, on the other hand, reads well. The first stich is verbless but the predication is clear: **בְּנֵי אִישׁ עַד־מָה כְּבָדִּי לֵב** ("sons of man, how long [will you be] heavy-hearted?").²⁹ The following stich asks a parallel question whose semantics mirror the first (allowing the reader to dwell on and explore the thought³⁰): **לָמָה תֶּאֱהָבוּ רֵיק** ("why do you love vanity?").³¹ Some argue that the Hebrew behind the OG is not good biblical poetry, but these concerns are unfounded.³² Barthélemy, for example, objects to the parallelism of OG's *Vorlage*, seemingly on the grounds that parallel stichs should communicate synonymous ideas.³³ Granted, the MT's text presents a line-to-line semantic parallel between the psalmist's adversaries tarnishing his reputation in the first stich and telling lies about him in the second. However, it has long been recognized that such line-to-line semantic parallelism is not, as was once thought, at the core of poetic parallelism. Correspondence at all levels of language—morphology, consonance, prosody, syntax, vocabulary,

etc.—can be involved in parallelism between stichs and also at closer and further distances.³⁴ Moreover, the narrow tripartite typology of “synonymous,” “antithetic,” and “synthetic” line-to-line parallelism is neither adequate descriptively, nor accurate linguistically.³⁵ The parallelism of the OG’s *Vorlage* is, in fact, not at all out of keeping with what is found elsewhere in the Psalms. Barthélemy also argues that the pejorative designation “heavy-hearted” is not appropriate for those who are told to trust God in v. 6 (בְּטַחוּ אֶל־יְהוָה), “put your trust in the LORD”). This, however, assumes that the addressees of v. 6 are the same as those of v. 3, which is neither necessary nor probable—even in the MT, v. 3 is negative toward its addressees.

To be sure, sometimes in textual criticism the more difficult reading is earlier—but in this case, the difficult reading is uncharacteristic of Hebrew poetry. Moreover, the less difficult reading cannot be explained simply as an improvement of the difficulty—it is tightly woven into the fabric of the psalm. The most plausible explanation, then, is that the MT’s reading results from scribal error. If the OG’s Hebrew is earlier, it could not have arisen from the translator misreading; it must have been the OG’s Hebrew *Vorlage*.

3. Psalm 4:8

The OG understands the relationship between the two stichs of Ps 4:8 differently than modern interpreters. In Hebrew, the verse is best understood as employing enjambment—the clause beginning in the first stich is finished in the second:

נִתְּנָה שְׂמֵחָה בְּלִבִּי מֵעַתָּה דִּגְגָם וְתִירוֹשָׁם רַבּוּ

You have put joy in my heart, more than the season
during which their grain and wine abound.

The phrase מֵעַתָּה (“from the time”) and its relationship to the following words are crucial here. The noun עֵת (“time”) takes the same form whether it is bound or free. It could be taken as bound to the noun דִּגְגָּם (“their grain”), together meaning “time of their grain;” however, it makes better sense contextually to read עֵת as modified by an unmarked relative clause. Unmarked relatives are not uncommon, particularly in the Psalms; the noun עֵת could be bound to the entire relative clause—its boundness signaling a restrictive relative clause³⁶—or it could be free with the relative signaled purely by context. Either reading works well. In the prepositional phrase מֵעַתָּה, a null element is understood from context (“more than [the joy of] the season”). This, too, is not uncommon, and the reader understands that the comparison (signaled by מִן) is not between the psalmist’s joy and a time, but between his joy and the joy of “them” when their grain and wine abound.³⁷

Although the translator of OG Psalms usually spots unmarked relatives, especially when the head-noun is bound, here the OG reads the second stich as an independent clause without a relative:

ἔδωκας εὐφροσύνην εἰς τὴν καρδίαν μου· ἀπὸ
καιροῦ σίτου καὶ οἴνου καὶ ἐλαίου αὐτῶν
ἐπληθύνθησαν

You gave³⁸ gladness in my heart; they³⁹ multiplied
from the season of their grain and wine and oil.⁴⁰

Perhaps the OG translator overlooked the unmarked relative because it is the first to occur in the Psalms. By Ps 7, the OG recognizes these relative constructions and translates them as such.⁴¹ Instead, עֵת is understood as bound to דִּגְגָּם (“their grain”), the preposition מִן is taken as denoting source instead of comparison,

and the second stich is taken as a standalone clause with its main verb at the end.⁴²

Curiously, not a single OG manuscript in Greek has the word $\kappa\alpha\iota\pi\omicron\upsilon$ (“time”) as in the text of Rahlfs’s edition, given above.⁴³ Instead, all the Greek manuscripts have $\kappa\alpha\rho\pi\omicron\upsilon$ (“fruit”). Many early Old Latin witnesses and church fathers writing in Latin, however, have the word *tempore* here, reflecting $\kappa\alpha\iota\pi\omicron\upsilon$, rather than *fructu*, reflecting $\kappa\alpha\rho\pi\omicron\upsilon$. Because the Old Latin tradition was translated from the Greek and is not corrected to a Hebrew tradition—at least not early on—the best explanation for the Latin’s agreement with the MT is that it reflects the original OG translation better than the Greek manuscripts themselves.⁴⁴ This is why Rahlfs has corrected to $\kappa\alpha\iota\pi\omicron\upsilon$ (“time”). Moreover, there is a straightforward explanation for the diversity of the evidence: the words $\kappa\alpha\iota\pi\omicron\upsilon$ and $\kappa\alpha\rho\pi\omicron\upsilon$ are very similar, most of the letters being identical—especially in uncial script, where the two differing letters are mistakable, IP and ΠΠ.⁴⁵ The contextually motivated scribal error must have occurred very early in the transmission of the Greek, with the result that the original reading is preserved only in Latin.

Despite this excellent explanation of the OG and Latin evidence, there is no harm in exploring the possibility that the variation stems from variant Hebrew. Indeed, one possible explanation, however compelling, does not rule out the possibility of other explanations, and as a point of methodology a scholar cannot stop when they discover one plausible explanation. What if the Old Latin *was* corrected to a Hebrew manuscript (or, more likely, a recension of the OG like Aquila), resulting in the reading *tempore*, as an alternative to postulating inner-Greek scribal error? If the original OG were indeed $\kappa\alpha\rho\pi\omicron\upsilon$ (“fruit”) not $\kappa\alpha\iota\pi\omicron\upsilon$ (“time”), it would reflect Hebrew פְּרִי (“fruit”) or יְבוֹל (“produce”). It is not obvious how the variant Hebrew readings

עֵת and פָּרִי or יְבוֹל would arise; but if *taw* (ת) were written poorly, without much of a serif on its left stroke, it could be mistaken for *resh* plus *yod* (רִי), and if *ayin* (ע) were written poorly, with the left vertical stroke too far to the right, it could be mistaken for *peh* (פ). Although these graphic interchanges are not common, neither are they impossible, especially considering that graphic error is rarely merely about mistaking letters, but also the impact of context on the word or words that the reader's brain expects to see.⁴⁶ The following words “grain,” “wine,” and “oil,” are foodstuffs, which could have induced the translator or a scribe to view this word as another foodstuff. A shift from מַעַת (to מַעַר) to מַפְרִי is thus not completely unreasonable. This variant *Vorlage* might also explain why the OG, which notices unmarked relatives elsewhere, does not read one in Ps 4:8—with the noun פָּרִי instead of עֵת, an unmarked relative is improbable if not impossible⁴⁷—and takes מִן as indicating source rather than comparison.

The point of the preceding paragraph is to explore what is possible. To be clear, I do *not* think this is a plausible explanation. For one thing, the phrase פָּרִי דִגְנָם, “fruit of their grain,” makes little sense: the “grain” is already the fruit/produce, and as such a phrase like this is never found in the HB.⁴⁸ More importantly, the alternative explanation is much more convincing: the OG missed the unmarked relative but translated עֵת, with the text changing subsequently in the transmission of the Greek. From there, the straightforward mechanism of change (IP to PΠ in the context of reading) and external evidence (the earliest Old Latin testifies to *tempore*) are very compelling.

4. Conclusion

The OG is truly a fascinating collection of texts. At the cross-roads of Hebrew and Greek, it is complex linguistically. And its

complexity extends to the possible explanations for its phenomena. In the OG we encounter a variety of translation styles and techniques, scribal errors and scribal revisions, text-critical complexities in Hebrew and Greek manuscripts, and even the occasional exegetical move. And though generations of scholars have explored many of these possibilities, the OG's depths have not been plumbed; it holds many further treasures yet to be discovered.

Notes

1. John Screnock, *Traductor Scriptor: The Old Greek Translation of Exodus 1–14 as Scribal Activity*, VTSup 174 (Leiden: Brill, 2017); Screnock, “A New Approach to Using the Old Greek in Hebrew Bible Textual Criticism,” *Textus* 27 (2018): 229–257; Screnock, “The Use of the Septuagint in Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible,” in *Handbook to Septuagint Research*, eds. William A. Ross and W. Edward Glenny (London: Bloomsbury/T&T Clark, forthcoming).

2. To be fair to us both, the translator plays a significant role in my approach to the OG, and the OG's *Vorlage* is a significant factor for Ed. The difference lies in which aspect we think more likely to explain data; and for me, I restrict the role of the translator insofar as I see him constrained largely by isomorphic translation technique—I see the translator as more mechanical, while Ed sees him grasping for meaning and interpretation. Again, the difference largely stems from the way translation is different in our respective corpora. For a concise statement of my method, which I follow in my reconstruction of potential OG *Vorlagen*, see Screnock, “A New Approach,” 245–257.

3. In English Bibles, v. 6. Here and throughout the verse numbering found in the HB will be used; the English verse numbers are always one less.

4. Mitchell Dahood, for example, reads the verb as an archaic form of נָס (from the root נָסַח, “the light of your face *has fled* from us” (*Psalms I: 1–50*, AB [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965], 26); similarly, Hans-Joachim Kraus, reconstructing an earlier reading נָסַח, “to set out, journey” (*Psalmen: I. Teilband* [Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag des Erziehungsvereins, 1966]). Franz Delitzsch thinks the verbs נָסַח and נָסַח have been “mingl[ed]”(!), such that the meaning is “to lift” but there is “an allusion to נָס,” communicating that

the “light of His countenance... [is] a banner promising them the victory” (*Biblical Commentary on the Psalms*, trans. Francis Bolton [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1889], 116–117). Before Delitzsch, Rashi understood the verb to have similar connotations (Eberhard Bons in *Septuaginta Deutsch. Erläuterungen und Kommentare zum griechischen Alten Testament. Band II: Psalmen bis Daniel*, eds. Martin Karrer and Wolfgang Kraus [Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2011], 1506).

5. The latter would not make sense contextually, although the former could work given the negative outlook of the first stich (cf. Dahood’s interpretation in footnote 4). Regardless, the OG’s translation suggests a different interpretation of the Hebrew.

6. Charles Briggs and Emilie Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1907), 36; Emanuel Tov and Frank Polak, *The Revised CATSS Hebrew/Greek Parallel Text* (Jerusalem, 2009), s.v.; Albert Pietersma, “An Ode among Psalms: A Commentary on the Fourth Greek Psalm,” in *Text, Theology and Translation: Essays in Honour of Jan de Waard*, eds. Simon Crisp and Manuel Jinbachian (United Bible Society, 2004), 147–161, here 158; *Septuaginta Deutsch*, 1506.

7. The OG translator was “etymologizing” (Pietersma, “An Ode among Psalms,” 158). On etymologizing as a general strategy for translation difficulties, see Emanuel Tov, *Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint in Biblical Research*, 3rd ed. (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2014), 188–197.

8. Similarly, קָן (“nest”) and צִל (“shadow”) are results of the actions כָּנַן (Piel “to make a nest”) and צָלַל (“to grow dark”).

9. Cf. Pietersma, “An Ode among Psalms,” 158.

10. If the meaning were “to signal,” only a cognate accusative would work as an object: נִסָּם נִסָּם (“signal a sign”). In other words, the verb is intransitive; one cannot (in English or corresponding Hebrew) “signal a face” or “be gracious kindness.” Instead אֹר פָּנֶיךָ could have been taken as an adverbial noun phrase: “make a sign *with* the light of your face,” but the overall sense in this case would not be obvious.

11. While אֹר פָּנֶיךָ could have been understood grammatically as the subject of an active verb “to signal” (“the light of your face made a signal upon us”), the sense is a little awkward.

12. We have no extant *qatal* I-נ geminate verbs in the Nifal, but Nifal geminates in general have two open syllables—there would be no reason for נ to assimilate.

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13. ערה and ערר (as well as עור), for example, both have the core meaning “to be bare, naked.”

14. Theo van der Louw, “The Dictation of the Septuagint Version,” *JSJ* 39 (2008): 211–229.

15. Pss 65:9; 74:4 (2x), 9; 78:43; 86:17; 105:27; 135:9.

16. In the one other occurrence in the Pentateuch, in Exod 17:5, the OG translator either does not know what to make of נִס or has a variant *Vorlage*.

17. The OG manuscripts are unanimous here, including in the aspects of the OG relevant to my discussion.

18. Pietersma, “An Ode among Psalms,” 154.

19. For evidence of this strategy elsewhere in the OG, see W. Edward Glenny, “Hebrew Misreadings or Free Translation in the Septuagint of Amos?,” *VT* 57 (2007): 524–547, esp. 534–537.

20. *Septuaginta Deutsch*, 1505.

21. See footnote 7.

22. So, for example, Arnold B. Ehrlich, *Die Psalmen: Neu Uebersetzt und Erklärt* (Berlin: M. Poppelauer, 1905), 6–7; Briggs and Briggs, *Psalms*, 33; Kraus, *Psalmen*, 30; and most commentaries that treat the OG.

23. On translator scribal error, see Tov, *Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint*, 144–56.

24. See Screnock, *Traductor Scriptor*, 2–3, 93–148.

25. Pietersma, “An Ode among Psalms,” 154.

26. Stanislas Dehaene, *Reading in the Brain: The Science and Evolution of a Human Invention* (New York: Viking, 2009), 222–225.

27. So Ehrlich, *Die Psalmen*, 7; against Dominique Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle de l'Ancien Testament, Tome 4. Psaumes* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 6–7. Pietersma seems to imply that he thinks the MT's text is earlier: “the variant text [of G's source is] based on a confusion of ב and כ” (“An Ode among Psalms,” 154).

28. To be sure, we can make some sense of MT's text as it is, especially if we key in on the transformative/result semantics of *lamed*, but the difficulties in the clause are suggestive in a text-critical context.

29. Contra Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle*, 7, the lack of an overt subject is not problematic: the subject (“you”) is clear from context.

30. Robert D. Holmstedt, “Hebrew Poetry and the Appositive Style: ‘Parallelism,’ *requiescat in pace*,” *VT*, forthcoming.

31. Alternatively, we could read כְּבָדִי לֵב at the start of the second stich, as a vocative parallel to בְּנֵי אִישׁ in the first: לֵב כְּבָדִי לֵב // לֵמָּה תִאָּהֲבוּן בְּנֵי אִישׁ עַד-מָה // רִיק (“Sons of man, how long? Heavy-hearted ones, why do you love vanity?”). In either interpretation, the poetics work well in my opinion.

32. Kraus objects that the Hebrew behind the OG ruins the “verse-structure” (*Versgefüge*) without further explanation (*Psalmen*, 30).

33. For Barthélemy, “la ‘lourdeur de cœur’ ne désigne pas en hébreu biblique le ‘goût du néant’ et la ‘recherche du mensonge’, ainsi que le parallélisme poétique le suggérerait ici” (*Critique textuelle*, 7).

34. See Adele Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992), 18–30, and throughout.

35. Holmstedt, “Hebrew Poetry and the Appositive Style.”

36. See Robert D. Holmstedt, “The Restrictive Syntax of Genesis i 1,” *VT* 58 (2008): 56–67, here 59–63.

37. The elision of elements is not rare, particularly in poetry. For Delitzsch, “the expression is as concise as possible” (see his excellent discussion in *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms*, 117). Similarly, Briggs and Briggs paraphrase מֵעַתָּה as “טוב משמחת העת אשר” (better than the joy of the time during which...) (*Psalms*, 36).

38. The difference between “gave gladness in my heart” and “set joy in my heart”—the former is awkward in Greek as in English—stems from the lexical pairing of נתן and δίδωμι. Before its use in the OG, δίδωμι did not have the sense “to place [something somewhere]” (cf. LSJ, s.v.) while the Hebrew נתן does. The translator of OG Psalms cared less about representing the specific semantics of נתן in its particular context and more about representing נתן with the same Greek word across the book.

39. The “they” who multiply are those who doubt God from v. 7; cf. Pietersma, “An Ode among the Psalms,” 159.

40. The OG plus “and oil” probably represents variant Hebrew; it is not relevant to our discussion.

41. E.g., Ps 7:6, 16. The OG generally notices and understands such relatives.

42. Pietersma, “An Ode among the Psalms,” 159; *Septuaginta Deutsch*, 1506–1507.

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43. Bons in *Septuaginta Deutsch*, 1506; for Rahlfs's edition, see Alfred Rahlfs, *Psalmi cum Odis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979).

44. Cf. Rahlfs, *Psalmi cum Odis*, 45.

45. Pietersma, "An Ode among the Psalms," 159.

46. See footnote 26 and section 2.2 on *bet/kaf* interchange with כללמה.

47. "More than the fruit with which their grain and wine abound?"

48. Note, for example, Deut 7:13, where "fruit of your womb" and "fruit of your land" are parallel to "your grain" and "your wine." Then again, it could be that knowledge of Deut 7:13 has influenced the translator or a Hebrew scribe to find פֶּרִי ("fruit") in the text.

The Sacrifice of Praise in Psalm 49 LXX

Lance Kramer

The two references to the “sacrifice of praise” in Psalm 49 LXX play a crucial role in understanding the focus of the psalm as a whole. They highlight the need for a heart of worship in order to maintain covenant fidelity. After analyzing how the psalm’s placement within the Psalter, its structure, and its references to covenant and the sacrifices in Leviticus play a crucial role in understanding the psalmist’s use of the phrase “sacrifice of praise to God” (Ps 49:14), I will show that the “sacrifice of praise” in Ps 49 is both material and typological.¹

1. The Context of Ps 49 in the Psalter

Psalm 49² is a prophetic lawsuit psalm attributed to Asaph.³ In it, Yahweh judges Israel for violating the covenant he made with them at Sinai.⁴ The psalm begins with the declaration of the coming of Yahweh and his impending judgment speech. Yahweh is described as the judge (κριτής, 49:6) who will rebuke Israel and “lay out a case” against them (49:21). A discussion of the psalms surrounding Ps 49, namely Pss 48 and 50, will assist in elucidating the significance of the phrase “sacrifice of praise to God.”

1.1 The Psalms of the Sons of Korah: Pss 41–48

Prior to this lone psalm of Asaph is a series of psalms attributed to the sons of Korah (Pss 41–48) which comprise the beginning of book two of the Psalter.⁵ These psalms were possibly recited at certain sacrificial feasts.⁶ Several of these psalms have similar themes or words as those used in Ps 49, such as Ps 48:2–3 and 11–14 which highlight the beauty of Zion as Yahweh’s dwelling place (cf. Ps 49:2). Many of these psalms also reference times of “trouble” (θλίψεως) directly or indirectly for Yahweh’s people (Pss 43:24; 45:1; 48:5); it is Ps 49:15 that requires Israel to look to Yahweh during these times.

Psalms 48 in particular has some commonalities with Ps 49 as it focuses on the immorality of humanity in general, especially the rich against the poor (Ps 48:5–6, 16; cf. Ps 49:16–21). The “understanding” (σύνετε) that Ps 49:22 calls for is the basis for the refrain in Ps 48:12–13; namely, that “a person held in honor did not understand” and that he becomes like “senseless beasts” (NETS). The concept in Ps 49:21 that unfaithful Israel thought Yahweh was like them is reminiscent of becoming like the beasts in Ps 48:12–13 as well. In other words, the same problems and lack of understanding by the Israelites expressed in Ps 49 are also true of the broader humanity in Ps 48.

1.2 Psalm 50

The strongest connections of Ps 49 with the psalms that surround it comes between Ps 49 and Ps 50.⁷ David confesses his “lawlessness” (ἀνομίας) and “sin” (ἁμαρτίας) in Ps 50:4–5 (cf. Ps 49:16–17), yet still professes his faith in Yahweh as the one who will “deliver” (ρῦσαι) him and bring about his “salvation” (σωτηρίας) in Ps 50:14 (cf. Ps 49:22–23). David criticizes the insufficiency of the sacrificial system to please Yahweh and focuses rather on the inward condition of a person in Ps

50:17–19 (cf. Ps 49:8–15). In Ps 50:20–21, David asks that Yahweh “do good... to Zion” (ἀγάθυνον... τὴν Σιων) knowing that this will result in acceptable sacrifice (cf. Ps 49:2, 8). It is in Ps 49:18–21 that the “sinner” (ἁμαρτωλῶ) is rebuked for participation with thieves and adulterers and for allowing his mouth to “increase evil” (ἐπλεόνασεν κακίαν) against his fellow Israelites—all of which are sins that David committed against Uriah (2 Sam 11:4, 14–27).⁸ David sleeps with Uriah’s wife, Bathsheba (2 Sam 11:4), commands evil against him, thereby murdering him, and then “steals” Bathsheba for himself (2 Sam 11:14–17).

The final editor(s) of book two of the Psalter seems to have intentionally placed Pss 49 and 50 next to each other to highlight these significant themes. The declaration of the guilt of the nation made in Ps 49 highlights the proper repentant response of an individual, namely the king, in Ps 50;⁹ and the emphasis on Zion makes David’s sin in Ps 50 a national issue, not just an individual one.¹⁰ What is most important to highlight here is that the critique of sacrifices is more a critique on the motivation and inward orientation of one’s heart regarding the sacrifices rather than on the sacrificial system itself.¹¹ Both Pss 49 and 50 critique the sacrificial system, but do so in a way that maintains its validity.¹² Otherwise, it would seem odd for Yahweh to continue to accept any sacrifices (Pss 49:8, 14, 23; 50:19). David’s sins against Uriah are really the same sins in which at least some in Israel are participating (Ps 49:18–21). David’s repentance in Ps 50:12–16 also highlights the need for right motives as is expressed in Ps 49:8–13. In some sense, then, Ps 49 is a rebuke given to the people of Israel for their lack of repentance highlighted by David’s own repentance from similar sins in Ps 50.

1.3 Conclusion on the Context of Ps 49

The connections between Pss 48–50 highlight aspects of Ps 49 that might have gone unnoticed. The editor(s) of the Psalter understood that the plight of humanity described in Ps 48 is just as true for Israel in Ps 49, despite their insincere profession of Yahweh's covenant (Ps 49:16–17). The repentance of David in Ps 50 gives a display of what true worship ought to be like, one of a repentant heart that leads to a faithful life. Psalm 49, then, functions as a bridge between the psalms of Korah in Ps 41–48 and the psalms of David in Ps 50–70. The themes of true repentance of the heart in Ps 50 and the necessity for Yahweh alone to save humanity in Ps 48 are highlighted in Ps 49 through its focus on the “sacrifice of praise” (Ps 49:14–15, 23).

2. The Structure of Ps 49

Before addressing the more specific issues regarding the covenantal language of Ps 49 and the references it makes to Leviticus, the structure of Ps 49 (50 MT) must be analyzed in order to elucidate its meaning. After discussing the current positions on the structure of Ps 50 MT, I will consider the discourse features present in Ps 49 LXX that confirm the general consensus held by most scholars regarding Ps 50 MT, and how this structure highlights the centrality of the call to offer up the “sacrifice of praise.”

2.1 Current Views on the Structure of Ps 50 MT

Most contemporary scholars argue that Ps 50 MT is split into three or four sections. Craigie and Tate suggest that Ps 50:1–6 MT depicts Yahweh's summons of his covenant people, 50:7–15 MT gives the true meaning of sacrifice, and 50:16–23 MT warns those not who are not in line with the covenant stipulations.¹³ Kraus recognizes these same divisions as well.¹⁴ Spero recognizes

three sections, but he divides the first and second section between 50:4 and 50:5 MT.¹⁵ Goldingay also holds to a similar division, though he breaks Ps 50:22–23 MT off as a conclusion to the psalm as a whole.¹⁶ Allen recognizes Ps 50:1–6 and 50:7–23 MT as the two major units, the latter being broken into three parts: a discussion of right sacrifice (50:7–15 MT), a rebuke for those who disobey the covenant (50:16–21 MT), and a conclusion to the psalm (50:22–23 MT).¹⁷ Declaissé–Walford also delineates a conclusion, but limits it to Ps 50:23 MT.¹⁸ The criteria for these divisions are typically based on either the content and themes of the text or the poetic features of the text. These criteria, however, have not sufficiently taken into account the discourse features of the text.

2.2 Structural Clues in Ps 49

The structure of Ps 49 is fairly straightforward. Three discourse features determine its overall flow. First, there are several shifts in person throughout the psalm. Psalm 49:1–6 speaks in the third person regarding Yahweh. The first major shift in person happens between vv. 6 and 7 from the third person to the first person.¹⁹ This shift communicates a change between the speaker of the psalm being the psalmist himself and the speaker of the psalm being Yahweh. The second transition happens in v. 16; the first half of the verse introduces Yahweh's speech to "the sinner" (ἁμαρτωλῶ) while vv. 16b–21 then articulates the speech using the first person. Psalm 49:22 also uses the third person and then returns to the first person in v. 23.

Second, seven imperatives followed by result clauses mark the major sections of the psalm in 49:5, 7, 14–15, 22. The first imperative in v. 5 is a call to "gather together" (συναγάγετε) those who are under Yahweh's covenant, most likely the Sinai covenant (see below). The result of this imperative is that the

heavens, who are about to bear witness against Israel, would declare that Yahweh's verdict is righteous, since he is the judge.²⁰ The second imperative comes in v. 7 where Yahweh commands Israel to listen to what he is about to say. Following this imperative is another result clause—when the people come to hear, Yahweh will testify against them (v. 7). In 49:14–15, a string of three imperatives conclude Yahweh's rebuke of Israel for their sacrifices. Israel is called to sacrifice the sacrifice of praise to Yahweh, pay their vows, and call upon Yahweh in the day of trouble. These imperatives will be examined more closely below. Psalm 49:15 gives the intended result of these three imperatives, that Yahweh would rescue those who call on him and that they would then glorify him. The final imperative in v. 22 is a command to “understand these things,” most likely a reference to all that Yahweh has testified against them in the previous verses. The urgency of this command is highlighted by the inferential marker *δή* (“therefore”). They are to do this so that Yahweh will not “carry them off” without a “rescuer” (v. 22).

Third, the psalmist writes with certain patterns that make each section of the psalm cohere. The repetition of speaking verbs in 49:1–6 suggests that this section is a unit that introduces the speech given in vv. 7–23.²¹ Psalm 49:18–20 has a series of imperfects that describe the actions of Israel for which Yahweh is rebuking them. They have associated themselves with thieves and adulterers (v. 18) and have slandered their fellow Israelites (vv. 19–20). The terminology used in v. 23 is reminiscent of the imperatives found in v. 14 with the repetition of the “sacrifice of praise” (*θυσία αἰνέσεως*), as are vv. 15 and 22 with the reference to “salvation” (*σωτήριον*) in comparison to the need for deliverance from Yahweh or the lack of a “deliverer” (*ρυόμενος*), respectively. Psalm 49:23, then, forms a sort of final summary

statement of all that Yahweh has spoken to them in rebuke in vv. 7–22.

2.3 Conclusion on the Structure of Ps 49

The discourse features discussed above strengthen the major divisions described by other scholars previously noted. In light of these details, I propose the following outline for Ps 49:

- I. The Setting of the Scene: The Promise of Yahweh's Coming (49:1–6)
 - A. The Psalmist's Promise: Yahweh's Coming Judgment (49:1–4)
 - B. The Psalmist's Command: Gather the Covenant People (49:5–6)
- II. Yahweh's Rebuke: Faulty Sacrifices and Disobedience to the Covenant (49:7–23)
 - A. Yahweh Rebukes Israel for Wrong Motives in Sacrifice (49:7–15)
 - 1. Yahweh's Rebuke: Stop Trying to Manipulate Me (49:7–13)
 - 2. Yahweh's Command: Sacrifice from a Worshipful Heart and Look to Me for Rescue (49:14–15)
 - B. Yahweh Rebukes Israel for Disobedience to the Covenant (49:16–22)
 - 1. Yahweh's Rebuke: Stop Disobeying the Ten Words (49:16–21)
 - 2. Yahweh's Command: Don't Forget the Covenant (49:22)
 - C. Yahweh's Declaration Summarized: Sacrifice from a Worshipful Heart and Live According to the Covenant (49:23)

3. The Role of Covenant in Ps 49

The role of covenant in Ps 49 has been underdeveloped in scholarship, even though it plays a significant role in the message the psalmist is conveying. Unpacking a full biblical theological understanding of covenant is outside the scope of this study; however, a discussion of Ps 49's perspective on covenant is necessary to understand the psalmist's call for the "sacrifice of praise" (θυσίαν αἰνέσεως) in vv. 14 and 23.

3.1 *The Mosaic Covenant and Ps 49*

The term "covenant" (διαθήκην) occurs twice in vv. 5 and 16. The first occurrence comes at the end of the first section of the psalm (vv. 1–6). Here Yahweh calls those who are "pious" (όσίους), those who made a covenant with him by a sacrifice, to be gathered to him. Biblical covenants often involved sacrificial animals to ratify the covenant (see Gen 15:7–20).²² This is certainly true of the Mosaic covenant to which this psalm refers (Ps 49:5; cf. Exod 24:5–8).

The reference to the Mosaic covenant in Ps 49 is confirmed by the imagery used throughout vv. 1–6. In v. 3, Yahweh is described as one who has "fire" (πῦρ) burning "before him." He is also described as having a "storm all around him" (κύκλω αὐτοῦ καταιγίς). This imagery is reminiscent of the smoke (ἐκαπνίζετο) around Mount Sinai in light of Yahweh's descent onto it "in fire" (πυρί) in Exod 19:9 and 18. In a later description of this event in Deut 4:9–14, Yahweh commands that the people "assemble" (ἐκκλησιάσων) around the mountain to hear from him concerning the covenant he was making with them (cf. Ps 49:5); here Yahweh is described as being surround by "fire" (πυρί) and in the midst of the "tempest" (θύελλα). Later in Deut 30, Moses calls upon "heaven and earth" (οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν) to "witness" (διαμαρτύρομαι) against Israel as he encour-

ages them to choose life in Yahweh over disobedience to the covenant (Deut 30:19). Similarly, Yahweh calls upon “heaven and earth” (τὸν οὐρανὸν... καὶ τὴν γῆν) to judge his people in Ps 49:4. And in Ps 49:7, Yahweh “witnesses” (διαμαρτύρομαι) against Israel. Ps 49, then, alludes to the Exodus theophany in which Yahweh reveals himself to Israel before he speaks to them.²³

What is odd about the theophany in Ps 49 is that it comes not from Sinai, but “from Zion” (ἐκ Σιὼν, 49:2). In later psalms of Asaph, Zion is the current residence of Yahweh (Pss 74:2; 76:2; cf. 9:11), and elsewhere the psalms describe Zion as Yahweh’s permanent resting place (Ps 134:13–14).²⁴ Zion is described as a “mountain” (ὄρος, Ps 47:2, 11; Ps 74:2) like Sinai (cf. Exod 9:9–14). One psalmist equates Judah with Zion, whom Yahweh loves (Ps 78:68), and in Ps 49, Zion is described as “the splendor of his beauty” (Ps 49:2 NETS). Thus, in Ps 49 Yahweh shines forth from Zion, not Sinai, when he reveals himself to Israel and calls for their gathering. Psalm 49, then, is not a recapitulation of the events at Sinai, but a current assessment of Israel’s participation in that covenant.²⁵

The second reference to “covenant” comes in 49:16, where the wicked are rebuked for giving lip service to the covenant. Their commitment to this covenant is called into question because they hate discipline and do not take the words of Yahweh’s covenant seriously (v. 17). This hatred is explained in vv. 18–21. The sinner among Israel disregards the Ten Words that are the heart of the Mosaic covenant. Yahweh gives three examples of the sinner’s disobedience. First, Yahweh rebukes the sinner for “running” (συνέτρεχε) with thieves (v. 18), most likely referring to the command to “not steal” (κλέψει, Exod 20:15). Second, the sinner’s participation with “adulterers” (μοιχῶν) recalls the command to “not commit adultery” (οὐ μοιχεύσεις, Exod 20:14).

Third, the description of speaking “evil” (κακίαν) against a brother may be a reference to the command to “not bear false witness against your neighbor” (οὐ ψευδομαρτυρήσεις κατὰ τοῦ πλησίον σου, Exod 20:16).²⁶ Hence the “sinner” is one who pays lip service to the covenant and yet does not obey the covenant stipulations.

3.2 Allusions to Leviticus in Ps 49

This covenantal backdrop colors the understanding of the sacrificial language sprinkled throughout Ps 49. These references are clearly allusions to Leviticus which is to be expected if the setting of this psalm is Zion, where the temple is located (Ps 49:2). The majority of this Levitical imagery occurs in 49:7–15.

In Ps 49:8, Yahweh notes what Israel is *not* rebuked for, namely that they are indeed performing the sacrifices according to the covenant stipulations. The burnt offering was offered on the altar whose fire was burned “continually” (διὰ παντός);²⁷ thus Israel was offering up sacrifices to Yahweh according to what was prescribed in the law. Yet, Yahweh’s rebuke is that he will not “accept” (δέξομαι) these sacrifices. The psalmist lists three animals that Yahweh is unwilling to accept: “calves” (μόσχους), “goats” (χιμάρους), and “birds” (πετεινά).²⁸ These three animals are allusions to the sin offerings described in Lev 4–5. A bull was to be offered up on behalf of the people as their sin offering whenever they commit an “unintentional” sin (Lev 4:13–21). If a leader or common person sinned, they were to offer a goat or a lamb without blemish to die on their behalf (Lev 4:22–26). For those too poor to afford a goat or lamb, they were to offer a bird instead (Lev 5:7–10). The idea here is that Yahweh is rejecting the sin offering of anyone who would come before the altar, irrespective of whether they were rich, poor, a leader, or a common person. The question, then, is *why*? The sin

offering was the means by which sin was forgiven and fellowship with Yahweh was repaired, and it served as the basis for all other offerings.

Yahweh gives his reason in Ps 49:12–13. Since all of the world belongs to Yahweh, he does not need their sacrificial gifts (v. 12). The reference to Yahweh’s hunger in verse 12 is clearly ironic. It seems as though sacrifices were being offered up to Yahweh in order to manipulate him and appease him.²⁹ Although the Israelites were offering up these sacrifices according to the law, they were doing so with wrong motives. This is Yahweh’s initial critique in Ps 49 of Israel—they have faulty worship. While they obey this aspect of the law in outward actions, their motives reveal that they are not truly worshipping Yahweh. Yahweh then commands in vv. 14–15 what Israel ought to do instead. Right worship is to offer to Yahweh the “sacrifice of praise” (θυσίαν αἰνέσεως). To understand the reference to the “sacrifice of praise” and its juxtaposition with the sin offering, the “sacrifice of praise” in Leviticus must first be analyzed.

3.3 Θυσίαν Αἰνέσεως in Lev 7 and its Significance for Ps 49

The “sacrifice of praise” (θυσίαν αἰνέσεως) is one of three kinds of “peace” offerings described in Lev 7:11–36.³⁰ The other two forms of peace offering described are the “vow” (ἐνχρή) offering and the “free-will” (ἐκούσιον) offering (Lev 7:16). Leviticus 7:11–36 dictates that unleavened bread accompany these offerings (Lev 7:11–14) and that they be eaten within a certain time span (Lev 7:15–18). It also commands that part of the offering belongs to the priest (Lev 7:28–36). In Lev 3 the law of the peace offering describes the process of the sacrifice and the placement of the animal’s blood, as well as the kinds of sacrificial animals Yahweh requires.³¹ The term “praise” (αἰνέσεως) highlights the motive behind this variant of the peace offering.³² Worshipers

who brought the sacrifice of praise were to do so in honor and praise of Yahweh.³³

Two other aspects of particular note regarding this offering are that it is a voluntary offering most likely given after Yahweh delivered the worshipper from danger.³⁴ Additionally, it is the only sacrifice that the worshipper eats. These minor details should not go unnoticed, since the ritual acts and sacrifices themselves are inherently symbolic.³⁵ The voluntary nature of the sacrifice highlights the fact that the one bringing the sacrifice does so of their own volition and not because the law demands it.³⁶ Participating in this sacrifice reveals that the one bringing the sacrifice in fact *wants* to worship Yahweh and that they believe that Yahweh is worthy of praise. In other words, the “sacrifice of praise” reveals that the one bringing the sacrifice has a heart of worship. In addition to this, the fact that the worshipper could eat this sacrifice highlights the fact that by bringing the peace offering they would be having fellowship with Yahweh by enjoying a meal in Yahweh’s presence.³⁷ This meal would exhibit “a renewed sense of fellowship with Yahweh and his people, an occasion to celebrate with gratitude.”³⁸ The sacrifice of praise was therefore the culmination of the covenantal promise, that Yahweh’s presence would be with his people for their joy.³⁹

The reference in Ps 49 to the “sacrifice of praise” is therefore intentional given its purpose in the covenant. Rather than offering empty worship to Yahweh through heartless obedience to the law-covenant, worshippers ought to bring a “sacrifice of praise” because they should want to worship Yahweh from the heart and not simply perform outward actions (v. 14).⁴⁰ In 49:8–15, Yahweh’s critique is of wrong motivation in sacrifice and his answer is that worshippers ought to offer a “sacrifice of praise” (v. 14).⁴¹ The psalmist’s point is that this particular

sacrifice highlights the need for a new heart of worship in his audience. Likewise, the psalmist's reference to paying vows to Yahweh and "calling" to Yahweh for help in trouble corresponds with the "sacrifice of praise," since worshippers offered it after deliverance from danger (v. 15). The reference to the "sacrifice of praise," then, is metaphorical in the sense that the psalmist intends to use this sacrifice to point to the greater issue of the need for worship from the heart.

3.4 Conclusion on the Role of Covenant in Ps 49

The psalmist's critique of the sacrificial system and the covenant is not that the sacrifices are unnecessary (v. 8), but that worship in merely outward form is no worship at all. "The abuse of sacrifice, rather than its absolute worth, [is] emphatically condemned."⁴² The "sacrifice of praise" (θυσία αἰνέσεως) is certainly a reference to the material physical sacrifice.⁴³ The worshippers should express their inward praise and thanksgiving outwardly through the sacrifice. However, in this instance, the physical sacrifice is also being referenced as a metonymy. In other words, the "sacrifice of praise" in Ps 49 is physical since the law-covenant still stands but typological in that it emphasizes the heart. However, this critique of each Israelite's heart in worship is also a critique of the covenant system itself—that the covenant cannot bring about the inward change it demands. What should be on the sinners' lips are words of praise as they offer the sacrifice of praise, but instead they give lip service to the covenant while ignoring its requirements since their hearts are wicked.

4. Conclusion

The analysis above shows that the message of Ps 49 is primarily about the heart of those who worship Yahweh and live under the old covenant. Its structure and surrounding context give fur-

ther support to recognizing this fact. In light of this overarching message, the “sacrifice of praise” (θυσία αἰνέσεως) in Ps 49:14, 23 is meant to invoke within its hearers a conviction that one should worship Yahweh with thanksgiving and praise from the heart and not just with the lips.

Notes

1. I am grateful for Dr. Glenn and the impact he made on me during my time as a student at the University of Northwestern–St. Paul. Some of the most pivotal and paradigm shifting moments in my own young, theological understanding came through his classes. Therefore, it is an honor to dedicate this essay to him.

2. For the remainder of this essay, references to the Psalms will use LXX numbers and versification unless otherwise stated (so, Ps 49 is Ps 50 MT).

3. For a discussion on the designation of Ps 50 MT (Ps 49 LXX) as a lawsuit psalm, see Ma Maricel Ibita, “‘O Israel I Will Testify Against You’: Intensification and Narrativity in the Lament-Lawsuit of the ‘Unsilenced’ God in Psalm 50,” in *Composition of the Book of Psalms*, ed. Erich Zenger (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 537–539. “Lawsuit” is a technical term in prophetic discourse that is a subset of judgment/punishment speeches. Although the expected term רִיב (“to contest a lawsuit”) is not present in Ps 50 MT, there are signals of a court proceeding through the “summons” (50:1), “judging” (50:4), “gathering” (50:5), “judge” (50:6), “testifying” (50:7), and “charge laying” (50:21). See also Claus Westermann and Gene M. Tucker, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991), 199–200.

4. Contra Peter C. Craigie and Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 1–50*, 2nd ed., WBC 19 (Waco, TX: Word, 1983), 363–364. Craigie and Tate view Ps 50 MT as a liturgical psalm intended to portray a covenant renewal ceremony. Similarly, John Goldingay understands Ps 50:8–15 MT to be building suspense by pointing out what Israel is *not* rebuked for (*Psalms*, 3 vols, BCOTWP [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007], 2:118). This interpretation seems forced since the psalmist, through Yahweh’s speech in Ps 49:9–13 LXX, clearly criticizes Israel’s motivation in their sacrificial activity.

5. Psalm 50 MT is often described as “misplaced” because it is separate from the series of psalms that begin book three of the Psalter, which are normally

attributed to Asaph (Ps 73–83). See Shubert Spero, “Was Psalm 50 Misplaced?,” *JBQ* 30.1 (2002): 26–31.

6. See M D. Goulder, “The Social Setting of Book II of the Psalter,” in *Book of Psalms: Composition and Reception*, eds. Peter W. Flint and Patric D. Miller, Jr. (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 349–67.

7. For a list of those who draw these connections, see Stefan Attard, “Establishing Connections Between Pss 49 and 50 within the Context of Pss 49–52: A Synchronic Analysis,” in *Composition of the Book of Psalms*, ed. Erich Zenger (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 414.

8. Goldingay, *Psalms*, 2:118. It’s possible that the disregard David exhibits for the loss of life of his fellow Israelites may be taken as “slander” (2 Sam 11:25); however, this is unlikely since the slander here is more likely related to bearing false witness in public. Ironically, the command “to not murder” (οὐ φονεύσεις) is overlooked in Ps 50 (see Exod 20:15).

9. Frederick J. Gaiser, “The David of Psalm 51: Reading Psalm 51 in Light of Psalm 50,” *WW* 23.4 (2003): 393.

10. Gaiser, “The David of Psalm 51,” 393.

11. Gaiser, “The David of Psalm 51,” 391.

12. Gaiser, “The David of Psalm 51,” 390.

13. Craigie and Tate, *Psalms 1–50*, 363.

14. Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1–59: A Commentary*, trans. Hilton C. Oswald (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988), 488.

15. Spero, “Was Psalm 50 Misplaced?,” 26.

16. Goldingay, *Psalms*, 2:110. See also Gaiser, “The David of Psalm 51,” 388.

17. Leslie C Allen, “Structure and Meaning in Psalm 50,” *VE* 14 (1984): 19–20.

18. Nancy L DeClaissé-Walford, Rolf A Jacobson, and Beth LaNeel Tanner, *The Book of Psalms*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 448.

19. The MT uses “to me” (לִּי, Ps 50:5 MT) instead of the LXX’s “to him” (αὐτῷ, Ps 49:5 LXX), but then the MT returns to the third person in v. 6.

20. The καί linking Ps 49:5 and 6 is resultative.

21. Johanna W. H. Van Wijk-Bos, “Oh, When the Saints: A Consideration of the Meaning of Psalm 50,” *JSOT* 24 (1982): 67.

22. Gordon J. McConville, “בְּרִית,” *NIDOTTE*, 1:734.

23. James M. Hamilton, “Theophany,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament*:

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Wisdom, Poetry, and Writings, eds. Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 817; Jeffrey J. Niehaus, *God at Sinai: Covenant and Theophany in the Bible and Ancient Near East* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 305, n. 34; Craigie and Tate, *Psalms 1–50*, 365; Thomas Francis Glasson, “Theophany and Parousia,” *NTS* 34.2 (1988): 259; Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 491.

24. L. Michael Morales, *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord? A Biblical Theology of the Book of Leviticus*, *New Studies in Biblical Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 228.

25. Goldingay, *Psalms*, 2:112.

26. Craigie and Tate, *Psalms 1–50*, 366. However, the psalmist may also have Lev 19:14 in mind given the greater lexical overlap.

27. See Lev 6:5–6. This phrase is also used in Heb 13:15 to describe the “sacrifice of praise” (θυσίαν αἰνέσεως).

28. Yahweh’s ownership of “all wild animals of the forest” (ἐμά ἐστιν πάντα τὰ θηρία τοῦ ὄρους) is the ground for why he need not accept these sacrifices. This category, then, seems to be the larger frame into which each of the subcategories falls.

29. DeClaissé-Walford, Jacobson, and Tanner, *The Book of Psalms*, 451; Martin J. Selman, “Sacrifice in the Ancient Near East,” in *Sacrifice in the Bible*, ed. Roger T. Beckwith and Martin J. Selman (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995), 93.

30. Nobuyoshi Kiuchi, *Leviticus*, ApOTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 138–39.

31. Kiuchi points out that the discussion in Lev 3 seems to presuppose the communal nature of the sacrifice. See Nobuyoshi Kiuchi, “Spirituality in Offering a Peace Offering,” *TynBul* 50.1 (1999): 27.

32. Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 413.

33. Gordon J. Wenham translates the Hebrew term תְּוָדָה as “confession” since it could involve the confession of sin, but this seems out of place given the voluntary nature of the sacrifice (*The Book of Leviticus* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979], 78). See Kiuchi, “Spirituality in Offering a Peace Offering,” 25. Regardless, the Septuagint word “praise” (αἰνέσεως) is more limited in its range of meaning.

34. Mark F. Rooker, *Leviticus*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000), 133; R. K. Harrison, *Leviticus: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1980), 82. By voluntary, I do not mean that the

sacrifice was offered on any occasion. Kiuchi believes that it would have been unthinkable not to offer the sacrifice of praise in light of Yahweh's deliverance ("Spirituality in Offering a Peace Offering," 29).

35. Kiuchi, *Leviticus*, 30–32.

36. The fact that no concession was made for the poor highlights the fact that this offering was voluntary. See John E. Hartley, *Leviticus*, WBC 4 (Dallas, TX: Word, 1992), 42.

37. Kiuchi, *Leviticus*, 78; Morales, *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord?*, 137–38; Richard E. Averbeck, "Offerings and Sacrifices," in *NIDOTTE*, 4:1000.

38. Morales, *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord?*, 139.

39. Morales, *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord?*, 139.

40. Nigel B. Courtman argues that thanksgiving of the heart is the general use of the sacrifices throughout the psalms ("Sacrifice in the Psalms," in *Sacrifice in the Bible*, eds. Roger T. Beckwith and Martin J. Selman [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995], 42–43).

41. Courtman, "Sacrifice in the Psalms," 47.

42. Courtman, "Sacrifice in the Psalms," 48.

43. Goldingay, *Psalms*, 2:116.

The Nature of Israel's Rebellion in Amos 4:4–5

Anna Rask

Come to Bethel and rebel at Gilgal—multiply rebellion. And bring every morning your sacrifices, every three days your tithes. And make a sacrifice of thanksgiving with some leaven and proclaim freewill offerings. Make proclamation! For thus you love [to do] people of Israel. A declaration of my Lord, the LORD. (Amos 4:4–5)¹

In 805 BCE King Adad-Nirari III of Assyria captured Damascus and defeated King Hazael of Aram (841–806 BCE) who had been a consistent thorn in the side of Israel's kings. Hazael had sieged Jerusalem during the reign of Joash of Judah, taken control of the Transjordan, and controlled all the commerce along the King's Highway.² But now Aram was no longer at the height of its political power and soon neither would Assyria be, as they experienced a period of weakness from 772–754 BCE.³ Aram and Assyria's substantial loss of power was Israel and Judah's gain as two powerful kings would emerge and rule steadily for over forty years, King Uzziah of the Southern Kingdom of Judah (792–740 BCE) and King Jeroboam II of

the Northern Kingdom of Israel (793–753 BCE). During their reigns both Judah and Israel enjoyed great economic prosperity and relative peace and security.

It was during this time that Amos was called by Yahweh to prophesy to the Northern Kingdom of Israel even though he was a native of the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Amos's prophetic career was short, perhaps only a year, sometime between 760 and 730 BCE. He traveled to the Northern Kingdom, specifically to the sanctuary at Bethel, but also perhaps to other sanctuaries such as Gilgal to preach his messages.⁴

Amos was a shepherd and a grower of sycamore figs. Amos himself explains he is not a prophet by vocation and is proud of his lack of credentials.⁵ The writers of the OT often associated the role of shepherding with the role of being king. Amos was a literal shepherd who spoke against the royal shepherd, Jeroboam II, who was supposed to be leading Yahweh's people in covenant fidelity. He instead was allowing and encouraging economic exploitation and legal injustice and was also perpetuating the sin of King Jeroboam I (931–910 BCE).⁶ The primary sin of Jeroboam I was the institution of a new state religion. In 930 BCE he erected golden calves at sanctuaries in Bethel and Dan which, it will be argued, at first represented Yahweh but then quickly developed into idolatry, syncretism, and a false view of Yahweh. Under the reign of Jeroboam II, Israel's worship had become so mixed with pagan elements that they were no longer worshipping Yahweh. Instead they were worshipping a "god" they had named Yahweh who was simply a figment of their imagination—a "god" they thought they could manipulate to bless and protect them.⁷

Amos 4:4–5 is a sarcastic rendition of a traditional priestly call to worship. Amos calls the Israelites to come to their sanctuaries and continue their rebellion against Yahweh by their manipu-

lative worship of the false “god” to whom they bring abundant sacrifices, tithes, and offerings—for that is what they love to do and brag about. Amos 4:4–5 is a condemnation of Israel’s religion and their view of Yahweh; every aspect of their worship is wrong because they are worshipping the wrong “god.”⁸

1. Literary Context of Amos 4

Amos 1–2 contains a series of repetitive phrases in which Amos indicts Israel’s neighbors for their **פִּשְׁע** (“rebellion”). If Amos was publicly prophesying at the sanctuaries of either Bethel or Gilgal during a pilgrimage festival, the Israelites may likely have cheered as they heard judgment being declared on their enemies.⁹ Amos’s indictments on Israel’s neighbors are primarily about their moral injustices, but when he turns to Judah, Israel’s sister nation and Amos’s own people, he indicts her for not keeping the Torah. Shockingly, in Amos 2:6, he then focuses his attention on Israel herself. Her condemnation is the strongest and longest of those preceding it. He names specific rebellions primarily in the realm of economic exploitation and legal injustice as Israel was enslaving people, abusing widows and orphans, gaining their wealth at the expense of the poor, and living an easy life while others suffered. Amos paints a picture of a seemingly very religious people: at the local sanctuaries they were offering tithes beyond “budgetary requirements,” an abundance of sacrifices, and were voluntarily giving unrequired freewill offerings.¹⁰ Given their current economic prosperity they likely thought they were being divinely blessed. Amos makes the case that Israel, who has an exclusive relationship with Yahweh, is not on the same immoral level as her pagan neighbors, rather she is worse than them and Yahweh will bring judgement against her too. In Amos 4:1–3 Yahweh threatens “violent military action” against them followed by an exile. It is verses 4–5 that focus on

ecclesiastical concerns related to the people of Israel at their cultic sanctuaries.¹¹

2. Exegesis of Amos 4:4

The Israelites would pilgrimage to their cultic sanctuaries, such as Bethel and Gilgal, for a variety of reasons such as to give thanks, fulfill vows, seek atonement through sacrifices, give tithes and offerings,¹² make peace with their deity through sacrificial communion meals, and to receive their deity's blessings so as "to secure their welfare."¹³ Upon arrival at the sanctuary a priest would invite the worshippers to come and seek their deity and in turn find life and peace.¹⁴ The priest would address "the people with plural imperatives, setting forth instructions concerning the cultic ritual[s] to be performed at the shrines."¹⁵ In Amos 4:4–5, Amos the prophet takes over the priestly role to sarcastically exhort "the congregation in a shocking parody of ecclesiastical language that must have sounded like irreverent blasphemy."¹⁶ Amos likely surprised his audience but they no doubt would have immediately sensed his sarcasm as he changed the words they were accustomed to hearing; nevertheless, his message would have been appalling in that he was calling them to come to their sanctuaries not to worship but to rebel.¹⁷

"To rebel" (עָשָׂה) is a political term¹⁸ signaling an "act of rebellion against a constituted authority. It is a volitional act of the will resulting in estrangement from the object of one's rebellion."¹⁹ It is used in Amos 4:4 to identify the Israelite worshippers as "rebels and seditionists" against their "divine suzerain;" they are "treaty-covenant breakers against God."²⁰ The noun עָשָׂה ("rebellious act" or "transgression") is used in the indictments against the foreign nations in Amos 1–2. Its use again in the indictment against Israel signals that Yahweh regards her as being no better than the pagan nations around her. Yahweh's

judgment will surely fall on his people for her acts of willed rebellion against him.²¹

2.1 Opinions on the Nature of Israel's Rebellion

The nature of Israel's rebellion against Yahweh has been an issue of much debate yielding four primary views. While scholars may prioritize one of the four views below, they often see all four as factors in Israel's rebellion.

First, and the most popular view, is that Israel's acts are deemed as a rebellion because they are hypocritical and are superficial empty formalism.²² The multitude of religious rites that the Israelites performed at their cultic sanctuaries make it seem as though they were very pious and religious people, and they likely thought they were, but these rites were simply an expression of how much they loved being religious.²³ Their behavior outside the sanctuaries "contradicted their professed devotion" to Yahweh as they would gain wealth by oppressing the poor.²⁴

Second, Israel's actions are deemed as a rebellion against Yahweh because the people were self-absorbed; they loved and honored themselves more than Yahweh, thus displacing him as the "central reality of the cult."²⁵ It was at the sanctuaries that the wealthy could openly display their wealth to try to gain higher status in the community.²⁶

Third, Israel's actions are deemed as a rebellion against Yahweh because they believed that if they zealously offered sacrifices, tithes, and offerings they could manipulate Yahweh into blessing and protecting them.²⁷ Andersen and Freedman argue that Amos 4:4 "is a specific pronouncement against a particular festivity, a national celebration." They believe the scattered verses in Amos condemning Israel's worship are all "glimpses of a single event, a great and special national celebration in thanks-

giving for the victories over Lo-Dabar and Qarnaim.”²⁸ They posit that if the Israelites were pilgrimaging to religious shrines after military victories then the nature of their rebellion would be “the use of religion to legitimate militarism, to equate victory with divine blessing, [and] to use tokens of divine approval as evidence to contradict the argument that oppression of the poor has made them forfeit the favor of heaven.”²⁹

Fourth, Israel’s actions are deemed as a rebellion against Yahweh because the people were transforming their worship rituals to be ends in and of themselves. The goal of Israel’s worship should have been to fellowship with Yahweh and become moral and ethical people. Worship in and of itself can replace neither morality nor ethical behavior.³⁰ Amos, and other prophets to come, condemned Israel’s cult when it was substituted for moral behavior and was being absolutized.³¹ The prophets instead stressed that Yahweh was most concerned with personal behavior: “justice, kindness, righteousness, integrity, honesty, and faithfulness.”³²

There are also several options proposed by scholars of what the nature of this rebellion *cannot* be. Some scholars argue the rituals in and of themselves cannot be the problem since the people were in fact bringing the correct prescribed sacrifices, offerings, and tithes.³³ Neither Shalom M. Paul nor William Rainey Harper believe Amos is deeming Israel’s cultic rites as rebellion simply because they were practicing them at cultic shrines or high places outside of Jerusalem; for they argue that the Deuteronomic law of the centralization of the cult was not yet in effect.³⁴ Nor do they think Amos is accusing the Israelites of “offering illegitimate sacrifices or of being involved in idol worship, as [they argue] these hardly play any role whatsoever in his condemnations.”³⁵ Additionally, Harper does not consider Amos to be condemning them for seemingly changing “the details of the

ceremonial [law] by adapting them to the heathen worship outside of Israel.”³⁶ Andersen and Freedman see that Amos 4:4–5 “is the clearest condemnation of the official cult as sinful,”³⁷ but they do not believe Amos’s statements are an indictment of the cultus as a whole for such a “judgment is too categorical.”³⁸ Instead they argue the “attitude of the prophets to the political and religious institutions and officials of Israel was ambivalent. They could commend or condemn as occasion required.”³⁹

2.2 The Fundamental Nature of Israel's Rebellion

The above views on the nature of Israel’s rebellion are aspects of their rebellion but none of them identify the fundamental problem. A review of the implications of Jeroboam I’s actions will serve to clarify it.

Jeroboam I became the first king of the Northern Kingdom following the split of the united monarchy in 931 BCE and the death of King Solomon. In 1 Kgs 11:26–40 the prophet Ahijah informs Jeroboam I that it was because of Solomon’s idolatry that the kingdom was going to be divided, but that for the sake of David, and Yahweh’s chosen city of Jerusalem, Judah would continue to be a kingdom and Yahweh would be faithful to the promises he made to David and Solomon. Yahweh then promised to make Jeroboam I “a dynasty as enduring as the one [he] built for David” (1 Kgs 11:38), but in order to be blessed by Yahweh, Jeroboam I needed to obey Yahweh.⁴⁰ Paul R. House comments that implicit “in these promises is the notion that any idolatry will bring this covenant to a halt.”⁴¹ The role of the king was not simply to be a steward of the government, rather it was to make worship of Yahweh at the temple in Jerusalem of utmost importance and to lead the people in keeping the covenant. When the kings allowed “anything besides separatist Yahwism to flourish” they were not “pure symbols.”⁴²

When Jeroboam I became king of Israel, he had a political problem: how could the Northern Kingdom remain faithful in their covenant with Yahweh when his presence and temple was technically in the Southern Kingdom in Jerusalem? Jeroboam I risked losing control of his own subjects and kingdom if he allowed them to travel to Jerusalem for worship. Jeroboam decided to make a strategic political and religious move, he established two shrines in the already sacred sites of Bethel and Dan at the opposite ends of his kingdom.⁴³ These two sites became the main cultic sanctuaries of the Northern Kingdom and were an alternative place of worship to Jerusalem.⁴⁴ He then erected golden calves in these sanctuaries, instituted priests who were not from the tribe of Levi, made additional temples on high places, and changed the day of the Feast of Tabernacles (cf. 1 Kgs 12:25–33).

It is debated as to what Jeroboam I's intentions were when he erected the golden calves, but the most likely option is that the calves were not cultic objects but instead, in likeness to the Ark of the Covenant, were pedestals upon which Yahweh was thought to invisibly stand.⁴⁵ It does not seem Jeroboam I intended for the calves to be worshipped nor was he inventing a new deity, rather they were to represent Yahweh.⁴⁶ However, the golden calf or bull symbol was "too closely associated with the fertility cult to be safe."⁴⁷ These calves were not images of Egyptian gods but instead were a primitive Semitic and Hebrew symbol of the "life-giving energy of the Godhead."⁴⁸ Such was likely also the case after the Exodus when the Israelites made a golden calf to symbolize the power of Yahweh who delivered them from Egypt; they were not worshipping an Egyptian god or another deity.⁴⁹ Jeroboam I likely felt he "was following ancient precedent, and was in no sense renouncing the worship of Yahweh."⁵⁰ But this use of Canaanite cult symbols led to "a

confusion of Yahweh and Ba'al, and to the importation of pagan features into the cult of the former."⁵¹ By installing the calves Jeroboam I disobeyed the word of Yahweh in Exodus 20:4–6 regarding idolatry. He even had been recently reminded that Yahweh prohibited idolatry for Ahijah had told him this was what led to Solomon's fall and the division of the kingdom (cf. 1 Kgs 11:26–40).

Jeroboam I had effectively made a new alternative religion and dubbed it the official state religion of the Northern Kingdom.⁵² It was thoroughly non-Mosaic being a syncretistic mix of Canaanite idolatry and deviant Yahwism. Such "syncretism led to loyalty for neither tradition." Jeroboam I had successfully moved his nation from orthodoxy to heterodoxy.⁵³ Syncretism and idolatry in the OT are always forms of non-legitimate worship of Yahweh and they threaten covenant loyalty.⁵⁴

Yahweh's rejection of this new religion is made clear in 1 Kgs 13:1–10 as an unnamed man of God cries out against the altar at Bethel "presumably because it has no legitimacy in God's eyes," and he predicts Josiah, a descendant of David, will defile the altar.⁵⁵ The man of God then offers a sign to legitimize his message, the altar will split and the ashes on it will be poured out, which is exactly what occurs.⁵⁶ In 1 Kgs 14 Ahijah also condemns Jeroboam I's idolatry and rejection of Yahweh and tells him that Yahweh regards him as having done more evil than all who were before him, thus he will not receive Yahweh's promises. He even declares that in the future Israel will go into exile because of this new religion and for taking part in fertility cults.⁵⁷

The authors of 1–2 Kings use Jeroboam I as an "example of how to define a morally deficient king" because his actions are "so far-reaching and repulsive."⁵⁸ Jeroboam I set Israel on a path of spiritual, moral, and political decline that ultimately led to

destruction. The phrase the “sin of Jeroboam” occurs nineteen times in 1–2 Kings and becomes paradigmatic for the subsequent kings of Israel as the cultic actions he initiated are perpetuated throughout the duration of the Northern Kingdom. Every king of Israel continues the sin of Jeroboam. Jeroboam I is “an example of how pervasive sin can be. His religion affects others adversely. His sin becomes their sin, and his cult leads to an easy acceptance of Baalism.”⁵⁹

The OT reveals that the majority of Israelites during Jeroboam I’s reign and beyond never took issue with henotheism nor polytheism. “[T]he more Israel accepted not just the *presence* of the other religions but their validity as well, the more Yahwist worship became a mixture of truth and error and the more the people turned outright to other gods.”⁶⁰ During the reign of the Israelite King Ahab in the ninth century BCE the cult of Jeroboam I continued but now Baalism also spread into the nation due to Ahab’s marriage to Jezebel, a devout Baal worshipper. This move meant that full-blown fertility rites had come into Israel.⁶¹ The Israelites were now not simply syncretistic and deviant Yahwists, they were polytheists. There is no record of Elijah or Elisha explicitly attacking or condemning the cult established by Jeroboam I, rather they are described as fighting against Baalism only.⁶² They left the people with a choice: they could either serve Yahweh or Baal, but not both. Even after Elijah’s victory on Mt. Caramel, Baalism was still not eradicated, the peoples’ choice of Yahweh alone was only temporary. King Jehu of Israel later purged out Baalism, but rather than leading the people into a separatist Yahwism he still committed the sin of Jeroboam which 2 Kgs 10:29 clarifies as the worship of the golden calves at Bethel and Dan.⁶³ Evidently, he did this because he regarded them as legitimate centers of “primitive Yahweh worship.”⁶⁴

The defeat of Damascus and Aram by Assyria in 805 BCE did usher in a golden age of economic and military success for Israel, but the nation was the most religiously corrupt it had ever been.⁶⁵ Jeroboam II kept the state religion instituted by Jeroboam I nearly two hundred years earlier, yet it seems the people still considered themselves legitimate followers of Yahweh as none of Amos's prophesies explicitly accuse the people of *foreign* idolatry.⁶⁶

Scholars question why Amos, who prophesied at Bethel, never mentioned the golden calf likely hovering right above him. Lewis Bayles Paton suggested that he never so much as "utter[ed] a single word which can fairly be construed as a direct condemnation of this form of worship."⁶⁷ Many scholars are unwilling to say Amos 4:4–5 is a reference to worship in the cult established by Jeroboam I, and they use Amos's silence to signal his consent of the calf-symbolism and Jeroboam I's cult as a whole.⁶⁸

It would seem that aside from the condemnations by Ahijah and the man of God in 1 Kgs 13, the cult of Jeroboam I and the "calf-worship enjoyed an undisturbed existence from the time of Jeroboam I to the time of Amos, and that during this long period not one voice was raised in opposition to it as an illegitimate way of worshipping Yahweh."⁶⁹ The first explicit comments in the prophetic writings come in Hosea who with "intense hostility" explicitly calls the calf-worship idolatry and says the cultic sanctuaries are serving to apostatize Israel from Yahweh.⁷⁰ Paton notes that such "a fully developed antagonism is very surprising in Hosea, in view of the fact that we have found nothing of the sort in the earlier history."⁷¹ He questions if it is possible for a religious thought to pass "at a leap from complete approval to complete disapproval, without going through the intermediate stages of criticism or suspicion of the correctness of established

beliefs.”⁷² According to Paton the analogy of history teaches the exact opposite:

Great religious revolutions, such as Hosea’s change of attitude towards the calves, do not come in a moment, but are the culmination of a long development of human thought. We are led, therefore, to suspect that the approval of the calf-worship by Hosea’s predecessors is more apparent than real, and that their silence on this subject has another explanation than that they saw nothing to blame in this way of worshipping Yahweh; that possibly the germ of Hosea’s antagonism was already present in the minds of Elijah and Elisha, but that they did not publicly condemn the calf-symbolism, because they thought that it would be time enough to attempt a reformation within the religion of Yahweh, after the religion of Baal had been finally defeated.⁷³

Simply because Amos is silent on the calf-worship and cult of Jeroboam I does not mean he approved of it. Hosea was a near contemporary of Amos, he continued Amos’s main theological points and may have even heard him preach.⁷⁴ It is hard to believe Amos had no antagonism toward the calves and cult of Jeroboam I. His failure to explicitly mention the calves could have been because they were simply one feature of a completely corrupt system, this is likely the same reason he did not mention the non-Levitical priests or the specific rituals of their sacrifices.⁷⁵

Hosea mentions the calves only three times, they are not a main point in his prophecies; rather, like Amos his main thought is that Israel is not worshipping Yahweh. The “god” they are worshipping is no better than Baal.⁷⁶ Paton proposed a more recent example of this notion:

One might search the writings of the Protestant Reformers without finding any special polemic against the worship of the Virgin as the Mother of Sorrows with seven swords in her heart; but that would not show that they approved of this cult, but simply that they rejected Mariolatry in its entirety, and that, therefore, they did not trouble themselves to antagonize one particular phase of this debased form of Christianity.⁷⁷

Amos reveals a people who, though they may have nominally called themselves Yahwists, did not truly know the character of Yahweh.⁷⁸ The Israelites essentially regarded him in the same ways their neighbors regarded their gods, as a patron-god who loved and protected only them and hated other nations.⁷⁹ Israel thought their economic prosperity was a result of their deity blessing them in light of their multitudes of tithes, sacrifices, and offerings at their sanctuaries. These apparent blessings motivated the people to keep up their religious rites in abundance to manipulate their deity to keep the blessings coming. The first three sections of Amos seek to combat Israel's misconceptions about Yahweh.⁸⁰ Amos reintroduces Yahweh not as Israel's patron-god but as Yahweh the "God of hosts" meaning he is the only God of the universe.⁸¹

Thus, the fundamental nature of Israel's rebellion was their breaking of the Mosaic covenant by not worshipping Yahweh alone but instead engaging in idolatry.⁸² Israel's idea of Yahweh had degraded so much that they were not purely worshipping him. They were no longer simply syncretists and deviant Yahwists; they were heathens. They had added and subtracted so much to Yahweh's character that the "god" they worshipped was nothing more than a figment of their imagination, a false god.⁸³ Their worship was pleasing only to themselves.

In the OT's prophetic books the first prophecy of the book displays the theme of the rest of prophecies to come. The first prophecy in Amos is 1:2, "And he said: 'The Lord roars from Zion and utters his voice from Jerusalem; the pastures of the shepherds mourn, and the top of Carmel withers'" (ESV). Yahweh roars from his city and from his temple, and not "from one of the sanctuaries of the northern kingdom, because he does not dwell in them or recognize them as his."⁸⁴ This passage programmatically reveals that Yahweh is still the normative voice over his people and that he still has dominion over the Northern Kingdom. Paton aptly notes that "[n]owhere in the book [of Amos] does Yahweh speak of one of the Israelitish sanctuaries as 'my house.'" ⁸⁵ Because Israel does not worship Yahweh, he declares his judgment against them, particularly against their sanctuary at Bethel.

Since Israel had broken from the Davidic covenant Amos emphasizes the Mosaic covenant. Israel needed to be called back to following Yahweh alone and his commandments in the Torah. The reason Israel was failing in the areas of justice and righteousness was because they were not seeking the one true God or following his standards; "ethical standards flow from a commitment to the living God."⁸⁶ Although it would have been best for the Israelites to abandon their idols and worship the one and only God, Yahweh, at his temple in Jerusalem served by the Levitical priests, that is not what seeking Yahweh truly entails. Yahweh has always been more concerned about the spiritual condition of one's heart rather than their external acts of worship. Such is the notion conveyed in 1 Sam 15:22–23 when Samuel rebuked King Saul for disobediently making an unauthorized animal sacrifice. Samuel states that it is obedience that Yahweh requires over sacrifice; ironically this event took place at Gilgal.⁸⁷

2.3 Exegesis of Amos 4:4b

“Sacrifices” (זִבְחֵיכֶם) is a general term used for any animal sacrifice, but scholars posit here it may be specifically referring to the peace offerings mentioned in the Torah because the thank and freewill offerings to come in 4:5 are types of Torah peace offerings.⁸⁸ It is debated how to translate לְבֹקֶר and יָמִים לְשִׁלֻשֶׁת. One suggestion is to translate לְבֹקֶר as “in the morning” and יָמִים לְשִׁלֻשֶׁת as “on the third day,” which leads some to understand Amos’s call as a reference to a pilgrim custom, albeit an unattested one,⁸⁹ of staying three days at a sanctuary offering sacrifices the morning they arrived and giving their tithes on the third day before they left.⁹⁰ They then suggest that Amos’s call could be referring to the peoples’ present practices and he is sarcastically encouraging to continue them.⁹¹ However, it is best to understand הִרְבּוּ לְפִשַׁע (“multiply rebellion”) as governing v. 4b and the ל prepositions as functioning distributively.⁹² Thus, לְבֹקֶר would then mean “every morning” and יָמִים לְשִׁלֻשֶׁת would mean “every three days.” Amos is not calling the people to correct observance of the Torah for the people are not even worshipping Yahweh; rather, he is sarcastically calling them to extravagance by sacrificing every morning and giving their tithes every three days. Though Amos knows the Israelites are wealthy and are showing off their wealth with a multitude of sacrifices and tithes, the people would effectively go broke if they followed his advice. Gary V. Smith points out the irony as the sacrifices and tithes are described as “yours” rather than Yahweh’s.⁹³ These religious rites are pleasing only to the people as it feeds their ego and as they worship the so-called “god” they have conjured up. The more they perform these rites, the more they exacerbate their rebellion and guilt.

3. Exegesis of Amos 4:5

Amos's sarcastic call to worship continues with the verb קטר which is a "technical expression for 'offer'" and means "to burn and send up in smoke."⁹⁴ These ritual practices in v. 5 are to be understood as peace offerings.⁹⁵ It is the thanksgiving offerings that were traditionally offered "in anticipation [of] or [in] gratitude for deliverance of some kind"⁹⁶ or they were offered as praises to Yahweh for blessings and answered prayers.⁹⁷ Amos clarifies that these thanksgiving offerings are to be leavened (חֶמֶץ) which refers to the "meal-offering accompanying the thanksgiving [animal] sacrifice."⁹⁸ The preposition on the adjective מִחֶמֶץ could be understood as functioning as a privative which would translate as "without leaven," or it could be understood as a partitive and be rendered "with some leaven."⁹⁹ It seems best to understand the preposition as a partitive, thus translating it as "with some leaven."¹⁰⁰ But why would Amos call the people to offer leavened thanksgiving sacrifices or continue to do so when this would break a ritual regulation according to Leviticus?¹⁰¹

Roy Lee Honeycutt does not believe Amos was concerned with the people violating any cultic laws; rather, he thinks Amos is pointing out their "mistaken zeal" in thinking that by adding leaven to their thanksgiving offerings they could make them more acceptable to their deity.¹⁰² By way of contrast, Harper suggests Amos was calling the Israelites to "further increase their zeal" by burning "what ordinarily was not burned," yet he does not think Amos is referring to Lev 2:11 or 7:12 because he does not believe these laws were yet in existence.¹⁰³ Harper also argues Amos is referring to a developing new custom in which the Israelites would prepare a thank offering with "yeast or grape-honey (Ho. 3:1)" believing this "would be more acceptable."¹⁰⁴ Harper presumes that the use of leaven at this time was

considered pleasing to Canaanite deities, and that because of this when Exodus and Leviticus were later written the use of leaven was forbidden in burnt thanksgiving offerings.¹⁰⁵ Andersen and Freedman do not believe the use of leaven is the root of the rebellion at Bethel and Gilgal, nor do they believe its use was “paganizing” or that “the bans in Leviticus represent a later purist reaction against the practice.”¹⁰⁶

Against these interpretations, v. 5 is not about if the Israelites were correctly following cultic law. Rather, all of Israel's worship is sinful because it is not pure worship of Yahweh. Amos is sarcastically calling the people to be more zealous as if adding leaven to their thank offerings would somehow make the people more devout and better please their conjured up deity. But it would not at all be surprising if the Israelites were following a Canaanite practice of using leaven to please their deity, for their religion and conception of their deity was so syncretistic and corrupted.¹⁰⁷

Amos concludes saying, וְקִרְאוּ נְדָבוֹת (‘‘and proclaim freewill offerings’’) and הַשְׁמִיעוּ (‘‘make proclamation’’). Together these statements ‘‘suggest a prideful and boastful attitude toward their generous sacrifices and offerings.’’¹⁰⁸ According to the Torah, freewill offerings (נְדָבוֹת) were supposed to be ‘‘voluntary,’’ ‘‘spontaneous,’’ and ‘‘nonprescribed.’’¹⁰⁹ They were offered out of a worshipper's own volition to express their joy and devotion to Yahweh¹¹⁰ or thank him for his goodness.¹¹¹ The point of freewill offerings is completely contradicted when a worshipper proclaims their offering to others, yet that is exactly what Amos sarcastically calls them to do. Clearly the peoples' internal motivation was to show others their religious wealth and religious zeal to gain more recognition.

4. Conclusion

While it is fine to search the OT to find analogous texts to make sense of what Amos is saying in these two verses, Amos's call is not about returning to fastidious Torah following. Rather, Amos 4:4–5 is about the peoples' sin of breaking the Mosaic covenant with Yahweh, practicing idolatry, and worshipping a made-up deity at their own sanctuaries. Israel's religious rites were exacerbating the problem: "everything about the services of its sanctuaries, its sacrifices, its offerings, its music, is wrong, because [it is] rendered in worship of a false god."¹¹² Traditionally, at the end of a priestly call to worship there would be "some declaratory formula spoken as the basis for the summons to worship" such as, "'for I am Yahweh your God' or a reference to Yahweh's will or pleasure in the divine cult."¹¹³ Such a formula would base the "ritual in the person and will of the deity" and affirm the deity's acceptance of the offering and pleasure in the worshipper.¹¹⁴ Amos however ends with a reference to what the people love to do. He accuses them of loving to boast about their religiosity and generosity, but such "is not the same thing as loving God."¹¹⁵ Indeed, the people did not love Yahweh; they had broken from him and were not worshipping him. They loved only themselves and were making offerings to a false god who was nothing more than a projection of themselves.

Notes

1. My own translation.

2. John A. Beck, *The Baker Book of Bible Charts, Maps, and Time Lines* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2016), 115. Cf. 1 Kgs 19:15–17; 2 Kgs 8:7–15, 28–29; 10:32–33; 12:17–18; 13:3, 22–25.

3. Beck, *The Baker Book of Bible Charts, Maps, and Time Lines*, 116.

4. Cf. Amos 7:10–17.
5. Cf. Amos 1:1; 7:14.
6. Cf. Deut 17:14–20; Amos 4:1–3; 5:7.
7. Lewis Bayles Paton, “Did Amos Approve the Calf-Worship at Bethel?,” *JBL* 13 (1894): 89.
8. Paton, “Did Amos Approve the Calf-Worship at Bethel?,” 89–90.
9. James Luther Mays, *Amos: A Commentary*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969) 74. Cf. Peter C. Craigie, *Twelve Prophets*, vol. 1, *The Daily Study Bible* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), 154–155.
10. Roy Lee Honeycutt, *Amos and His Message: An Expository Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1963), 81.
11. Honeycutt, *Amos and His Message*, 77. Cf. Shalom M. Paul, *Amos: A Commentary on the Book of Amos*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 138.
12. Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, *Amos: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AYB 24A (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 412–413.
13. Mays, *Amos*, 74.
14. Billy K. Smith and Frank S. Page, *Amos, Obadiah, Jonah*, NAC 19B (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 87. Cf. Amos 5:4, 6.
15. Mays, *Amos*, 74. Gary V. Smith notes that the “Greek translators missed the ironic nature of these verses and made the verbs aorists (thus accusations, ‘you went to Bethel’) instead of ironic imperatives” (*Amos*, Mentor Commentary [Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2015], 187).
16. Mays, *Amos*, 74.
17. Smith and Page, *Amos, Obadiah, Jonah*, 87. Cf. Honeycutt, *Amos and His Message*, 81.
18. Elizabeth Achtemeier, *Minor Prophets I*, NIBCOT (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 199.
19. Honeycutt, *Amos and His Message*, 81.
20. Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 414. Cf. Amos 3:14 for the noun form פֶּשַׁע.
21. Honeycutt, *Amos and His Message*, 81. Cf. Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 434.
22. Achtemeier, *Minor Prophets I*, 199. Cf. Robert B. Chisholm, *Interpreting*

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the Minor Prophets (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990), 88; Honeycutt, *Amos and His Message*, 80; William Rainey Harper, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Amos and Hosea*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1905), 93; Craigie, *Twelve Prophets*, 157; Smith, *Amos*, 195.

23. Mays, *Amos*, 76.

24. Chisholm, *Interpreting the Minor Prophets*, 88. Cf. Amos 2:6–8; 3:9–10; 4:1; 5:4–7, 10–15, 18–27.

25. Mays, *Amos*, 73. Cf. Smith, *Amos*, 193, 195; Paul, *Amos*, 141.

26. Achtemeier, *Minor Prophets I*, 199–200. Cf. Smith, *Amos*, 193.

27. Smith, *Amos*, 192–193, 195. Cf. Chisholm, *Interpreting the Minor Prophets*, 88.

28. Cf. Amos 6:13.

29. Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 434. Cf. Amos 3:14; 5:6, 21–23; 7:9; 9:1.

30. Smith and Page, *Amos, Obadiah, Jonah*, 87–88; Paul, *Amos*, 139, 141.

31. Paul, *Amos*, 139.

32. Paul, *Amos*, 139. Cf. Isa 1:16–17; Jer. 9:22–23; 22:15–16; Hos 6:6; Amos 5:15, 24; Mic 6:8.

33. Smith and Page, *Amos, Obadiah, Jonah*, 87–88. Cf. Harper, *Amos and Hosea*, 93.

34. Paul, *Amos*, 139. Cf. Harper, *Amos and Hosea*, 91.

35. Paul, *Amos*, 139. Cf. Harper, *Amos and Hosea*, 91.

36. Harper, *Amos and Hosea*, 91.

37. Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 425.

38. Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 424.

39. Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 434.

40. Paul R. House, *1, 2 Kings*, NAC 8 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003), 171–172.

41. House, *1, 2 Kings*, 172.

42. House, *1, 2 Kings*, 314.

43. The city of Bethel was south of Israel's capital of Samaria and about ten miles north of Jerusalem. It was here that Jacob dreamt of the ladder to heaven and received from Yahweh the promise of Abraham (cf. Gen 28:10–22; 35:1–15.) Due to its ancestral importance Bethel became a cultic shrine to the

God of the patriarchs (Achtemeier, *Minor Prophets I*, 199. Cf. Mays, *Amos*, 74. Cf. Gen 12:8; 28:10ff.). Gilgal was on the eastern edge of the Northern Kingdom on the border of Jericho. It was Israel's first campsite upon entry into the land under Joshua. The people had taken stones out of the Jordan River and arranged them as a memorial to remind them of how Yahweh miraculously allowed them to cross the river. Since that event, the site was a popular place for Israel to worship Yahweh. Noteworthy is that when Joshua assigned multiple cities to tribal territories in Joshua 15, Gilgal is not mentioned. This may signal the site never became a place where people lived (Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 432). Gilgal was also where Saul was anointed as the first king of Israel. Early on in Israel's history Gilgal was used for military purposes but overtime it declined in strategic importance. During the time of Amos its importance was predominately religious (Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 431–432. Cf. Mays, *Amos*, 75; Achtemeier, *Minor Prophets I*, 200).

44. Achtemeier, *Minor Prophets I*, 199–200.

45. House, *1, 2 Kings*, 184. See House's references to H. Donner, "The Separate States of Israel and Judah," 387 and to Martin Noth, *History of Israel*, 232.

46. House, *1, 2 Kings*, 179. Cf. Paton, "Did Amos Approve the Calf-Worship at Bethel?," 80.

47. John Bright as quoted by House, *1, 2 Kings*, 184.

48. Paton, "Did Amos Approve the Calf-Worship at Bethel?," 81.

49. Paton, "Did Amos Approve the Calf-Worship at Bethel?," 81.

50. Paton, "Did Amos Approve the Calf-Worship at Bethel?," 81.

51. John Bright as quoted by House, *1, 2 Kings*, 184.

52. House, *1, 2 Kings*, 185, 179.

53. House, *1, 2 Kings*, 189.

54. House, *1, 2 Kings*, 205.

55. House, *1, 2 Kings*, 199.

56. House, *1, 2 Kings*, 188.

57. House, *1, 2 Kings*, 192. Cf. 1 Kgs 13:15–16.

58. House, *1, 2 Kings*, 178. Cf. 1 Kgs 16:7, 9, 26.

59. House, *1, 2 Kings*, 206–207.

60. House, *1, 2 Kings*, 347.

61. House, *1, 2 Kings*, 203.

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62. Paton, "Did Amos Approve the Calf-Worship at Bethel?," 81.
63. House, *1, 2 Kings*, 295.
64. Paton, "Did Amos Approve the Calf-Worship at Bethel?," 81.
65. House, *1, 2 Kings*, 309, 321.
66. Paton, "Did Amos Approve the Calf-Worship at Bethel?," 81.
67. Paton, "Did Amos Approve the Calf-Worship at Bethel?," 81.
68. To this effect, Paton quotes Julius Wellhausen: "For [Amos], the golden calf is in no sense the radical sin of Israel; he never wages war against it; in fact, never attacks any detail of the cult" ("Did Amos Approve the Calf-Worship at Bethel?," 82).
69. Paton, "Did Amos Approve the Calf-Worship at Bethel?," 82.
70. Paton, "Did Amos Approve the Calf-Worship at Bethel?," 82. Cf. Hos 8:4–6.
71. Paton, "Did Amos Approve the Calf-Worship at Bethel?," 82.
72. Paton, "Did Amos Approve the Calf-Worship at Bethel?," 82.
73. Paton, "Did Amos Approve the Calf-Worship at Bethel?," 82–83.
74. Paton, "Did Amos Approve the Calf-Worship at Bethel?," 83. Cf. Hos 4:3 and Amos 8:8; Hos 4:15 and Amos 5:5; Hos 5:5; 7:10 and Amos 8:7; Hos 8:14b and Amos 2:5; Hos 9:3 and Amos 7:17; Hos 10:8 and Amos 7:9; Hos 12:7 and Amos 8:5.
75. Paton, "Did Amos Approve the Calf-Worship at Bethel?," 83, 89–90.
76. Paton, "Did Amos Approve the Calf-Worship at Bethel?," 90.
77. Paton, "Did Amos Approve the Calf-Worship at Bethel?," 83.
78. Paton, "Did Amos Approve the Calf-Worship at Bethel?," 84.
79. Paton, "Did Amos Approve the Calf-Worship at Bethel?," 84.
80. Paton, "Did Amos Approve the Calf-Worship at Bethel?," 84. Cf. Amos 1:2–4:3; 4:4–5:17; 5:18–6:14.
81. Paton, "Did Amos Approve the Calf-Worship at Bethel?," 84.
82. House, *1, 2 Kings*, 341. Cf. 2 Kgs 17:15, 34–41.
83. Paton, "Did Amos Approve the Calf-Worship at Bethel?," 83, 87, 89.
84. Paton, "Did Amos Approve the Calf-Worship at Bethel?," 89.
85. Paton, "Did Amos Approve the Calf-Worship at Bethel?," 89. Cf. Amos 1:5; 3:14; 7:9; 9:1–4.
86. House, *1, 2 Kings*, 212.

87. Chisholm, *Interpreting the Minor Prophets*, 88.
88. Achtemeier, *Minor Prophets I*, 199. Cf. Mays, *Amos*, 75; Smith, *Amos*, 194. Cf. Lev 3; 7.
89. Paul, *Amos*, 140. Cf. Harper, *Amos and Hosea*, 92.
90. Achtemeier, *Minor Prophets I*, 199. Cf. Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 434.
91. Mays, *Amos*, 75.
92. Mays, *Amos*, 75. Cf. Smith and Page, *Amos, Obadiah, Jonah*, 88.
93. Smith, *Amos*, 194. Cf. Paul, *Amos*, 140.
94. Mays, *Amos*, 75.
95. Achtemeier, *Minor Prophets I*, 199. Cf. Mays, *Amos*, 75; Smith and Page, *Amos, Obadiah, Jonah*, 88. Cf. Lev 22:29–30.
96. Smith and Page, *Amos, Obadiah, Jonah*, 88.
97. Mays, *Amos*, 75.
98. Paul, *Amos*, 141.
99. Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 433. Cf. Harper, *Amos and Hosea*, 93; Smith, *Amos*, 187.
100. Harper, *Amos and Hosea*, 93.
101. Exodus 23:18, 34:25, and Lev 2:11 forbid leavened bread to be offered and burned on the altar along with blood sacrifices. Leviticus 7:12–13 does allow leavened bread to be offered along with a thanksgiving animal sacrifice of well-being but says the bread is not to be burned but rather was to be eaten by the priests. Leviticus 2:11 and 6:17 do allow for unleavened bread to be burned in thank offerings.
102. Honeycutt, *Amos and His Message*, 83.
103. Harper, *Amos and Hosea*, 92–93.
104. Harper, *Amos and Hosea*, 93.
105. Harper, *Amos and Hosea*, 93. Cf. Mays, *Amos*, 75. Cf. Lev 7:12 and Exod 23:18.
106. Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 433.
107. Harper, *Amos and Hosea*, 92–93. Cf. Hos 3:1.
108. Smith and Page, *Amos, Obadiah, Jonah*, 88.

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109. Paul, *Amos*, 141. Cf. Smith, *Amos*, 187. Cf. Exod 35:5–7, 29; Lev 7:16; 22:18, 21; 23:38; Num 15:3; 29:39; Deut 12:6, 17.

110. Mays, *Amos*, 75.

111. Smith and Page, *Amos, Obadiah, Jonah*, 88.

112. Paton, “Did Amos Approve the Calf-Worship at Bethel?,” 89–90.

113. Mays, *Amos*, 74.

114. Smith and Page, *Amos, Obadiah, Jonah*, 88.

115. Smith and Page, *Amos, Obadiah, Jonah*, 88.

Articulating a Theology of Jesus

Jonathan R. Pratt

Ever since New Testament theology developed as a branch of the broader discipline of biblical theology, scholars have debated how such a theology should be constructed.¹ Are we to use the categories of systematic theology and then see what each NT author had to say about these areas?² Or should we study the post-Easter preaching of the early church to see how Christians developed the theology of the NT?³ Some have sought to organize NT theology using significant themes found therein.⁴ Still others have traced the theological themes of the individual writers of the NT with the goal of showing the unity of these themes.⁵

But regardless of the approach taken, one important question persists: *What role should the words and works of Jesus have in forming a NT theology?* Undeniably, the things Jesus said and did should play a central part in the drama of this pursuit. In fact Jesus's words and deeds ought to be the starting point in any formulation of a NT theology. Before we ask what any of the Gospel writers or Paul or Peter believed about Jesus, we ought to consider what Jesus believed as revealed in his words and works. Discovering and articulating this theology of Jesus, as I argue in

this essay, should be seen as a key component in designing a NT theology.

I will proceed by dealing with four issues that provide the structure in which to delineate the various aspects of Jesus's theology. First, I will establish the *warrant* for the study of Jesus's theology as a legitimate pursuit. Second, I will provide a survey of previous attempts to answer this question in order to show the *need* for such an enterprise today. Third, I will address the *challenges* that face those who attempt a study of Jesus's theology. And fourth, I will delineate a *methodology* for the study of the theology of Jesus.

1. The Warrant for the Study

The assertion that Jesus's theology should be the starting point in articulating a NT theology may seem quite impossible or at best naïve, but I propose five reasons why such an enterprise should be pursued, not just as a possibility, but even more as a necessity. I will classify these reasons under two broad categories: theological and historical.

1.1 Theological Warrants

There are at least two theological reasons that warrant a study of Jesus's theology. First, the reality of who Jesus is demands that we study his theology. The author of Hebrews refers to Jesus as the founder of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). Paul calls Jesus the head (Eph 5:23; Col 1:18) and cornerstone (Eph 2:20) of the church. Furthermore, Jesus's words and works are significant because he is the second person of the Godhead (John 1:1; Titus 2:13; Heb 1:8).⁶ God revealed himself by many different avenues throughout biblical history (Heb 1:1), but in Jesus he has provided revelation about himself directly. Jesus's words ought to be

investigated because he is the head of the church and because he is God.

The efforts made by the followers of Jesus to preserve his words in writing establishes the basis for the second reason we should study his theology. As the canon took shape, the church came to recognize the four Gospels as authoritative books inspired by God.⁷ The Gospel writers chose to focus their attention on the Son of God's words and works because they did not want to lose any of the truth about Jesus due to the failure of people's memories.⁸ Indeed, guarding this tradition about Jesus was of supreme importance to the NT writers (2 Thess 2:15; 1 Tim 6:20; Jude 3).⁹ This is evident in the amount of canonical space dedicated to the preservation of what he said and did.¹⁰ It is also evident in the application of Jesus's teaching to the church shown in Acts, the epistles, and Revelation. Since Jesus is the focus of the NT revelation, his words preserved therein deserve pride of place in any articulation of a NT theology.

1.2 Historical Warrants

There are three historical reasons Jesus's words and works ought to be the starting point in constructing NT theology. First, before James or Mark or Paul, Jesus spoke. His words and works formed the basis for what these men and all the other NT writers thought and theologized.¹¹ Jesus taught his disciples, interacted with his opponents, performed miracles, comforted his followers, and prophesied about his death and the life to come. He did all of this before any of the apostles preserved it in writing or sought to develop theological dogma based upon what he had said and done.

Second, this simple chronological priority should be taken a step further. Peter Stuhlmacher argues that there are three possible starting points one could take when developing a NT the-

ology: Jesus's preaching, the Easter message (i.e., the preaching about the death and resurrection of Christ), and the theology of Paul.¹² It is possible to argue for the legitimacy of any one of the three depending on one's goal. If one seeks to use the oldest NT writings as the starting point, then the letters of Paul would be the choice.¹³ If one relies on the construction of the NT tradition, indebted as it is to the death and resurrection of Christ, then the Easter message would be a natural starting point. But if the goal is "to trace the path which God took when he, in and through Jesus Christ, came to humanity,"¹⁴ then one ought to start NT theology with Jesus because God chose to reveal himself in him. Jesus's preaching and teaching, then, should be the starting point of a NT theology since God chose to reveal his truth in and through Jesus prior to the theological conclusions his followers would make following Jesus's resurrection.¹⁵ Furthermore, Jesus's preaching forms the basis of the later kerygma of the church.¹⁶

The third historical reason we ought to engage in the study of Jesus's theology relates to the significance of Jesus's words and works in the inspired writings of his followers. Besides the Gospels, which intend to preserve the words and works of Jesus,¹⁷ Acts, the epistles, and Revelation base many of their arguments on the words of Jesus himself.

There are a few direct quotations of Jesus in Acts and the epistles. Twice in Acts Peter (Acts 11:16) and Paul (Acts 20:35) use Jesus's words to validate a point they were making to their audiences. In 1 Cor 11:24–25, Paul quotes Jesus's words at the Last Supper as a template to be used for the church's communion celebration, and in 1 Tim 5:18, he quotes Jesus's words from Luke 10:7 to support the idea of caring for elders. And, though not directly quoting Jesus, Paul refers to his teaching on marriage in 1 Cor 7:10–11.

The allusions to Jesus's words in Acts, the epistles, and Revelation are too numerous to delineate exhaustively here, but a few examples will suffice to show the authority of his words in the NT tradition. In Acts, Philip (8:12) and Paul (20:25; 28:31) preach the same message (the gospel of the kingdom) that Jesus did (Mark 1:15). Paul alludes to the words of Jesus in 2 Thess 3:3 (cf. Matt 6:13); 2 Tim 2:12 (cf. Matt 10:33); and Phil 3:7–8 (cf. Mark 8:36). We find many allusions to Jesus's teaching in James (2:5 [cf. Luke 6:20]; 5:1–6 [cf. Luke 6:24]), the Johannine epistles (1 John 3:11 and 2 John 5 [cf. John 13:34]; 1 John 3:8 [cf. John 8:44]), and Revelation (2:10 [cf. Matt 10:28]; 16:15 [cf. Matt 24:43; Mark 13:37]) as well.

Besides quotations and allusions, Jesus's use of the OT prompted his followers to employ the same texts in their preaching and teaching.¹⁸ Jesus cited Gen 2:24 in his teaching on marriage, as did Paul (Eph 5:31). The writer of Hebrews quoted or alluded to Ps 110 at least twenty times,¹⁹ and was most likely pointed there by Jesus's words (Matt 22:44 and par.; Mark 14:62 and par.). Likewise, Peter (Acts 2:34–35; 1 Pet 3:22) and Paul (Rom 8:34; 1 Cor 15:25; Eph 1:20; Col 3:1) used the Psalm with reference to Jesus's exalted status. When speaking about his rejection by unbelieving Jews, Jesus cited Ps 118:22 (Luke 20:17 and par.). Peter referred back to this usage in Acts 4:11 and 1 Pet 2:7. Paul quoted Isa 6:9–10 in Acts 28:26–27, using the prophet's words exactly the way Jesus did when using this text to explain his hearers' failure to grasp his message (Matt 13:14–15 and par.). Finally, Jesus referred to Dan 7:13 during his eschatological discourse (Matt 24:30 and par.) and at his trial (Mark 14:62 and par.). Both Stephen (Acts 7:56) and the writer of Hebrews (1:3) likely made this same connection because of Jesus's prior usage.

I have shown that there is a fivefold warrant for delineating Jesus's theology. Two theological reasons include (1) a Chris-

tological argument: Jesus is head of the church and is divine; and (2) a scriptural argument: more than half of the canonical NT books preserve the words and works of Jesus. Three historical points include the chronological reality that (1) Jesus spoke and acted prior to any written revelation; (2) the preaching and teaching of Jesus preceded and formed the basis for the later preaching of the church; and (3) the significance of Jesus's words and works seen in the abundance of quotations and allusions in Acts, the epistles, and Revelation show the value and significance of Jesus's words in the canonical record.

2. The Need for the Study

Despite legitimate reasons to prioritize Jesus's theology, many remain unconvinced. On the other hand, some have embraced the notion as foundational for NT theology. With few exceptions,²⁰ most of the nineteenth and early twentieth century theologies of Jesus followed the *Heilsgeschichte* approach championed by F. C. Baur and the Tübingen school.²¹ This trend ran headlong into a formidable wall built in part by two of the greatest conservative biblical theologians of the early twentieth century—Adolf von Schlatter in Germany and Gerhardus Vos in the United States.²² Both considered the historical Jesus and his teaching foundational for NT theology.²³ Thus, at the beginning of the twentieth century there were two basic approaches to Jesus's theology. On the one hand were those who rejected the historical nature of the words and works of Jesus. For them a consideration of Jesus's actual teaching was impossible because the NT bears testimony only to the thoughts and opinions of the early church about Jesus. On the other hand, those who accepted the sayings of Jesus as being authentically preserved in the Gospels, believed that NT theology ought to begin with a presentation of Jesus's theology.

Throughout the rest of the twentieth century and up to the present, NT scholars handled the teaching/theology of Jesus in three basic ways. First, some rejected it outright as a hopelessly impossible enterprise since the Jesus of history is impossible to extricate from the Christ of faith. Rudolf Bultmann, for example, proclaimed, "The message of Jesus is a presupposition for the theology of the New Testament rather than a part of that theology itself."²⁴ For Bultmann, "[t]he theology of the New Testament begins with the *kerygma* of the earliest church and not before."²⁵

In contrast, following the work of Schlatter and Vos, several conservative scholars have included Jesus's theology as a part of their explication of NT theology,²⁶ including Peter Stuhlmacher (1992), G. B. Caird (1994), N. T. Wright (1996), Larry Helyer (2008), and Ben Witherington (2016).²⁷ Of these, Caird, Helyer, and Witherington spend one or two chapters explaining Jesus's theology. Stuhlmacher dedicates half of his work (about 200 pages in the German edition) to Jesus's teaching (in many respects his work is patterned after the approach of Schlatter). Wright deals with many categories of Jesus's thought, but he does so deductively with an ulterior goal in mind.²⁸ An important subset of works exist whose authors did not necessarily intend to make a specific contribution to the discipline of NT theology but which do, nonetheless, provide an explanation of Jesus's theology.²⁹

Alongside these conservative scholars are several others who, though not necessarily accepting the historical Jesus, still believe that the writing of a NT theology ought to begin with the preaching of Jesus. Thomas W. Manson (1935), Joachim Jeremias (1971), and Leonhard Goppelt (1981) all present book length treatments of Jesus's theology.³⁰ Werner Kümmel (1973) deals with the theology of Jesus, Paul, and John in separate sec-

tions and then finishes with a synthesis of the three in his concluding chapter.³¹ Ferdinand Hahn (2005) devotes Part 1 of his NT theology to defending the use of Jesus's preaching for the foundation of NT theology.³² Finally, Udo Schnelle (2009) dedicates one chapter to the proclamation of Jesus.³³

The third approach to the teachings of Jesus is not really an approach at all but is rather an omission. Several NT theologies have been produced in the past forty years by evangelical scholars who appear to assume the foundational nature of Jesus's teaching. Though all would strongly affirm the historicity of Jesus and the authoritative nature of his words, none have dedicated even a chapter of their books to a treatment of Jesus's theology.³⁴

Beginning with George Ladd and Chester Lehman in 1974 and moving forward to the works of Donald Guthrie (1981), Leon Morris (1986), Roy Zuck and Darrell Bock (1994), I. Howard Marshall (2004), Frank Thielman (2005), Thomas Schreiner (2008), and Julius Scott (2008), evangelical Christians have enjoyed an abundance of NT theological studies.³⁵ However, each of these books gives no space to Jesus's theological instruction.

This absence of attention to the theology of Jesus is also evident in seven monograph series dedicated to biblical theology. From 1952–1975, SCM Press/Alec R. Allenson published eighty-two volumes in two series entitled, *Studies in Biblical Theology*. Only two of these monographs deals with Jesus's theology.³⁶ Cambridge University Press published sixteen volumes in a series entitled *New Testament Theology* from 1991–2003, none of which explicated a theology of Jesus. At present, four publishers are producing multi-volume series on biblical theology: *New Studies in Biblical Theology* (Inter-Varsity Press), *NAC Studies in Bible and Theology* (B&H Publishing Group),

Explorations in Biblical Theology (P&R Publishing), and Library of Biblical Theology (Abingdon Press).³⁷ None of the seventy-one volumes in these four series includes a study of Jesus's theology. Lastly, Zondervan's Biblical Theology of the New Testament series will eventually consist of eight volumes, none dealing with the theology of Jesus.³⁸

Despite the proliferation of monographs in biblical theology, there are surprisingly few presentations focused on Jesus's theology. Though there remain many evangelical scholars who are ably writing in defense of the historical Jesus and who are making significant contributions to the discipline of NT theology, very few have seen fit to articulate Jesus's theology let alone make it the starting point of NT theology. In fact, since 1900 only Adolf Schlatter (1920) has presented a conservative, book-length treatment of the subject.³⁹ Even when we add non-conservatives to the mix, only Jeremias (1971) and Goppelt (1981) come into view. Moving onward to shorter treatments of Jesus's theology within larger NT theological works, we find that since 1950 only N. T. Wright (1996), Peter Stuhlmacher (1992), and Ferdinand Hahn (2005) have provided more than a couple of chapters discussing Jesus's theology.

3. The Challenges of the Study

If the effort of articulating a theology of Jesus and placing it at the head of the enterprise of NT theology is both warranted and necessary, several hurdles face those who would undertake this task. These include the question of the historical Jesus, the identification of Jesus's words, and the time when he spoke them.

3.1 The Historical Jesus

For conservative theologians the historical Jesus and the theological Christ are the same individual. Anyone wishing to know

who Jesus was and what he said can readily discover this information in the Gospels. There is no need to peel back the layers of tradition formed over decades by well-meaning Christians bent on developing a positive theological picture of Jesus. They affirm that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John accurately reported the teachings of Jesus without erring and according to the intended meaning of Jesus himself. Such scholars should not have any problem delineating a theology of Jesus since the Gospels convey his teaching accurately and provide the right theological and historical context in which to understand it.

But such a perspective does not find happy acceptance among less conservative scholars. For them the effort to articulate Jesus's theology is quite improbable, if not impossible, because the Gospels reveal a "remembered Jesus"⁴⁰ rather than a "recited Jesus."⁴¹ At best, Jesus's words recorded in the four Gospels bear some resemblance to what Jesus might have actually said, and at worst they provide only a faint hint. Either way these words, purported to have come from Jesus, cannot serve as fertile ground for the articulation of Jesus's theology because there is no way to be confident that what the Gospel writers recorded reflects the actual words of Jesus.⁴²

An inordinate amount of time spent on the defense of the historical Jesus in the pursuit of his theology can hopelessly sidetrack us from the goal. Fundamental differences should be acknowledged and accounted for, but they should not detain those who trust Scripture from articulating Jesus's own theology. Since I approach the question from the conservative perspective, I point the reader to the multitude of works which offer significant support to the accuracy of the historical Jesus found in the Gospels.⁴³ And I concur with those who argue that the burden of proof in this discussion lies with those who deny the historicity of Jesus's words and work.⁴⁴

3.2 *The Identification of Jesus's Words*

Another challenge facing the pursuit of Jesus's theology: what exactly did Jesus say? There are three aspects to this question. First, identifying the original Greek text of the NT must precede all other investigation. This whole subject, of course, plunges us into the technical world of NT textual criticism. Interestingly, the two largest variant readings in the NT contain significant and unique teachings by Jesus: the *Pericope Adulterae* (John 7:53–8:11) and the ending of Mark (16:9–20). Including or excluding these passages in a description of Jesus's theology requires prior textual decisions to be made.

Second, we must inquire into situations where Jesus's words are easily confused with the words of the Evangelist; i.e., where do Jesus's words end and the Evangelist's comments begin? For example, in John 3:1–15 Nicodemus comes to Jesus at night and they interact over the question of how one can be born again. Jesus gives a rather lengthy answer in vv. 10–15 as he speaks about the necessity of the Son of Man's death. Many red-letter editions continue to print vv. 16–21 in red, but are these Jesus's words? If we consider the parallel story in 3:22–36 with John the Baptist, it appears that John the Evangelist has followed the same pattern in both narratives. That is, in 3:1–15 and in 3:22–30, the Evangelist records the interaction between the characters; then, in 3:16–21 and 3:31–36 he provides a commentary on what just occurred.⁴⁵ Thus, the words of John 3:16–21 are not those of Jesus but are, rather, the words of the Evangelist. Hence, these six verses should not be used when articulating a theology of Jesus.

Third, the issue of the *ipsissima verba* and the *ipsissima vox* of Jesus requires attention. The precise Aramaic words spoken by Jesus are recorded quite infrequently in the Gospels.⁴⁶ Aside from his words on the cross (Matt 27:46; Mark 15:34) and his words

to Jairus's daughter (Mark 5:41), there are few other instances where Jesus's Aramaic words are recorded. Rather, the Evangelists have translated Jesus's Aramaic words into Greek. A problem arises when we consider the extent to which the Evangelists are translating or summarizing Jesus's voice. If the words of Jesus recorded in the Gospels differ at all (assuming that the words were spoken at the same event; e.g., the Lord's Supper or the feeding of the 5,000), how can we discern the theology of Jesus since such changes represent the various theological interests of the particular Evangelist who recorded the event? These differences help to show the theology of Matthew or Luke, but they could tend to confuse the effort to articulate Jesus's theology.

With few exceptions,⁴⁷ the differences between Gospel quotations of Jesus do not affect one's understanding of the meaning of Jesus's words. Two examples must suffice:⁴⁸

Matt 16:13: "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"

Mark 8:27: "Who do people say I am?"

Luke 9:18: "Who do the crowds say I am?"

While Jesus probably said, "Son of Man," Mark's and Luke's insertion of "I" in its place does not constitute a change in meaning; the same can be said for Luke's use of "crowds" as opposed to Matthew's and Mark's use of "people." A second example comes from Jesus's trial:

Matt 26:64: "Yes, it is as you say.... But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."

Mark 14:62: “I am.... And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

Luke 22:67b–70: “If I tell you, you will not believe me, and if I asked you, you would not answer. But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God.”

Again, there are a few differences between the three accounts, but as Bock states, “Though there is variation and difference in detail, the gist of the replies is the same.”⁴⁹

Thus, the attempt to articulate Jesus’s theology is not thwarted by the slight modifications the Evangelists may have made to the words of Jesus.⁵⁰

3.3 The Timing of Jesus’s Words

When considering the raw material needed for articulating a theology of Jesus, we must set the parameters not only with regard to identifying Jesus’s words but also with regard to their timing. The Gospels are the main source of Jesus’s teachings both before and after his resurrection. Additionally, Acts 1:4–5, 7–8; 11:16 record similar words of Jesus found in Luke 24:47–49. And most agree that the *agraphon* in Acts 20:35 (“It is more blessed to give than to receive”) came from Jesus’s mouth during his earthly ministry. Furthermore, Paul’s recounting of Jesus’s words at the Last Supper in 1 Cor 11:24–25 likely precede the recording of the same words in each of the Gospels. Thus, the words of Jesus in the Gospels, Acts, and 1 Corinthians constitute the bulk of the material for articulating a theology of Jesus.⁵¹

But Jesus said other things from his exalted position at God’s right hand that are recorded in the NT. In Acts 9:4–16 (parallel accounts include Acts 22:7–21; 26:14–18), Christ speaks to Paul

on the Damascus road; Acts 10:13, 15; 11:7, 9 record the words of Christ to Peter in the vision of the sheet; Acts 18:9–10 quotes Jesus's words to Paul in Corinth; in Acts 23:11 Christ comforts Paul regarding his coming witness in Rome; and 2 Cor 12:9 recounts when Christ encouraged Paul in a time of personal weakness. All of these instances relate to the ministry of the apostles and a situation when Christ spoke directly to them.

Furthermore, the Book of Revelation includes Jesus's words to the apostle John on Patmos (Rev 1:8–11, 17–20) and to the seven churches in Asia (Rev 2–3). These are similar to those in Acts and 2 Corinthians in that they provide encouragement and instruction to the first-century church and its leaders. Finally, Christ gives several exhortations regarding his coming (Rev 16:15; 22:7, 12–13, 16, 20), and these are likewise directed to the late first-century readers of this prophecy.

Should these post-ascension words of Christ found in Acts, 2 Corinthians, and Revelation be included in the study of Jesus's theology? Or are Jesus's pre-ascension words qualitatively superior than his post-ascension words as a source for his theology? To the first question, we ought to answer "Yes," which entails "No" to the second. True, Jesus's words in Acts, 2 Corinthians, and Revelation address believers in the church as opposed to his pre-ascension words, which were directed to people not yet in the church (because the church had not yet begun). But this fact does not alter the value of any of Jesus's words recorded in the NT, which were clearly intended to teach the believers of the church the unsearchable riches of Christ.⁵²

The challenge of articulating Jesus's theology does encounter several hurdles. But I have sought to help the reader clear these hurdles with alacrity. First, we have ample reason to affirm that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John accurately reported the words Jesus said and the deeds Jesus performed. Second, we can be con-

fidest we are studying the actual words of Jesus by considering text-critical and contextual issues, while also considering the ipssissima vox of Jesus. Third, we should study both the pre- and post-ascension words of Christ if we hope to delineate a comprehensive theology of Jesus.

4. The Methodology for the Study

Before explaining the method for pursuing a theology of Jesus, I have a few words about alternative approaches to this subject. Some have chosen to explain Jesus's theology by looking at the literary forms he used. Books on the parables of Jesus are one example.⁵³ Others have investigated the commands of Christ.⁵⁴ Certainly, other forms could be studied such as discourses, prophecies, etc. Schlatter's *History of the Christ* approached the theology of Jesus through a chronological and historical consideration of his life. In a sense, reading his book is like reading a life of Christ, although his interests were theological, rather than historical, using the events of Christ's life as a springboard to describe Jesus's theology. While each of these approaches has merit, I propose that a theme-based method holds more promise.

4.1 A Theme-Based Approach

Those who have chosen a thematic treatment of Jesus's theology provide the wisest way forward.⁵⁵ Yet no one to date has attempted a *comprehensive* topical study. So what categories or themes should be used to organize a theology of Jesus?

The answer to the question of category choice best derives from a detailed investigation of all the material available. But the amount of material is immense, and so it seems wise to organize it into smaller chunks such as parables, discourses, imperatives, prophecies, answers to questions, proverbs, etc. Once the material has been organized, one must determine the major theme

or themes addressed and any sub-themes mentioned. Sometimes this theme identification is easy (e.g., a parable which begins with “the Kingdom of Heaven is like...”) and other times quite challenging (e.g., Matt 12:31, “blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven”). Sometimes Jesus interprets his actions clearly as when he explains why he washed the disciples feet (John 13:12–17). Yet in other places his actions and explanations appear quite confusing (e.g., the cleansing of the temple and the prophecy to rebuild it).

Once a set of themes arises from an inductive exegesis, they become the organizing principles used to systematize Jesus’s theology. Sub-themes are then organized under the broad themes. One must avoid a couple temptations in this endeavor. First, one might pursue themes personally intriguing or seemingly more application-oriented rather than those that Jesus emphasized. And second, one might import categories from systematic theology or contemporary issues⁵⁶ rather than use the themes Jesus did. In both cases, there is a temptation to allow external categories to control Jesus’s theology. Rather than following an inductive approach, deductive⁵⁷ approaches that begin with foreign themes tend to see evidence where there may in fact be none.

5. Conclusion

Given the scant treatment of Jesus’s theology in the history of the discipline of NT theology, must we assume that studying the theology of Jesus is a hopelessly futile exercise? Μὴ γένοιτο! (*May it never be!*) New Testament scholars, who hold to the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture, and who declare that the Christ of faith is the Jesus of history, have an immensely wonderful opportunity before them.

The prospect and possibility of articulating a theology of Jesus require attention and involvement, but they also call for certain virtues. Those who would desire to enter the foray must possess at least three. First, they need *courage* to face the potential ridicule that may come from the academy. Ben Witherington's experience will likely be repeated for those who engage in this task:

When my book *The Christology of Jesus* came out at the beginning of the 90s a panel discussion of the book was undertaken at the Society of Biblical Literature. Some scholars saw it as humorous to talk about Jesus viewing himself in a messianic light. Nevertheless, I persisted, and the book has served as a stimulus in the discussion of Jesus' self-understanding. One angry person came up after the panel discussion at the Society of Biblical Literature and accosted me: "You're just a theologian, not a historian, why not just admit it? You're not talking about the historical Jesus, you're talking about the later Christian evaluation of Jesus."⁵⁸

Second, they must have a *love* for our Savior that compels them to pursue a knowledge of his teaching. All understand that, if not for Jesus, there would be no Matthew, Luke, or Romans or any other NT book. Jesus stands at the forefront of the Christian church as its Founder and Head. What he said and did is of profound importance for those who carried on his teachings. Hence, there must be a priority placed upon loving and learning from this Christ since, as Peter confessed, he alone has "the words of eternal life" (John 6:68).⁵⁹

Third, they require *diligence* to investigate closely all the teachings of Jesus. Conservative, Bible-loving scholars ought to lead the way in the detailed and comprehensive study of the words of Jesus. Sadly, liberal scholars like Rudolf Bultmann and F. C.

Baur put many conservatives to shame with their painstakingly thorough scholarship.⁶⁰ Bible-believing scholars who desire to explain the teachings of Jesus for today's church must step forward to engage the task with unfaltering zeal.

I have tried to demonstrate that articulating Jesus's theology holds great promise as a starting point for the task of NT theology. Indeed, this enterprise, though not pursued very often or at great length, holds the potential to provide encouragement and joy in the faith. The words of Jesus are convicting, comforting, instructive, hope-driven. May God give us more who will enter this neglected field of study whose promise is, indeed, as glorious as the Savior whose words and works it seeks to understand and proclaim.

Notes

1. Ernst Käsemann suggested that the discipline of biblical theology arose in the seventeenth century and that NT theology branched off near the beginning of the nineteenth century ("The Problem of a New Testament Theology," *NTS* 19 [1973]: 235). Most scholars would concur (e.g., Gerhard Hasel, *New Testament Theology: Basic issues in the Current Debate* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978], 9, 25). Käsemann's question, "How can a New Testament theology be given a meaningful structure?" ("The Problem of New Testament Theology," 236), indicates the thoughts of many biblical theologians in this quest. For a helpful introductions see Peter Stuhlmacher, *How to Do Biblical Theology* (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick, 1995), 15–27; and Ben Witherington III, *New Testament Theology and Ethics* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 2016), 1:53–58.

2. Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1981).

3. Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. Kendrick Grobel, 2 vols. (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1951, 1955); and William Wrede, "The Task and Nature of 'New Testament Theology,'" trans. Robert Morgan in *The Nature of New Testament Theology*, ed. Robert Morgan (London: SCM Press,

1973), 69–116. This approach is often referred to as the study of *Heilsgeschichte* (history of religions).

4. Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2008); Leon Morris, *New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986); and Alan Richardson, *An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1958).

5. This approach is particularly noticeable in I. Howard Marshall, *New Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2004); and Frank Thielman, *Theology of the New Testament: A Canonical and Synthetic Approach* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005). Roy B. Zuck and Darrell L. Bock also follow the authorial approach although they make no attempt to synthesize the parts into a unified whole (eds., *A Biblical Theology of the New Testament* [Chicago: Moody Press, 1994]). Similarly, Chester K. Lehman, *Biblical Theology, Volume 2: New Testament* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1974); and George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, rev. ed., ed. Donald A. Hagner (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993). Charles C. Ryrie organizes his book by the individual authors, but then under each section he uses systematic categories as the means of explanation (*Biblical Theology of the New Testament* [Chicago: Moody Press, 1959]).

6. Dennis F. Kinlaw has a slightly different project in mind, but he makes this same argument regarding Jesus's deity (*Let's Start with Jesus: A New Way of Doing Theology* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005], 19–24).

7. Of course this recognition process also includes the other twenty-three books of the New Testament. The point here is to acknowledge the preservation of the words of Jesus in the inspired gospels as recognized by the church. See Michael J. Kruger, *Canon Revisited: Establishing the Origins and Authority of the New Testament Books* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 88–122; and Bruce M. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 251–257, 282–288.

8. This is the implication of Luke's words in Luke 1:1–2. Besides loss of memory, there were many other reasons for preserving the traditions about Jesus (Kruger, *Canon Revisited*, 179–184), but the point here relates to the preservation of the tradition in written words.

9. Herman N. Ridderbos shows that the content of the tradition also included other elements such as the gospel message (1 Cor 15:1–8), teachings of Christian doctrine (Rom 6:17; Jude 3), and moral and ethical guidelines (1 Cor 11:2; 1 Thess 4:1–2) (*Redemptive History and the New Testament Scriptures*, rev. Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., trans. H. DeJongste [Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1988], 15–21).

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10. Grouping the Gospels together with the words of Jesus recorded in the rest of the NT, 49% of the NT is dedicated to the preservation of the words and works of Jesus. This number does not include any references to Jesus's work (i.e., crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, etc.) recorded in Acts–Revelation. It is safe to say that over half of the NT specifically preserves the words and works of Jesus.

11. Adolf von Schlatter, *The History of the Christ: The Foundation for New Testament Theology*, trans. Andreas Köstenberger (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1997), 18–19.

12. Stuhlmacher, *Biblical Theology*, 15. Also, G. B. Caird, *New Testament Theology*, ed. L. D. Hurst (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 345–47.

13. Some argue that James precedes Paul; e.g., John Drane, *Introducing the New Testament*, 3rd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 380; and D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 627.

14. Stuhlmacher, *Biblical Theology*, 15.

15. Stuhlmacher, *Biblical Theology*, 16. I need to make two significant points of clarification. First, when I refer to Jesus's preaching and teaching I am including his works, which he often used as platforms for the truths he wanted to teach (e.g., John 10:24–26; 13:12–16). Second, in speaking of the “starting point” of NT theology as consisting of Jesus's words and works, I am not suggesting the need to do historical research behind the text in order to somehow discern the “actual words and deeds” of Jesus. Rather, I am arguing for the need to think chronologically, organizing and delineating Jesus's theology from the inspired and preserved words and works of Jesus already recorded in the NT. Obviously, Jesus's theology is much broader than this (see John 21:25!), but I am limiting this study to the NT corpus alone.

16. Leonhard Goppelt, *Theology of the New Testament, Volume 1: The Ministry of Jesus in its Theological Significance*, trans. John Alsup (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981), 7.

17. Clearly the Gospel writers' intent went beyond the simple preserving of Jesus's words and works because they had theological interests as well. But the point I am making relates to the comparison of the Gospels, with their historical-biographical aspects, to the theological perspectives of Acts, the epistles, and Revelation.

18. Note the helpful chart in Steve Moyise, *Jesus and Scripture: Studying the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2010), 122–123. Two studies on Jesus's use of the Old Testament include R. T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament: His Application of Old Testament Passages to Himself*

and *His Mission* (London: Inter-Varsity, 1971); and Charles A. Kimball, *Jesus' Exposition of the Old Testament in Luke's Gospel*, JSNTSup 94 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994).

19. This number comes from Steve Moyise, *The Later New Testament Writings and Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2012), 95. This large number of references to Psalm 110 prompted George Buchanan's overstatement that Hebrews is a "homiletical midrash based on Ps 110" (*To the Hebrews*, AB [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1972], xix).

20. Some exceptions include Joseph Parrish Thompson, *The Theology of Christ from his Own Words* (New York: Charles Scribner & Co., 1871); and John M. King, *The Theology of Christ's Teaching* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1902). Two examples of more specific aspects of Jesus's theology include James Stalker, *The Christology of Jesus: Being His Teaching Concerning Himself According to the Synoptic Gospels* (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1900); and George Smeaton, *The Doctrine of the Atonement as Taught by Christ Himself* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1871; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1953). Rudolf Stier combined a harmony of the Gospels approach along with a commentary on the words of Jesus such that the result should be considered a theology of Jesus (*The Words of the Lord Jesus*, trans. William B. Pope, 8 vols. [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1855]). Also see Stier, *The Words of the Risen Saviour*, trans. William B. Pope (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1871; repr., Minneapolis: Klock & Klock Christian Publishers, 1982).

21. William Wrede's "The Task and Nature of 'New Testament Theology'" (originally published in 1897 as *Über Aufgabe und Methode der sogenannten neutestamentlichen Theologie*) summarized and exemplified the conclusions of the nineteenth century with regard to the place of Jesus's theology in NT theology. Not everyone adopted a purely critical approach. For example, Willibald Beyschlag, though questioning the historical reality of some accounts in the Gospels, recognized the need for a "presentation of the teaching of Jesus for its own sake. The teaching of Jesus is to us a main fact of New Testament theology" (*New Testament Theology*, trans. Neil Buchanan, 2nd English ed., 2 vols. [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1899], 18).

22. Schlatter's *The History of the Christ* (see note 11) was originally published in German in 1909–1910 and was revised in 1920–1922. Geerhardus Vos published *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1948) near the end of his life, but he spoke and wrote about biblical theology very early in his career; e.g., his Princeton inaugural address, "The Idea of Biblical Theology as a Science and as a Theological Discipline" (published in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus*

Vos, ed. Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. [Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2001], 3–24) was delivered May 8, 1894. Schlatter and Vos receive varying reviews with regard to biblical, and more specifically, NT theology. Although Vos never wrote a NT theology, his book shows awareness of the importance of Jesus's teaching in the formulation of a whole biblical theology and of NT theology in particular (Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 321–327). Though Schlatter did not receive the attention he should have had in Anglo-American biblical scholarship (his NT theology was not translated into English until 1997), he nonetheless has been deemed the intellectual equal of his German contemporaries. Morgan assesses Schlatter as “perhaps the only ‘conservative’ New Testament scholar since Bengel who can be rated in the same class as Baur, Wrede, Bousset, and Bultmann” (*Nature of New Testament Theology*, 27). Käsemann agrees: “Undoubtedly [Schlatter] is to be ranked as Bultmann’s one and only peer” (“The Problem of a New Testament Theology,” 239).

23. For Vos the revelation of Christ can be divided into four areas: (1) general revelation; (2) the OT; (3) Jesus’s public ministry from birth to ascension; and (4) mediated revelation through the apostles (*Biblical Theology*, 326, 369–372). Vos spends the last fifty-five pages of his book explaining the content of Jesus’s teaching which shows that he considers this to be the foundation for NT theology. Schlatter states his starting point clearly when he says, “The knowledge of Jesus [i.e., the words and work of the historical Jesus] is the foremost, indispensable component of New Testament theology” (*The History of Christ*, 19). He then proceeds to flesh out this “knowledge of Jesus” in a detailed account of the theology of Jesus as revealed in the various events of his earthly life and death.

24. Bultmann, *New Testament Theology*, 1:3.

25. Bultmann, *New Testament Theology*, 1:3. But Bultmann could be said to stand on the shoulders of Martin Kähler who argued for a similar kerygmatic starting point a generation earlier (*The So-Called Historical Jesus and the Historic Biblical Christ*, trans. and ed. Carl E. Braaten [original German ed. 1892; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964], 30). See Werner Georg Kümmel, *The Theology of the New Testament*, trans. John E. Steely (Nashville: Abingdon, 1973), 24. Equally critical of starting with Jesus, William Wrede argues that “Paul is still the real creator of a Christian theology” (*Paul*, trans. Edward Lummis [London: Philip Green, 1907], 177). Likewise, Käsemann: “We do not come on to firm ground of any considerable, though still limited, extent until we reach Paul and his amanuenses, and consideration should be given to the question whether New Testament theology ought not methodologically to begin with him” (“The Problem of a New Testament Theology,” 243). For more discussion, see James D. G. Dunn, *New Testament Theology: An Introduction* (Nashville: Abingdon,

2009), 26. Bultmann and Wrede are only a small representation of critical scholars who have approached the notion of Jesus's theology in this way. Several other notable writers who shared this perspective include: Hans Conzelmann, *An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Harper & Row, 1969); Joachim Gnilka, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (Freiburg: Herder, 1994); and Georg Strecker, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. M. Eugene Boring (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000).

26. The use of "conservative" here relates to the fact that the authors mentioned hold to the historical reality of Jesus and to the fact that the Gospels retain accurate reports of the things Jesus said and did.

27. G. B. Caird, *New Testament Theology*; N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996); Peter Stuhlmacher, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments, Band 1: Grundlegung Von Jesus zu Paulus*, 3rd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005; recently published in English as *Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, trans. and ed. Daniel P. Bailey [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2018]); Larry Helyer, *The Witness of Jesus, Paul and John: An Exploration in Biblical Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2008); Witherington III, *New Testament Theology*. There are numerous books which address one aspect of Jesus's theology but do not seek to provide an organized summary of all that Jesus taught. Some examples include: Geerhardus Vos, *The Teaching of Jesus Concerning the Kingdom and the Church*, 2nd ed. (New York: American Tract Society, 1903); Reginald H. Fuller, *The Mission and Achievement of Jesus: An Examination of the Presuppositions of New Testament Theology*, SBT 1/12 (London: SCM Press, 1954); W. G. Kümmel, *Promise and Fulfilment: The Eschatological Message of Jesus*, SBT 1/23, trans. Dorothea M. Barton (Naperville, IL: Allenson, 1957); Norman Perrin, *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963); Amos N. Wilder, *Eschatology and Ethics in the Teaching of Jesus*, rev. ed. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1978); A. J. B. Higgins, *The Son of Man in the Teaching of Jesus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); and Ben Witherington III, *The Christology of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990).

28. Wright: "Since I intend to argue in this and the next two chapters that a good deal of what is generally called the 'teaching' of Jesus is best characterized in terms of implicit, and sometimes explicit, story, it is vital that the general point be grasped in advance" (*Jesus and the Victory of God*, 198–99). It seems that Wright's treatment of Jesus's theology is limited to his larger aims in his book rather than to a general overview of all the themes Jesus included in his teaching ministry.

29. Robert F. Horton, *The Teaching of Jesus in Eighteen Sections* (London: Isbister and Company, Limited, 1895); A. E. J. Rawlinson, *Christ in the Gospels*

(London: Oxford University Press, 1944); Robert H. Stein, *The Method and Message of Jesus' Teachings* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978), 60–148; Norman Anderson, *The Teaching of Jesus* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1983); Scot McKnight, *A New Vision for Israel: The Teachings of Jesus in National Context* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999); and Craig L. Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels: An Introduction and Survey*, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2009), 447–482.

30. T. W. Manson leaves out John in his study, treating only the teaching of Jesus as found in the Synoptics (*The Teaching of Jesus: Studies of its Form and Context*, 2nd ed. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935]); Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology: The Proclamation of Jesus*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971); and Goppelt, *Theology of the New Testament*. Witherington suggests that Jeremias received “withering criticism” for his willingness to begin his NT theology with a treatment of Jesus’s teaching (*New Testament Theology*, 65). Jeremias’s original 1971 German subtitle included a part one note, yet Christopher Tuckett writes that “[i]t is unclear if [a second volume] was ever intended” (“Does the ‘Historical Jesus’ belong within a ‘New Testament Theology?’” in *The Nature of New Testament Theology*, ed. Christopher Rowland and Christopher Tuckett [Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006], 232).

31. Kümmel, *Theology of the New Testament*.

32. Ferdinand Hahn, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 1:30–46. For comments about Hahn’s work see Frank J. Matera, “New Testament Theology: History, Method and Identity,” *CBQ* 67 (2005): 12–15; and C. Kevin Rowe, “New Testament Theology: The Revival of a Discipline, A Review of Recent Contributions to the Field,” *JBL* 125 (2006): 394–395.

33. Udo Schnelle, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. M. Eugene Boring (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2009), 61–162.

34. Marshall provides a bit of the enigmatic nature of this phenomenon when he first states, “As the fundamental context for the development of early Christian thinking we must pay full attention to the activity and teaching of Jesus.... The task must include jesusology.” Then, one paragraph later, he writes, “The starting point [of New Testament theology] must be the attempt to elucidate the theology of the individual documents as expressions of the writers’ theology directed to specific occasions or purposes and from them to work back to the core beliefs” (*New Testament Theology*, 46–47). If “jesusology” is deemed as part of the theological task, why is its study not included in Marshall’s methodology, if not his starting point?

35. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*; Lehman, *Biblical Theology*; Guthrie, *New Testament Theology*; Morris, *New Testament Theology*; Zuck and Bock, eds., *A Biblical Theology of the New Testament*; Marshall, *New Testament Theology*; Thielman, *Theology of the New Testament*; Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*; J. Julius Scott, Jr., *New Testament Theology: A New Study of the Thematic Structure of the New Testament* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2008).

36. Kümmel, *Promise and Fulfilment*; Fuller, *Mission and Achievement*.

37. New Studies in Biblical Theology, edited by D. A. Carson, was originally published by Eerdmans beginning in 1995 and now comprises forty-five volumes. NAC Studies in Bible and Theology, edited by E. Ray Clendenen, was first published in 2006 and now includes eleven volumes. Explorations in Biblical Theology, edited by Robert A. Peterson, was first published in 2007 and now includes eleven volumes. Library of Biblical Theology, edited by Leo Perdue, began in 2008 and has four volumes published to date.

38. Andreas Köstenberger serves as the editor of this series. Zondervan has begun another biblical theology series (Biblical Theology for Life) edited by Jonathan Lunde, but the purpose of the series is to trace the development of theological themes throughout the Bible so a theology of Jesus would not fit into its parameters.

39. I have not taken Witherington's *Christology of Jesus* into consideration in this statement due to its limited focus on just one aspect of Jesus's theology.

40. James D. G. Dunn states, "At best what we have are the teachings of Jesus as they impacted . . . the individuals who stored them in their memories and began the process of oral transmission" (*Jesus Remembered* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003], 131). Likewise, Dale C. Allison, Jr. writes, "The Synoptics are not primarily records of what Jesus actually said and did but collections of impressions. They recount, or rather often recount, the sorts of things that he said and did, or that he could have said and done" (*The Historical Christ and the Theological Jesus* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009], 95). However, see Witherington, *New Testament Theology*, 66.

41. In using the phrase, "recited Jesus," I am not suggesting that the Gospel writers acted as reporters who wrote down the ipsissima verba of Jesus. Rather the Evangelists provided a faithful report of what Jesus said, his ipsissima vox. As Darrell L. Bock writes: "The Jesus tradition may not always be exactly like 'memorex,' but neither is it anything remotely like 'jive.' The voice of Jesus comes through the Gospels, 'live and in color.' It is summarized discourse that has faithfully preserved the gist of Jesus' teaching." ("The Words of Jesus in the Gospels: Live, Jive, or Memorex," in *Jesus Under Fire*, ed. Michael J. Wilkins and J. P. Moreland [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995], 94).

42. So Wrede, “Task and Nature of ‘New Testament Theology’.” In addition, it appears that, though he does offer one chapter on Jesus’s teaching, Udo Schnelle, fits this category (*Theology of the New Testament*, 68–71). Also, C. Kavin Rowe, “New Testament Theology,” 406–407.

43. Ben Witherington III, *What Have They Done with Jesus? Beyond Strange Theories and Bad History; Why We Can Trust the Bible* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 2006); Craig L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2007); Michael J. Wilkins and J. P. Moreland, eds., *Jesus Under Fire* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995); Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Real Jesus: The Misguided Quest for the Historical Jesus and the Truth of the Traditional Gospels* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1996); Gregory Boyd, *Cynic, Sage, or Son of God? Recovering the Real Jesus in an Age of Revisionist Replies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995); and Gary Habermas, *The Historical Jesus: Ancient Evidence for the Life of Christ* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1996).

44. Stuhlmacher, *How to do Biblical Theology*, 19; Caird, *New Testament Theology*, 355; Witherington, *New Testament Theology*, 67; and Jeremias who says, “In the synoptic tradition it is the inauthenticity, and not the authenticity, of the sayings of Jesus that must be demonstrated” (*New Testament Theology*, 37).

45. D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, PNTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 203–204.

46. See Michael W. Graves, “Languages of Palestine,” *DJG*, 484–492.

47. Two types of exceptions include: (1) parallel accounts that differ because one of the accounts omits material that might be considered vital to the proper understanding of the discourse (e.g., the Olivet Discourse [Matt 24:15–22; Mark 13:14–20; Luke 21:20–24]), and (2) parallel accounts that appear to contradict each other (e.g., commissioning of the Twelve [Matt 10:7–11; Mark 6:8–10; Luke 9:2–4]). There are good answers to both types of exceptions. Regarding the first type, see Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 880–886; Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 481–484; and Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:20*, WBC (Dallas: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 316–323. Regarding the second type, see Walter L. Liefeld, “Luke” in *Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), 8:919–920; and Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 1:1–9:50*, BECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994), 815–816.

48. Bock discusses both examples in greater detail (“Words of Jesus,” 86–88).

49. Bock, “Words of Jesus,” 88.

50. In using the phrase “slight modifications” I mean “summaries,” and I am not hinting at the possibility of error when the Evangelists made such

adjustments in their recording of Jesus's words. Rather, I am saying that the modifications never changed or contradicted the gist of what Jesus said. For a clear explanation of this issue, see Paul D. Feinberg, "The Meaning of Inerrancy," in *Inerrancy*, ed. Norman Geisler (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1980), 301.

51. Jesus said many other things not recorded in the Gospels (John 20:30; 21:25), and some would argue that we should pursue these agrapha in the non-canonical resources available to us. However, only those words recorded in the inspired text of Scripture should be our source for Jesus's theology. Stuhlmacher is correct when he says, "The main sources for understanding Jesus remain the four Gospels of the Bible. The apocryphal Gospels from the second century offer only secondary enlargements on and additions to the Gospel tradition" (*How to do Biblical Theology*, 17).

52. Note that the four Gospels were written to believers in the church, but they record the words of Jesus given before his ascension which historically addressed his followers not yet in the church. Stier attempted a study of Jesus's post-ascension words in 1871 (*The Words of the Risen Saviour*). I have yet to find a modern writer who has done the same.

53. E.g., Craig Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2012); Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 2nd ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972); and Arland J. Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000).

54. A popular level treatment of Jesus's commands is John Piper, *What Jesus Demands from the World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006).

55. E.g., Jeremias investigates the following main headings: the Mission of Jesus, the Dawn of the Time of Salvation, the Period of Grace, the New People of God, Jesus's Testimony to his Mission, and Easter (*New Testament Theology*, v–ix). And Vos investigates three topics: Jesus's Attitude Toward the Scriptures of the Old Testament, Jesus's Doctrine of God, and Jesus's Teaching on the Kingdom of God (*Biblical Theology*, 383–429).

56. E.g., Schnelle uses systematic categories to organize his theology (*Theology of the New Testament*); and Thompson, who wrote in 1871, had chapters on slavery and pietism (*The Theology of Christ from His Own Words*, ix–xiv).

57. Wright appears to be more deductively than inductively driven (*Jesus and the Victory of God*, 198–199). See note 28 in this essay.

58. Witherington, *New Testament Theology*, 54.

59. Not that a knowledge of Matthew's or Luke's or Paul's teaching is less

significant than Jesus's (i.e., the red letters are not more important or more inspired than the black ones). But, as I've argued here, it would appear that the teaching of Jesus has been de-emphasized.

60. A look at any of Bultmann's form critical work will demonstrate his laborious attention to detail regarding Jesus—and this from one who did not even think that the details he was investigating actually happened! In regard to F. C. Baur's work, this tidbit from Stephen Neill and N. T. Wright is noteworthy: "He was at his desk by four o'clock every morning. The works published during his lifetime amount to ten thousand pages; those published after his death from his notes or those of his students to another six thousand—the equivalent of a book of four hundred pages every year for forty years" (*The Interpretation of the New Testament, 1861-1986* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988], 21).

The Divine Name in the Gospel of John

Robert A. Snyder

At the burning bush on Sinai, God revealed his name to Moses in three forms: “I AM WHO I AM” (אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה), “I AM” (אֶהְיֶה), and “Yahweh” (יְהוָה)—the latter appears in English Bibles today as “the LORD” in capital letters, according to the post-exilic Jewish custom of substituting the title “Adonai” (אֲדֹנָי) for the sacred name (Exod 3:14–15). God then told Moses, “This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name to all generations” (3:15).¹ Accordingly, the Old Testament has over six thousand occurrences of the divine name, “Yahweh,” significantly more than any other title, including “God.”² In contrast, the New Testament appears to mention the divine name only in its shortened form at the end of “hallelujah” (Rev 19:1, 3, 4, 6). On the surface, this omission would suggest some discontinuity between the religion of Moses and the religion of Christ. If the divine name is God’s “memorial-name to all generations,” then why did the Christian community fail to remember it?

The NT provides at least two explanations for this omission. First, Christians continued the practice of substituting the title “LORD” for the name “Yahweh,” but then applied this title

directly to Jesus Christ as a common label for his divinity.³ Second, Jesus himself asserted his divinity through the phrase “I am,” especially in the Gospel of John. In these two ways at least, the divine name has been remembered in Christianity. This present essay examines the second way in detail.

The Gospel of John deliberately applies the divine name “I am” to Jesus Christ. Three lines of argument support this assertion. First, in the prologue (John 1:1–18), the phrase “full of grace and truth” refers to the divine name and thus creates the expectation that the name will appear in the rest of the book. Second, the absolute “I am” statements, which lack an explicit predicate, often speak of the safety provided by the divine name, which is an explicit theme from the OT (e.g., Prov 18:10). Third, the predicate “I am” statements appear with the absolute “I am” statements according to the same pattern as the development of the divine name in the book of Exodus. From these three lines of argument, it is reasonable to conclude that the Gospel of John remembers the divine name and provides continuity for Christianity with the Jewish religion of the OT.

1. The Divine Name in John’s Prologue

By all appearances, John’s prologue echoes the wilderness theophany of Exod 34 (cf. 33:18–23; 34:6–7). The “verbal echoes” and related concepts include the words “tented” and “glory” (John 1:14), the phrase “full of grace and truth” (1:14; cf. 1:16), the giving of the law (1:17), and the concept of not seeing God (1:18).⁴ In addition, the Greek translation of the divine name (ὁ ὢν) begins a significant clause in John 1:18 about the Son being “in the bosom of the Father”—not as a child on a lap, but as a friend leaning against a friend during a shared meal (cf. 13:23).⁵ Such ties have led most commentators to affirm the wilderness connection. Indeed, regarding Exodus 34, Anthony T. Hanson

concluded, “It would be impossible to find a scripture passage which contains more fundamental elements in common with John 1:14–18. I find it inevitable to conclude that the one is the basis of the other.”⁶

Regarding John 1:14 in particular, J. Ramsey Michaels claims that the text “evokes the Exodus,” but lacks any “*direct* reference” to it.⁷ While acknowledging similarities in imagery (“encamped”) and terms (“glory”), he notes that other occurrences of the verb “encamped” (σκηνόω) in the NT emphasize location, not temporary residence (Rev 7:15; 12:12; 13:6; 21:3).⁸ Moreover, the phrase “grace and truth” actually refers to the “Spirit of truth,” who is God’s gift (“grace”) to the Son—a phrase akin to “grace and power” in Acts.⁹ Regarding the Exodus, Michaels claims, “When the author wants us to think of Moses or the desert wanderings explicitly, he will mention Moses by name (v. 17).”¹⁰

Based on Michaels’s own principle, John 1:14 must also refer to Moses, because v. 17 cannot be extricated from its context.¹¹ Regarding the verb “encamped,” the comments from Revelation are valid but irrelevant. The temporary nature of the Word’s residence “among us” is plain from the Gospel itself, which ends with Jesus’s departure.¹² Moreover, in rabbinic thought, the verb σκηνόω is related to the *shekinah* glory, which first appeared as the pillar of fire and then “filled” the tabernacle (Exod 40:34–35). Perhaps the verb implied that “Jesus is now the *shekinah* of God.”¹³ The phrase “grace and truth” echoes the familiar OT phrase “lovingkindness and truth” (34:6), even though John uses “grace” (χάρις) instead of “mercy” (ἔλεος) which is the normal translation for the Hebrew word “lovingkindness” (רַחֲמִים)—a word with no direct equivalent in Greek. Many have noted that John’s translation of the OT often departs from the LXX.¹⁴ John may be offering his own translation, an

inspired interpretation of the Hebrew phrase. Therefore, the phrase “full of grace and truth” likely corresponds to the divine name “abounding in lovingkindness and truth” (34:6)—another echo of the wilderness theophany.¹⁵

If this conclusion is correct—that Exod 34 is the background to John 1:14–18, and that “full of grace and truth” refers to the explanation of the divine name in Exod 34:6—then John’s elaboration of that fullness in his prologue may prove critical to an understanding of the divine name in his Gospel: “For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ” (John 1:16–17). Two concepts are stressed: first, a universal reception of grace from the fullness (“we... all”); and second, the historical transition from Moses to Christ. The second supports the first. Every Christian perpetually receives grace from an infinite supply, because true grace has now come in Christ. This truth needs exegetical examination.

First, receiving from the “fullness” is explained by the phrase “grace upon grace” (χάριν ἀντὶ χάριτος). This phrase may either refer to replacement (“grace in place of grace”), accumulation (“grace upon grace”), or correspondence (“grace for grace”).¹⁶ Lexically, the preposition ἀντί best fits the first option, a meaning common to the Greek fathers, who often interpreted the phrase as the “grace” of Christ replacing the “grace” of Moses.¹⁷ This interpretation seems odd in light of the next verse, which links the “Law” to Moses and “grace” to Christ. Specifically, although the law is said to be “given” and thus could be considered a “grace,” the text explicitly says that “the grace” of John 1:16 “came into being” (ἐγένετο) through Christ—just as through him “all things” came to be (1:3; cf. 1:5, 14).¹⁸ The emphasis is on historical realization. Therefore, just as the fullness was beheld after the incarnation of Christ (1:14) and is said

to be “His” (1:16), the grace-replacing-grace experience of the fullness is also connected to Christ, not Moses. This fullness in Christ is truly experienced individually as grace-replacing-grace. The “living water” given in Christ becomes a continuous “well of water springing up to eternal life” (4:14), just as believers feed again and again on Christ, the “bread of life” (6:48–51, 52–58).¹⁹

Second, the transition from Moses to Christ is not necessarily a contrast. Many commentators note that the clauses in John 1:17 are in juxtaposition, not formal contrast.²⁰ If there is a contrast, it is between the concepts themselves—“the Law” versus “the grace and the truth,” and “given” versus “realized.” In a masterful Johannine way of expressing profound meaning through simple forms, these clauses represent both continuity and discontinuity. For example, historical realities are said to come both “through Moses” and “through Jesus Christ,” but in different ways—Moses is the agent for a divine passive (ἐδόθη), but Jesus is the agent for new existence (ἐγένετο). Moreover, while both “the Law” and “the grace” are gifts, the latter is added to the former and surpasses it—not as replacement, but as fulfillment. The purifying jars of the law were not emptied and then replaced with wine; rather, they were filled and then transformed into wine, with an excellence and an abundance that speaks of true grace (John 2:1–11). Similarly, both the temple and its sacrifices find their fulfillment in the Word incarnate as “the Lamb of God” (John 1:29; 2:19–21).²¹

Third, easily overlooked in the discussion of John 1:16–17 is the importance of v. 15. Although v. 16 grounds v. 14, as seen in the verbal reiteration of “full” with “fullness,” the parenthetical insertion of v. 15 provides necessary information for understanding the two verses that follow.²² In v. 15, two ideas are intimately connected: contrary to appearances, the Word incarnate is *before* John the Baptist in *rank*, because the Word himself was *before*

John in *time*. Regarding rank, the Word must be greater than John, because John owes his existence to the Word (cf. 1:3, 6). Regarding time, in order to create John, the Word must pre-date John. By parity, the Word incarnate must also be greater than Abraham (8:53), Jacob (4:12), and Moses (1:17), and predate them all. As Jesus himself will testify later, “Truly, truly, before Abraham was born [γενέσθαι], I am” (8:58).

Therefore, in light of this chronology and fulfillment in continuity (1:15, 17), could it be that “all” in v. 16 includes even Moses himself? While the “fullness” came only through the incarnation of the Word, perhaps Moses had a foretaste of the divine name before the incarnation. For example, when Moses prayed, “If I have found favor [χάρις, LXX] in Your sight, let me know Your ways that I may know You, so that I may find favor [χάρις, LXX] in Your sight” (Exod 33:13). What is this except favor leading to favor, that is, “grace upon grace” (John 1:16)? Similarly, while the law condemned the Israelites and threatened their annihilation, if Yahweh were to dwell in their midst (Exod 33:5), the “grace and truth” of the name of God provided the possibility of his presence with safety (Exod 32–34).²³ It was not the law that brought “lovingkindness” (חֶסֶד) to Israel in the wilderness, but the *name* of Yahweh, the name that predates the giving of the law. This name was *spoken* to Moses (Exod 34:6–7), but now in Christ it is *seen* (John 1:14, 18; cf. Job 42:5)—ironically, both revelations were given in the context of the people rejecting God (Exod 32:1ff; John 1:10). This name of “grace and truth” is something different than “the Law” and provides continuity with the NT experience of salvation in Christ.

Therefore, the prologue to the Gospel of John highlights the divine name as the essence of the divine glory. If Ardel B. Caneday is correct, that the twice-mentioned word “glory” in John

1:14 is “the featured echo around which other echoes seem to collocate and are swept into pericopes through John’s Gospel via the prologue as the portal,” then the threefold echo of “grace and truth” as the essence of that glory must imply a coordinate theme.²⁴ From the prologue, the reader expects to find the divine name in the Gospel of John.

2. The Absolute “I Am” Statements in John

According to the OT, the divine name provides safety for God’s people: “The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous runs into it and is safe” (Prov 18:10; cf. 29:25). In contrast to the rich man whose wealth is like a “strong city” and “a high wall” in his imagination (18:11), the righteous person finds safety through habitually running to the divine name.²⁵ In Ps 61:3, this image of God as a “tower of strength” is parallel to God as a “refuge,” which is another common image for having safety in God (e.g., Ps 2:12; 5:11–12; 18:30; 34:22; 37:40). Significantly, the prophet Zephaniah reports that the humble remnant will “take refuge in the name of the LORD” (3:12).

Jesus also associated the divine name with safety. At the end of his ministry, he prayed, “Holy Father, keep them in Your name, *the name* which You have given Me” (John 17:11; cf. 15). It was this name that Jesus “manifested” and “made... known” to those whom the Father had given to him (17:6, 26); and it was this name that he would continue to make known, even as he testified, “While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, so that the Scriptures would be fulfilled” (17:12). In the Gospel of John, the safety found in the divine name is primarily communicated through the absolute “I am” statements, which lack an explicit predicate.²⁶

At first glance, the most obvious place to start the discussion would seem to be Jesus's striking statement, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am" (John 8:58). Surely, Jesus provides here an undeniable self-identification with the divine "I AM" of the OT. After all, as Victor P. Hamilton quipped, it is doubtful that the Jews' angry response can be explained as a reaction to poor grammar.²⁷ Herman N. Ridderbos, however, asserts that only an explanation that includes the eschatological redemption of Christ can "do justice to the context" of his "day" (John 8:56).²⁸ The "I" in this "I am" statement does not point to God abstracted from history—a mere reference to the divine essence—but to the Word made flesh in Christ.²⁹ The strength of this argument comes from the demand to do justice to the context. The same context, however, also speaks of the Jews attempting to stone Jesus (8:59). Later, when the Jews attempt to stone Jesus "again" (10:31), they explain why: "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out *to be* God" (10:33). Therefore, the absolute "I am" statement contains both a reference of good news for Abraham as well as an assertion of divinity.³⁰

This combination of divine identity and good news is also seen in the prophetic uses of the phrase "I am," especially in the later chapters of Isaiah. According to Raymond E. Brown, while it is "difficult to find pagan parallels," the OT "offers... the only good examples of the absolute use."³¹ These examples include "I am Yahweh" (translated in the LXX as ἐγὼ εἰμι in Isa 45:18), "I [am] He" (always translated in the LXX as ἐγὼ εἰμι), and statements where "I am" in the LXX could be understood as a divine name, such as "I am 'I AM' who blots out transgressions" (Isa 43:25), "I am 'I AM' who comforts you" (Isa 51:12), and "My people shall know *my name*; in that day (they shall know)...

that *egō eimi* is the one who speaks”³² (Isa 52:6; cf. Isa 43:10; John 8:28; 13:19). Interestingly, while the LXX is said to stress “the unicity of God” and his “divine existence” (e.g., Exod 3:14, “I am the Existing One”), it is all the more striking to see the LXX in Isaiah associate ἐγὼ εἰμι with blotting out transgressions and comforting people.³³ Therefore, there is canonical precedent behind the absolute “I am” statements speaking of good news for God’s people and not simply that God exists.

Regarding physical safety, the absolute “I am” significantly appears when Jesus walks on the water (John 6:16–21). Although this miracle ranks as one of John’s seven signs, it is easily overlooked and its function within chapter six left unexplained. After all, the feeding of the five thousand clearly fits thematically with Jesus’s later words, “I am the bread of life” (6:35, 48). Why would John insert a second miracle as the background for this long discourse? After examining the use of “I am” within the miracle pericope, a possible function for its use will be proposed.

First, the miracle. After three to four miles of rowing at night on the stormy Sea of Galilee, the disciples were frightened by the sight of Jesus “walking on the sea and drawing near to the boat” (6:19). Interestingly, instead of parting the sea, as Moses had done, Jesus simply walked across. As a comfort, Jesus said to them simply, “It is I; do not be afraid” (6:20). The Greek text is simply ἐγὼ εἰμι with no predicate provided in the context. In the Synoptic Gospels, a possible predicate is provided (“It is a ghost!”), but it makes no sense—as if Jesus were responding, “Yes, I am a ghost!” (Matt 14:26–27; cf. Mark 6:49–50). While the phrase could also be interpreted as “I am Jesus” (e.g., CEV), the subsequent behavior of the disciples makes this interpretation unlikely. Once Peter returns to the boat with Jesus, having walked together on the water, the winds mysteriously stop and those in the boat *worship* Jesus, saying, “You are certainly God’s

Son!” (Matt 14:32–33). This response of worship corresponds well to Jesus’s use of “I am” as a statement of his divinity.³⁴ Moreover, the disciples’ verbal response foreshadows the famous confession of Peter, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt 16:16). This association of the divine name followed by a confession of faith may provide the clue for the function of the absolute “I am” statement in John chapter six.

If the absolute “I am” signified only self-existence, then announcing it to imperiled disciples seems odd. However, if this statement also carries the Exodus emphasis on divine presence and the Isaiah emphasis on forgiveness and comfort, then such an announcement conveys safety and it begins to make sense. In John 6, however, the safety of the divine name extends to more than just the wind, the sea, and the night. The next day, Jesus offered his first predicate “I am” statement: “I am the bread of life” (John 6:35, 48). This statement offended his audience, including many of his disciples, who then “withdrew” and walked with him no more (6:41–42, 52, 60, 66). In contrast, the twelve stayed. What made the difference? Contextually, the most likely cause is the nighttime theophany, in which Jesus asserted his divine presence and the twelve believed. After all, the disciples “saw” (θεωροῦσιν) Jesus in a theophany (6:19)—a sight necessary for saving faith (6:40)—while the crowds merely had “seen” (ἑώρακαστέ) Jesus (6:36). Therefore, in contrast to the apostate disciples, who were asking in effect, “Who does this man think he is?” (cf. 8:53), Peter confessed, “We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God” (6:68–69)—a confession made, as in the Synoptic Gospels, after a private theophany. In effect, the sign on the sea provided the absolute “I am” and the sign of the loaves provided the predicate, “the bread of life,” and altogether, the divine name protected the twelve from the sea and from apostasy.

The protection on the sea strongly resembles the protection later in the garden of Gethsemane (John 18:1–9). Again, it is night. Soldiers arrive to arrest Jesus, but instead of waiting for them to act, Jesus asks, “Whom do you seek?” (18:4). When they answer, “Jesus of Nazareth,” Jesus again responds by saying, “I am *He*” (ἐγώ εἰμι), after which the soldiers withdraw and fall to the ground (18:5–6). When the question and answer is repeated, Jesus then demands that the disciples go free, thereby fulfilling his own prophetic word, “Of those whom You have given Me I lost not one” (18:7–9).

Some commentators shy away from assigning full weight to the absolute “I am” in John 18:5–6. For example, while D. A. Carson acknowledges that ἐγώ εἰμι “can bear far richer overtones,” as in the divine assertions of Isaiah 40–55, he finds it more likely here that the words simply mean “It is I” (self-identification) or “I am Jesus” (the appropriate complement).³⁵ According to Carson, the expression ἐγώ εἰμι has “maximum weight” when it is either “absolute (8:58) or the object of what ought to be believed (‘if you do not believe that *I am*’ or the like, 8:24, 28).”³⁶ In the garden, however, several facts argue against an assertion of the divine name: the expression is ambiguous; the context “provides a perfectly adequate complement;” the Jews, if they had heard the divine name, would have tried to stone him (cf. 8:58–59); the normal posture before a theophany is not to draw back, but to “fall prostrate;” and if this narrative *were* a theophany, then it is “painfully clumsy” (they still arrest Jesus) and unnecessary (there is no need to “score theological points” with a “formally incomprehensible narrative”).³⁷ Therefore, Carson concludes that while the “overtone” of deity may be “undoubtedly present” for the enlightened reader and perhaps even for some soldiers, most of the soldiers probably fell for psychological reasons (e.g., “they are staggered by his open self-disclosure”)

and, in doing so, “their physical ineptitude was another instance of people responding better than they knew” (cf. 11:49–52).³⁸

Interestingly, the text itself interprets this scene—Jesus fulfilled his earlier words about protecting his own: “I was keeping them in Your name” (17:12; cf. 18:9).³⁹ Because only one other text in John speaks of Jesus’s words being fulfilled (18:32), the insertion here is rare and may anticipate possible interpretive confusion. Therefore, John explicitly identifies ἐγώ εἰμι (“I am”) with the divine name. Moreover, Carson’s idea of “people responding better than they knew” is helpful and fits a Johannine pattern (e.g., 11:49–52).⁴⁰ Nothing in the text requires that the divine name be *understood* for it to have physical effect. In fact, the physical effects may align with prophecy (Ps 27:2; 35:4).⁴¹ And even if the soldiers had understood Jesus’s words as blasphemy, seeking to arrest Jesus is apparently an alternative to stoning in this Gospel (cf. 10:31, 39). As for the odd effect of *drawing back*, the Greek perfectly echoes the effect of the divine name on the crowd in chapter six: “As a result of this many of his disciples withdrew [ἀπῆλθον εἰς τὰ ὀπίσω] and were not walking with him anymore” (6:66; cf. 18:6). In chapter eighteen, the accompanying effect is more graphic—instead of simply “not walking,” the opponents actually “fell to the ground” (18:6). Significantly, the withdrawal in the garden included Judas Iscariot (18:5), who, despite his devilish nature, had earlier remained with Jesus (6:67–71).

Therefore, Jesus’s use of the divine name in the garden is intentional and corresponds perfectly to his earlier pronouncement on the sea. In both instances, the “protective power” of the name is stressed, as pictured in the tower image of Prov 18:10.⁴² Although some have objected to the physical aim of this protection, as if such were unworthy of Jesus’s statement (John 18:9),⁴³ the Gospels tell us that more was at stake than drowning at sea or

being slain in the garden. Jesus's theophany on the sea protected his elect from falling away the next day due to his amazing self-assertions, and Jesus's theophany in the garden protected his elect from their inability to follow him at that time (cf. 13:36). Even though Peter objected, his subsequent denials revealed the danger—in the Synoptics, Jesus prays to keep Peter from being sifted by Satan (Luke 22:31–32), and in John's Gospel, Jesus prays that the Father would “keep” the disciples in his name, specifically from the “evil one” (John 17:11, 12, 15). The physical and spiritual are intertwined in such a way that protection by the divine name applies to both areas.

The Gospel of John ends with two gardens. Literary echoes lead to a comparison with subtle parallels. In the first scene, the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus is approached by his enemies and by Judas, the traitor. In the second scene, the garden of the new tomb, Jesus approaches a weeping woman. In both scenes, Jesus asks whom they are seeking. In the dialogue with his enemies, Jesus asserts the divine name and protects his people. In dialogue with the weeping woman, Jesus mentions not *his* name, but *her* name, “Mary.” Interestingly, her full name “Mary Magdalene” begins and ends the pericope (John 20:1, 18), as if the town of Magdala somehow contributes to the meaning of this scene. In Aramaic, “Magdala” likely derives from מְגַדָּל, the Hebrew word for “tower.”⁴⁴ Mary Magdalene would then be “Mary of the Tower,” a name not unlike Sally Hightower or Victor Godwin in connotation. Although admittedly speculative, an Aramaic name can have theological significance in the Gospel of John (e.g., John 9:7). Accordingly, this believing woman is already in her strong tower. She is kept safe and enjoys the fellowship of the Lord—a fellowship where believers are no longer regarded as slaves, but as friends, known by him and talking with him

face-to-face, like Moses, on a first-name basis (John 15:15; Exod 33:11–12).

3. The Predicate “I Am” Statements in John

The development in John from the absolute “I am” statements to the predicate “I am” statements strongly resembles the development of the divine name in Exodus. To see this resemblance, the pattern must first be shown in Exodus, then in the Gospel of John.

Regarding the divine name in Exodus, scholars have debated both its translation and its meaning. With regard to translation, “I AM WHO I AM” (אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה) has nine possibilities, due to three translations for the verb (“I was” or “I am” or “I will be”) and three translations for the relative pronoun (“who” or “what” or “that”).⁴⁵ The name “Yahweh” (יְהוָה) presents its own problems. Presumably, it should be the third-person form of the first-person form אֶהְיֶה, similar to other names in the OT (e.g., Isaac, Jacob, Israel, Jephthah). However, the expected third-person form for the verb הִיָּה in the *qal* stem would be יִהְיֶה (“he was” or “he is” or “he will be”), not יְהוָה. This oddity has led some scholars to speculate that the verb is in the causative *hiphil* stem—perhaps even an “early Canaanite causative”—meaning “I cause to be,” referring to God’s creative governance of nature and history.⁴⁶ In response, there is no known *hiphil* usage of this verb in Scripture, and the first-person form אֶהְיֶה is definitely in the *qal* stem, not the *hiphil*.⁴⁷ With regard to meaning, the LXX translators apparently understood the divine name ontologically. Instead of “I AM WHO I AM,” the LXX has “I am The One Who Is” (Ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ὢν), as if a philosophical statement were being made.⁴⁸ If this is correct, then God is asserting his self-existence, his aseity. He alone is essential Being, contingent on nothing. While this assertion is true theologically (cf. Rev 4:11 et

al.), it is also possible that the LXX simply reflects the difficulty of translation.⁴⁹

Given these uncertainties, a more promising approach to ascertaining the meaning of the divine name comes from its form. Scholars call it *idem per idem*, a form that stresses the freedom of the subject.⁵⁰ Because this form of the name is used later when God himself will “proclaim” his name (33:19; cf. 34:6–7), it seems best to let the form drive the interpretation.⁵¹ If so, then the shortened version (“I AM”) most likely carries the same meaning, because Moses is simply told to relay the name he has just heard to the people (Exod 3:14). Similarly, the juxtaposition of “Yahweh,” the proper form of the divine name, to the *idem per idem* formula both here (3:14, 15) and later (33:19; 34:6) shows that the meaning of “Yahweh” should also be understood with this *idem per idem* formula in mind, rather than simply by the verb “to be.” The emphasis is not on being in general, but on the sovereign freedom of God to be whatever he wants to be.

By itself, this freedom would appear to be a problem for humans as created beings. God is not like the deities of the ancient Near East, who were bothered by the noisy humans whom they had created to do their work and whose sacrifices they greedily ate.⁵² In contrast, the “Mighty One, God, the LORD” (Ps 50:1) tells his people, “If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the world is Mine, and all it contains” (50:12). As Paul told the Greeks on the Areopagus, “Nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything” (Acts 17:25). As self-existent and sovereignly free, God is beyond all coercion and manipulation. How then can humans be sure that this God will not simply act capriciously or arbitrarily, as he sometimes appears to act during times of human suffering?⁵³ While some have philosophically tried to infer God’s moral goodness from

his sovereignty, it seems hard to build a case for a certain future of goodness based on the principle of sovereign freedom alone.⁵⁴

In response, three observations give humans some initial reasons for hope. First, the fact that God has a fixed name shows that in *some* sense he does not change, and his character is predictable.⁵⁵ Second, a name can be known. Just as people introduce themselves by name, so God in Exodus introduces himself by name, thereby showing some desire for relationship. The revelation of himself becomes the basis of faith: “Those who know Your name will put their trust in You” (Ps 9:10). Third, somehow the message Moses is told to give must be good news: “Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you’” (Exod 3:14). The source must correspond to the gift; and as the gift is deliverance from oppression and inheritance in a new land, surely the name must mean something good, perhaps even the assurance of divine presence.⁵⁶

Later in Exodus, this suspicion of good news is confirmed. In the context of rebellion, after the Israelites had “exchanged their glory for the image of an ox that eats grass” (Ps 106:20), God not only spared them, but freely chose to place his tent in their midst, in response to the bold intercession of Moses (Exod 32:1–33:17). Apparently, in seeking confirmation of this bold grace—a grace not unlike returning to live with a spouse who had committed adultery on the honeymoon—Moses prays, “Show me Your glory!” (33:18).⁵⁷ In response, God promises, “I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you, and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion” (Exod 33:19). As the common chorus in Israel celebrates, goodness is at the heart of the divine name.⁵⁸ Perhaps this fact could have been inferred from previous promises, but now it is being “proclaimed” by God himself.

Moreover, this goodness, this divine name, consists of sovereign freedom in grace and mercy. The bare *idem per idem* form of “I AM WHO I AM” (Exod 3:14) gains specificity and doubles in size: “I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion” (33:19). It is not as though God no longer punishes sin—the fuller proclamation of the name makes this clear (Exod 34:6–7)—but his wrath is not central to his character. Consequently, the divine name offers hope to all, even to the rebel. Here then is the answer to humanity’s question whether the freedom of God can be trusted: “Whoever calls on the name of the LORD will be delivered” (Joel 2:32). Truly, the name of the LORD is a strong tower.

This pattern in Exodus, where the bare name later receives fuller treatment, strongly resembles the expansion in John of the absolute “I am” statements into the predicate “I am” statements. To see this expansion clearly, consider whether the primary emphasis in the predicate “I am” statements falls on the predicate or on the first-person pronoun (as if “I” was the predicate). In other words, is the predicate “more a description of what [Jesus] is in relation to man” or is the predicate “an essential definition or description of Jesus in himself,” in which case the “predicate is not true of some other person or thing”?⁵⁹

In response, two contextual facts should be noted. First, in the immediate context, the predicate “I am” statements often answer a misfocus of those being addressed, such as the manna-conscious Jews (John 6:34–35), the resurrection-minded Martha (11:24–25), and the way-despairing Thomas (14:6). By saying, “I am what you are focused on,” Jesus is clearly stressing that he *alone* is what the predicate signifies. And it is not necessarily an error that is being corrected, but a misfocus. Martha’s true statement about future resurrection is met with a statement of

exclusive identity: “I am the resurrection” (11:25). Second, in the overall context, these predicate “I am” statements occur in a book with absolute “I am” statements. By starting each predicate statement with “I am” (ἐγώ εἰμι), Jesus brings in the exclusive connotations of the absolute “I am” statements. This observation gains strength by noting that the first predicate “I am” statement (6:35) does not occur until after the first absolute “I am” statements (4:26; 6:20). Moreover, the resultant statements retain the first-person pronoun “I” (ἐγώ), an emphatic form not necessary in Greek.⁶⁰ Therefore, as in the absolute “I am” statements, so also in the predicate “I am” statements, the emphasis is still on Jesus, the “I” of the statement.

Granted, the predicate “I am” statements are often followed by an explanation of their significance for the believer—an explanation that *appears* to define the statement itself. For example, when Jesus declares, “I am the resurrection and the life,” he immediately explains the significance of “the resurrection” as “he who believes in Me will live even if he dies” and the significance of “the life” as “everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die” (11:25–26). This pattern of declaration and explanation occurs often in John (e.g., 6:35; 8:12; 11:25–26). Sometimes, the explanation is not a positive statement, but a negative one. In answering Thomas, Jesus declares, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me” (14:6). Here the emphasis is not on benefits, but on exclusivity. Both the explicit reference to “no one” and the emphatic form in Greek of “Me” (ἐμοῦ) stress the exclusivity of Jesus as *the* way.⁶¹ This example also highlights the importance of the Greek article, which also occurs in each predicate “I am” statement: Jesus is always *the* entity mentioned. Due to the universal presence of the article, it would be reasonable to conclude that an exclusive, negative statement could have followed each pred-

icate “I am” statement. For example, since Jesus is *the* resurrection, Jesus could have also said that *no one* receives resurrection apart from him. Certainly, this conclusion would have fit well with earlier assertions in John, such as “in *Him* was life” (1:4, emphasis added; cf. 5:21–22, 25–27). Therefore, the predicate “I am” statements stress the exclusive claim of Jesus to that identity, while the follow-up statements explain the significance of that exclusive identity for others, especially believers. As in the purpose statement for the book (20:30–31), the focus is on identity (“Jesus is the Christ”), which is followed by a statement of significance for believers (“that believing you may have life in His name”). Therefore, in both the absolute and predicate “I am” statements, the emphasis rests on Jesus’s exclusive claim to each identity.

This coordination in John of absolute “I am” statements with predicate “I am” statements follows the same pattern of the original “I AM” statements in Exodus. The unspecified *idem per idem* statement in Exod 3 and its shortened form are subsequently given color in Exod 33–34. God’s sovereign freedom finds ultimate expression in the free grace and mercy he shows to his people, even his rebellious people, without losing any of his freedom. Similarly, in John, the absolute “I am” statements lay the foundation for the name, but the predicate “I am” statements give the name its color in describing what Jesus is for believers. Therefore, in addition to the prologue and the absolute “I am” statements, the predicate “I am” statements also manifest the divine name.

The Gospel of John proclaims Jesus as the fulfillment of the divine name of Exodus. As in Exodus, where “He will always be whatever his people need him to be in any given moment, in any given place,” because truly God is both “I-will-be-what-I-will-be” and “I-will-be-what-I-need-to-be-for-you,”⁶² so also

in John, Jesus is both the absolute “I am” and the predicate “I am your every need.” Jesus is God’s memorial-name forever and our very strong tower. Hallelujah!

Notes

1. All translations are from the NASB unless otherwise noted.
2. G. H. Parke-Taylor, *Yahweh: The Divine Name in the Bible* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1975), 4–5, 9–10.
3. E.g., Joel 2:32 (Rom 10:13; cf. Acts 2:21, 26, 37–40); Isa 40:13 (1 Cor 2:16; cf. Rom 11:34); Isa 8:13 (1 Pet 3:15); cf. Parke-Taylor, *Yahweh*, 104.
4. Ardel B. Caneday, “Glory Veiled in the Tabernacle of Flesh: Exodus 33–34 in the Gospel of John,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 20 (2016): 56, 68; Herman N. Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary*, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 57; cf. Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, BECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 45.
5. The Septuagint (LXX) translates the divine name in Exod 3:14 as Ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὢν (“I am who I am”) and ὁ ὢν (“I AM”). Regarding the idiom, see Ridderbos, *John*, 58.
6. Hanson divides scholars into three groups: “(a) those who do see a reference to Exod. xxxiv in this passage—by far the largest number of those scholars whom I have consulted; (b) those who are doubtful about a reference to Exod. xxxiv, but who allow that χάρις και ἀλήθεια in i. 14 and 17 does reproduce the familiar phrase יהוה וחסד; (c) those who deny any connection at all, a very small group indeed” (as quoted by Ridderbos, *John*, 57, n. 135).
7. J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 79.
8. Michaels, *John*, 78–79.
9. Michaels, *John*, 81–82.
10. Michaels, *John*, 79–80.
11. Two links tie v. 17 to previous verses: first, the chain of “because” statements in vv. 16 and 17 supports v. 14 (D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, PNTC [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991], 134), and second, the articles on “grace” and “truth” refer to their immediate antecedents in v. 14 (Raymond

E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, AB 29–29A [New York: Doubleday, 1966–1970], 16). Daniel B. Wallace, however, claims that the article is due to the abstract nouns (*Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996], 250, 227).

12. Cf. Ridderbos, *John*, 51; Köstenberger, *John*, 42. Contrasts between tabernacle and temple (mobility versus stability) must not be pressed too far. Both refer to the incarnation (John 1:14; 2:19–21), and even in Israel’s history, the “temporary” tabernacle resided in the land for centuries and the “permanent” temple experienced more than one destruction.

13. Brown, *John*, 33.

14. See Brown, *John*, 14, who cites J. A. Montgomery; Ridderbos, *John*, 54, who cites Anthony T. Hanson.

15. Caneday claims that despite the LXX having πολυέλεος καὶ ἀληθινός (lit. “much-mercy and genuine”) for “abounding in lovingkindness and truth” (רַב־חֶסֶד וְאֱמֶת) in Exod 34:6, many have “reasonably” argued that “full of grace and truth” actually “reflects John’s own translation of the Hebrew text (“Glory Veiled,” 59; cf. Köstenberger, *John*, 44–45). For support, Caneday cites Richard Bauckham, *Gospel of Glory: Major Themes in Johannine Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2015), ix; Alexander Tsutserov, *Glory, Grace, and Truth: Ratification of the Sinaitic Covenant according to the Gospel of John* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2009), 39–161.

16. Brown, *John*, 16.

17. Carson agrees: “We have seen his glory, John writes, *because* from the fulness of his grace and truth we have received grace that replaces the earlier grace—the grace of the incarnation, of the Word-made-flesh, of the glory of the Son ‘tabernacling’ with us, now replacing the grace of the antecedent but equally promissory revelation” (*John*, 134).

18. Michaels, *John*, 91.

19. The present tense of “he who feeds” (6:54, 56, 57, 58) carries the aspectual nature of the indicative and speaks of “the *person who* . . . does” (Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 614, 620).

20. Carson, *John*, 134; Köstenberger, *John*, 47–48; cf. Ridderbos, *John*, 57.

21. Instead of a discontinuity in both location (outside the camp or “among us”) and visibility (seeing the glory or not), Köstenberger argues for continuity, but in different degree: “Rather than offend the Gospel’s Jewish audience, this verse is designed to draw it in: ‘If you want an even more gracious demonstration of God’s covenant love and faithfulness, . . . it is found in Jesus Christ’” (*John*,

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47). Similarly, Ridderbos maintains that the real contrast is between the partial dispensation in Moses versus the “fullness” in Christ (*John*, 57).

22. For a similar “interruptive” concept in Hebrew narrative, regarding the waw-disjunctive, see Bruce K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 651.

23. According to Tremper Longman III, the story arc of Exodus is “Absence to Presence” (*How to Read Exodus* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009], 39). Relatedly, J.A. Motyer sees a chiasmic structure in Exodus, with “Building for Pharaoh” ultimately ending in “Building for God” a tabernacle for his dwelling among them (*The Message of Exodus: The Days of Our Pilgrimage*, The Bible Speaks Today [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2005], 26).

24. Caneday, “Glory Veiled,” 56; cf. John 1:14; 2:11; 17:6.

25. The contrast between the righteous and the rich is made by juxtaposition; cf. Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs, Chapters 15–31*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 75–77; Derek Kidner, *Proverbs: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1964), 128–29. On the habitual non-perfective, see Waltke and O’Connor, *Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 506.

26. Brown divides the “I am” statements in John into three categories: (1) “The absolute use with no predicate” (e.g., John 8:24, 28, 58; 13:19); (2) “The use where a predicate may be understood even though it is not expressed” (e.g., John 6:20; 18:5); and (3) “The use with a predicate nominative” (e.g., John 6:35, 51; 8:12; 10:7, 9; 10:11, 14; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1, 5; with 8:18 and 8:23 on the “borderline”). For the full discussion see Brown, *John*, 533–538. For purposes here, (1) and (2) have been combined into the absolute “I am” category.

27. Victor P. Hamilton, *Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 64.

28. Ridderbos, *John*, 323.

29. Ridderbos, *John*, 323.

30. John Calvin recognized that both divinity and redemption were included: “That the grace of the Mediator flourished in all ages depended on His eternal Divinity” (quoted in Ridderbos, *John*, 323).

31. Brown, *John*, 535.

32. Brown, *John*, 536.

33. Brown, *John*, 536; cf. Carson, *John*, 578.

34. Later in the Synoptics, Jesus’s use of “I am” draws the charge of

blasphemy (Mark 14:62; cf. Luke 22:70). In light of these synoptic parallels, it is likely that John 6:20 is an assertion of the divine name, followed by a statement that often accompanies theophanies, “Do not be afraid” (see Brown, *John*, 533, 538).

35. Carson, *John*, 578. Brown notes that Codex Vaticanus reads, “I am Jesus” (*John*, 810).

36. Carson, *John*, 321.

37. Carson, *John*, 578.

38. Carson, *John*, 578, 579.

39. Brown concludes, “The sparing of the disciples fulfills the theme of xvii 12” (*John*, 818).

40. Carson, *John*, 579.

41. Brown, *John*, 811. In contrast to Carson, Brown sees a deliberate act of forced worship: “The reaction of falling back in confusion at Jesus’ answer is not simply spontaneous astonishment. The adversaries of Jesus are prostrate on their face before his majesty... and so there can be little doubt that John intends ‘I AM’ as a divine name” (*John*, 818).

42. Brown, *John*, 764.

43. Carson mentions this objection and answers it (*John*, 579).

44. BDB, 153d.

45. Hamilton, *Exodus*, 64.

46. Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 121; cf. Brown, *John*, 536. Additional support for the *hiphil* comes from the theophorus names in the OT that end in *-iah*, implying that the shortened form of the divine name (יה) most likely would have been pronounced *yah* (as in *hallelu-yah*); cf. Parke-Taylor, *Yahweh*, 3, 6.

47. Hamilton, *Exodus*, 64–65.

48. Parke-Taylor, *Yahweh*, 53; Brown, *John*, 536.

49. Larry J. Perkins, “To the Reader of Exodus,” in *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*, eds. Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 46; cf. Parke-Taylor, *Yahweh*, 53.

50. “By leaving the action unspecified the force of this idiom is to preserve the freedom of the subject to perform the action in whatever way he pleases” (John Piper, *The Justification of God: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Romans 9:1–23*, 2nd ed. [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1993], 82).

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51. “The circular *idem per idem* formula of the name—I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious—is closely akin to the name in Ex 3:14—I am who I am—and testifies by its tautology to the freedom of God in making known his self-contained being” (Brevard S. Childs as quoted by Piper, *Justification*, 82).

52. See the summaries of the Atrahasis, Enuma Elish, and the Poem of Erra (*Erra Epic*) in A. S. van der Woude, ed., *The World of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 85–88.

53. For an interpretation of Job that claims, “God’s management of the universe is arbitrary,” see Raymond P. Scheindlin, *The Book of Job* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998), 9–44.

54. For example, Jonathan Edwards once argued: “It is most evident by the works of God, that his understanding and power are infinite.... God being infinite in power and knowledge, he must be self-sufficient and all-sufficient; therefore it is impossible that he should be under any temptation to do any thing [*sic*] amiss; for he can have no end in doing it.... So God is essentially holy, and nothing is more impossible than that God should do amiss” (as quoted by John Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1990], 76).

55. For example, although he is not uncommonly said to relent in Scripture (e.g., Exod 32:14), his very relenting is sometimes listed among the unchanging attributes of his name (e.g., Joel 2:13; John 4:2; cf. Jer 18:7–10).

56. E.g., Motyer sees three things implied in the divine name: (1) “the God ever-present, ever-active, interventionist for good,” based on the verb “to be;” (2) “the ever-independent, sovereign God,” based on *idem per idem*; and (3) “the inexhaustible God,” based on the non-specific, open-endedness of the name, which “conceals at least as much as it tells” (*Message of Exodus*, 68–71); cf. Hamilton, *Exodus*, 66.

57. Both Piper and Caneday say it is for confirmation (Piper, *Justification*, 80; Caneday, “Glory Veiled,” 56). The fact that Moses repeated his initial prayer request after the theophany supports this understanding (cf. Exod 33:12–16; 34:9).

58. “Give thanks to the LORD, in that He is good, for the reason that His lovingkindness endures forever” (Ps 106:1; cf. Isa 63:7). This translation by the author is based on the different ways the Hebrew particle כִּי can be used (see Waltke and O’Connor, *Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 665).

59. Brown, *John*, 534. For the entire discussion, based on distinctions made originally by Rudolf Bultmann, see Brown, *John*, 533–35.

60. According to Wallace, “the nominative personal pronoun is most commonly used for emphasis” (*Greek Grammar*, 321).

61. “In the oblique cases the longer forms ἐμοῦ, ἐμοί, ἐμέ are used as a rule where the main emphasis lies on the pron.” (BDAG, s.v. “ἐγώ”).

62. Hamilton, *Exodus*, 66.

Jesus, the Church, and Mental Illness

Joshua W. Jipp

Do the Scriptures say anything of relevance for the church's pursuit to care for those with mental illnesses or mental health challenges? The Scriptures do not *directly* address every question that twenty-first century North Americans may ask, and yet the Scriptures do provide wisdom, guidance, and challenges for all questions of human existence and this includes the problem of mental illness. It will not do for ministers of the gospel to avoid this topic by claiming that they are not medical experts or professional counselors, for while professional help (e.g., counseling, medication, hospitalization) is necessary it is not sufficient to provide the care, love, and understanding needed by those who struggle with mental health challenges. It likely will not surprise anyone to hear that mental illness is rarely addressed in an explicit manner in most churches or sermons. There is an almost universal fear and prejudice against the mentally ill that results in them feeling unwelcome, stigmatized, and alienated from others within most settings—including many (probably *most*) churches. But if it is true that close to three percent of the adult population in the United States (nearly six million people) has experienced a severe and ongoing mental illness, then continuing in fear and a lack of understanding of mental illness is at best irresponsible and

at worst a willful turning away from those created in the image of God.¹ The statistics elucidate the fact that, to use Amy Simpson's language, "mental illness is mainstream," but it is likely that one's own experiences, including those of their families, would suggest that everyone is surrounded by mental illness.²

The ensuing thoughts will offer biblical and theological resources for how the church ought to think and act with respect to mental illness. Specifically included is a thought experiment oriented around Luke–Acts that asks the question: What does the witness of Jesus and the early church have to say about how the church engages people who are challenged with mental health illness? What follows is not so much specific and prescriptive application, but rather an examination of the witness of Jesus and the early church, and how they engaged suffering, stigma, and human vulnerability.

1. Jesus the Healer

Luke makes it plain that Jesus's short sermon in the Jewish synagogue in his hometown of Nazareth is *programmatic* for the entirety of his Gospel. Here Jesus draws upon Isaiah to proclaim that God's Spirit is upon him: "to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18–19). To state it simply, the object of Jesus's ministry is the vulnerable (i.e., the poor, blind, incarcerated, and oppressed), and his task is to reverse their conditions which prevent human wholeness and flourishing. If Jesus's initial sermon occupies a programmatic role in the gospel, then one should expect to find Jesus enacting this program of release and divine favor to *all people*, including the oppressed and needy. This is exactly what Jesus does in his Galilean ministry (4:31–9:50) where Luke presents a series of

scenes depicting Jesus instructing and liberating human beings. This is the literary function of Luke 4:31–44, where there are a series of short vignettes that present what Jesus's ministry looks like in condensed, representative form:

- (i) 4:33–37: Jesus provides release from demonic oppression for a man “with an unclean spirit” (4:33). The text gives a preview of the cosmic battle that takes place over humanity between the healing Messiah and Satan.
- (ii) 4:38–39: Jesus heals a woman and the fever “left her” (ἄφηκεν αὐτήν, 4:39); thus showing that healing is one way Jesus provides *release* (cf. 4:18–19).
- (iii) 4:40–41: Luke provides a typical summary statement of Jesus's ministry: “as the sun was setting, all who had charge of persons who were sick with various illnesses brought them to Jesus. And placing his hand on each one of them, he healed them. And demons also went out from many people, shouting, ‘You are the Son of God!’”

Jesus's Galilean ministry is peppered with accounts of his healings and exorcisms: a leper (5:12–16); a paralytic (5:17–26); the slave of the centurion (7:2–10); the son of the widow in Nain (7:11–17); Jesus's response to John the Baptist's question of whether or not he is the one (“At that time Jesus healed many people of diseases, afflictions, and evil spirits, and he granted sight to many blind people. He replied to them, ‘Go and report to John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those with leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor are told the good news,’” 7:21–22); the Gerasene demoniac (8:26–39); the daughter of Jairus (8:40–42, 49–56); the woman with the flow of blood

(8:43–48); and the ministry of the twelve in the Galilean villages to heal and proclaim the gospel (9:1–6). And this is only within Jesus’s Galilean ministry! The point here seems to be as emphatic as one could hope for—one of the primary ways in which *Jesus enacts his ministry of release and welcome is through healing the sick and oppressed*. A basic question to ask now is: What is the logic here? Why would release from sickness and disease be spoken of as enacting the kingdom of God?

Within Luke’s Gospel, Jesus’s healings reflect his *compassionate concern* (note this compassion is an enactment of his own teaching, 6:36) for holistic human flourishing and the restoration of humans to total-capacity health, well-being, and social functioning. It is important to look at “Jesus’ acts of healing first and foremost from the perspective of his beneficiaries, those who were sick. Jesus was remembered as having healed people out of compassion for their needs.”³ For example, Jesus’s cleansing of the leper dramatically overturns and reverses the leper’s place in society (5:12–16). Of primary importance here is not the healing from actual physical ailment, but rather the implications of the leper’s healing; namely, that it restores him from a place of banishment on the margins of society and from being unable to participate in the religious, communal life of Israel (Lev 13:14; 13:44–45) to now being in a place of full communion within the people of God. The result is similar with Jesus’s healing of the woman with the flow of blood. Her disease was not life-threatening, but it was socially debilitating (8:43–48). Jesus’s healing is a form of compassion that allows her to reenter society, religious life, and to rejoin her family. In Luke 7:11–17 Jesus restores life to the widow’s son. Luke says that Jesus sees the vulnerable, marginalized widow and “the Lord feels compassion for her” (7:13). His restoration of life to the dead son essentially secures her ability to have life and subsistence due to her son.

There are two healing narratives in particular in Luke that specifically exemplify how Jesus's healings are enactments of release and liberation from Satanic/demonic oppression which usher in shalom—peace, freedom, and life as intended by God. First, in the story of the Gerasene demoniac, the man is described initially as “one who had demons” (8:27) and later as “the man from whom the demons had gone” (vv. 28, 33, 36, 38). The man's fundamental characteristic is one who is in bondage and oppression to demonic power (4:18–19). The picture is that of a totally dehumanized person, driven from society (house and city), and forced to live in the abode of the dead. He is literally “shackled in chains and bonds” (v. 29) and lives amongst the tombs—as one who is essentially dead (v. 27). Jesus's healing of the man results in a point-by-point overturning of the man's prior condition: he had many demons (v. 27) // demons gone from the man (v. 35); he had worn no clothes (v. 27) // he was clothed (v. 35); he did not live in a house but tombs (v. 27) // he was called to return to his own home (v. 39); demons seized him and he was out of control (v. 29) // he was in his right mind (v. 35).⁴

Second, the story of the healing of the bent woman demonstrates most obviously that Jesus's healings are enactments of *liberation* or *release* from the power of Satan (13:10–17). Thus the story is filled with language of “binding and loosing” (v. 12: You have been set free; v. 15: each of you frees his cow/donkey; v. 16: the woman is set free from the bonds of Satan). Her affliction is due to “having an unclean spirit” (13:11). Note Jesus's pronouncement: “ought not this daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has oppressed for eighteen years, must she not be set free from this bondage on the Sabbath”? (13:16). Her healing, then, is a form of release which signifies wholeness and freedom from dia-

bolic and social oppression. Further note Jesus's word of inclusion to her when he refers to her as "this daughter of Abraham."

Though this point will not be greatly expanded upon, it should be noted that the healing ministry of Jesus *continues in the early church* as evinced by the book of Acts. Peter's Pentecost speech is significant here as it both provides explicit evidence that Jesus was remembered as one "attested by God among you through powerful acts, wonders, and signs which God did among you" (2:22) and indicates God's Spirit will continue to act among the church with signs and wonders (2:19; cf. 2:43).⁵ Peter's healing of the lame man at the temple gate (Acts 3:1–10) and Paul's healing of the lame man in Lystra (14:8–10) are so clearly patterned after Jesus's healings (esp. Luke 5:17–26). They are both performed through prayer to Jesus *and in the name of Jesus*; the obvious conclusion is that Jesus's apostles *continue* what Jesus himself had done, but only now through the power of the risen and heavenly enthroned king (this is explicit in Acts 3:12–16).⁶

Jesus's healings, then, are a form of release and welcome that liberates humans from bondage and oppression, restores them to proper physical and social engagement, and flow from Jesus's compassion for human suffering and vulnerability. Henriksen and Sandnes state this well: "As healer, Jesus reveals a God of love and compassion, who does not turn away from the suffering of creation but instead makes possible concrete hope for redemption and fulfillment by acting in, with, and under creaturely conditions in order to reveal the kingdom. ... [Jesus] engages the powers of creation in his graceful approach to humanity in order to alleviate the suffering of the sick and destitute."⁷

What does Jesus's healing ministry mean, however, for the church's call to care for those with mental illness? Heather Vacek's *Madness* examines how a variety of Protestant responses

to mental illness were grounded in their Christian sense of obligation to show compassion and care for the mentally ill.⁸ Despite a host of theological differences, these responses were deeply attentive to the human experience of suffering and vulnerability. The words of Dorothea Dix seem to not accidentally echo the words of Jesus: "I come to present the strong claims of suffering humanity. I come to place before the Legislature of Massachusetts the condition of the miserable, the desolate, the outcast. I come as the advocate of helpless, forgotten, insane, and idiotic men and women; of beings sunk to a condition from which the most unconcerned would start with real horror; of beings wretched in our prisons, and more wretched in our almshouses."⁹ One hears in Dix's plea echoes of Jesus's care and advocacy for the vulnerable. Dix has internalized Jesus's compassion as one who sensed the need and vulnerability of the specific people he encountered.¹⁰

Jesus's healing ministry functions as a reminder that Jesus cared deeply about human flourishing and stood opposed to death and that which inflicted harm and evil upon humanity. Those who seek to continue the healing ministry of Jesus, then, will "stand with those whose lives or whose flourishing are threatened and to withstand the disorders that threaten them, however we explain those disorders."¹¹ Amanda Porterfield has argued that the church's care for the sick continued in the early centuries of the church's existence and that this was rooted in Jesus's healing ministry. She states this well: "[C]are for the sick was a distinctive and remarkable characteristic of early Christian missionary outreach. Early Christians nursed the sick to emulate the healing ministry of Jesus, to express their faith in the ongoing healing power of Christ, and to distinguish Christian heroism in the face of sickness and death from pagan fear."¹² The church's indiscriminate concern for the poor was one of the major factors

that led to the creation of institutions such as “poorhouses” that supported widows, the sick, and the poor, as well as hospitals, which were, “in origin and conception, a distinctively Christian institution, rooted in Christian concepts of charity and philanthropy.”¹³

2. Hospitality and Friendship

The fundamental problem in Luke–Acts is not simply humanity’s alienation from God but also *its alienation from one another*.¹⁴ Humans were created to be friends with God as well as friends with one another. One of the surprising features of Luke’s Gospel is that Jesus’s analysis of those in need of “the year of the Lord’s favor” and welcome includes *all people*, including but not limited to those who are poor, blind, and oppressed (4:18–19). Luke portrays Jesus as a host who dispenses God’s hospitality by sharing meals with strangers, sinners, outsiders, and those on the margins of society. In the ancient world, hospitality to strangers was the means whereby an enemy or outsider was converted into a friend. The “table” was reserved, then, for friends or those with whom one wanted to initiate friendship.¹⁵ Thus, one of the primary ways in which humanity’s alienation from God is overcome, within the Gospel of Luke, is through sharing meals with Jesus.

But what is surprising about Jesus’s eating practices is that he does not eat only with the religious elite; his hospitality seems to be indiscriminate and offered toward all people: tax collectors (5:27–32; 19:1–10); a sinful woman (7:36–50); two women (10:38–42); the poor and ritually unclean (9:11–17); his disciples (22:15–20); and the Pharisees (7:39; 11:37–54; 14:1–16). It is no surprise, then, that Israel’s leaders consistently grumble and complain about those with whom Jesus shares meals (5:30–32; 15:1–2; 19:6–7). Their immoral lifestyle—or at least lack of seri-

ous devotion to the Torah—has disqualified them from participating in the kingdom of God. And yet Jesus interprets their joyful participation in his hospitality meals as the enactment of God's recovery of his lost sheep and formerly lost children who have now been reconciled with God (throughout Luke 15).¹⁶

Thus, Jesus's meals create a context whereby sinners, outcasts, and those on the margins become friends with God and fellow participants in the kingdom of God. It is this reconciliation with God or friendship with God that should result in their common fellowship or union with one another as fellow friends with God and one another. This is seen, for example, when Jesus publicly declares Zacchaeus to be "a son of Abraham" (19:9) and the bent woman a "daughter of Abraham" (13:16); when the father in the parable tells his older son that "we must rejoice" at the restoration of the lost son (15:29–32), and when Jesus exalts the woman's hospitality and her recognition of her need of forgiveness but then shames Simon the Pharisee for his lack of hospitality and attendant failure to see his need (7:44–50). Luke's sequel to his Gospel, the book of Acts, portrays the early church as a community of friends who celebrate and continue to remember Jesus's hospitality to them. The Summary Statements of Acts 2:42–47 and 4:32–35 show the church remembering Jesus by breaking bread with one another (2:42, 46; cf. Luke 22:19). Luke employs the language of philosophical friendship—"all things in common" (2:44; 4:32b), "one heart and soul" (4:32), and "fellowship" (2:42)—to show that the early church is a community of friends comprised of *all* people—rich and poor, Hellenist and Hebrew, man and woman, and soon Jews, and every ethnicity under heaven. The primary point here is that Luke's story presents a correspondence between divine and human hospitality or stated differently, humanity's restoration with God results in restoration with one another. Friendship with God has as

its result the creation of a community of friends. Samuel Wells states the theological dynamic well: "For Jesus, our real problem as human beings is our alienation from God and one another. That is what changes in Jesus. Jesus is the solidarity between us and God that makes those links tangible and visible and permanent and unbreakable."¹⁷

What is the relevance of Luke's vision of hospitality and friendship for those who are challenged by mental illness? A community of friends is precisely the gift that Christians can share with *all people* that experience deep vulnerability, stigma, and suffering. It would appear that there is a deep correspondence between the fear, exclusion, and stigma experienced by many of the characters in Luke's Gospel and mentally ill persons today. Christian community and friendship provide the possibility for vulnerable persons to experience meaningful relationships, relational wholeness, loyalty and commitment even in the midst of pain and brokenness, and fellow humans who are committed to countering the stigma and exclusion many mentally ill persons experience.¹⁸ John Swinton has made a powerful argument that "Christian friendships based on the friendships of Jesus can be a powerful force for the reclamation of the centrality of the *person* in the process of mental health care."¹⁹ Despite the importance of professional help offered by psychiatry and medicine, a community of friends can provide a focus upon *the person* (instead of the pathology) and thereby enable people "to explore issues of human relationships, personhood, spirituality, value, and community...."²⁰ Just as Jesus and his friendship overturned society's evaluation of tax-collectors, women, the poor, and the sick so the church as a community of friends is able, through its friendship with the mentally ill and other vulnerable and marginalized peoples, to witness to a new, kingdom-oriented standard of evaluating one another.

One of the common refrains from people who struggle with mental illness is the challenge their behavior often presents to their friends and family. How should they interact with their loved one in the hospital? Why does their friend/loved one seem unpredictable and/or resist opportunities for social engagement? Could the erratic behavior of their loved one result in harm? Why does their loved one seem sad, angry, timid, etc., at all the wrong times? The challenges these questions pose to friends and family almost certainly have no real satisfying answers. Persons with mental illness are not problems to be solved, but persons that require faithful, loyal, persistent, not-easily-offended friends who are willing to simply be *with them*.²¹ Samuel Wells has argued that the most faithful form of Christian witness is what he describes as “being with” (rather than working for or working with), precisely because God’s act in Christ is an act of the restoration of “being with” his people; it is an overcoming of the alienation between God and humans that is fundamentally an act of hospitality that results in friendship.²² This is a helpful way of conceptualizing the church’s engagement of those with mental illness (and those with other forms of vulnerability and suffering). Rather than treating the person as a “problem” that needs to be fixed and needs to find victory or success, the call here is for the church to simply *remain with* those who are challenged with mental illness. The call is an ordinary one of friendship, presence, fellowship, and all of the joys and struggles that characterize friendships with one another.

3. Challenging Stigmas and Stereotypes

One of the defining features of God’s hospitality in Jesus for his people is that this welcome does not correspond to some prior existing social worth or status of the individual. God’s welcome is for male and female, Jew and (in Acts at least) Gen-

tile, Pharisees and sinners, rich and poor, apostles and outcasts. Luke demonstrates that God's friendship is for all people apart from their social status by frequently raising a negative cultural stereotype only to reject or subvert it. A few examples will suffice. I have written at length about how Paul's shipwreck on Malta plays on the stereotypes of the supposedly exotic islanders as uncivilized barbarians. Only here does Luke use the language "barbarian" (Acts 28:2, 4) and it seems this is almost certainly his intention to raise the stereotype of the barbarian, the non-Greek, as one who is prone to prey on shipwrecked strangers and who lacks the civilized custom of hospitality.²³ The reader is prepared, then, for an impending *inhospitality* scenario as Paul and his fellow prisoners wreck on the island. But Luke raises this stereotype only to reject it as a poor means of making sense of the Maltese, for Luke pairs "barbarian" together with φιλανθρωπία ("philanthropy") and this is intentionally jarring for the reader. By way of summary, the Maltese execute hospitality protocols as well as any of the other characters throughout Luke-Acts. They make a fire to warm the prisoners (28:1–2); Paul receives a friendly and hospitable welcome in Publius's home (28:7–9); and the Maltese provide Paul with what he needs for his journey as they grant honors to him (28:9–10).

Luke does something similar, of course, with the so-called Parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10. One aspect of Jesus's genius—to use an insight from John Dominic Crossan—is seen in his forcing the lawyer and reader "to put together two impossible and contradictory words for the same person: 'Samaritan' (10:33) and 'neighbor' (10:36).... The story demands that the hearer respond by saying the contradictory, the impossible, the unspeakable."²⁴ The story packs the punch that it does precisely because the reader struggles to say: "The *Samaritan* was the

neighbor to the man,” and perhaps even harder, “The *Samaritan* obeyed and fulfilled the commands of the Law of Moses.”

A third instance of Luke’s transformation of stigmas and stereotypes occurs in Luke’s portrait of the first Gentile convert, the Ethiopian Eunuch, for he is both black and a sexual deviant by most ancient standards. The Torah forbid castrated men (those with “crushed testicles”) from full participation in the temple (see Lev 21:16–23; Deut 23:1). The prophet Isaiah in fact draws upon the eunuch as a representative for the kinds of outcasts who will be welcomed into God’s people when God fulfills his promises (Isa 56:3–8). Eunuchs were frequently portrayed as soft, feminine, and sexually deviant as they did not conform to the masculine stereotypes of virility and strength.²⁵ But despite Luke’s fronting of the man’s identity as a eunuch (Luke 8:27, 34, 38, 39), he activates none of the stereotypes about eunuchs. Rather, the man is silent, humble, and inquisitive as he reads Isaiah and seeks interpretive help from Philip. He welcomes Philip’s interpretation and pursues baptism and goes back home rejoicing—a model Lukan character to be sure.

Roman centurions, women, and those with physical disabilities could be examined in detail to see that the previous three examples are not accidental but instead point to a fundamental feature of Luke-Acts, namely, the worthlessness of stigmatizing stereotypes for making sense of human existence. The recipients of divine welcome in Luke-Acts are some of society’s most stigmatized (and often vulnerable) persons: sinners, tax-collectors, eunuchs, Samaritans, the poor and the hungry, the physically disabled, and barbarians. Jesus is remarkably unconcerned with a fear of the stranger, being polluted by a sinner, or conforming to good societal standards and cultural norms.²⁶ Amos Yong has suggested that this theme indicates that those on the margins of society are included within God’s people as they are so that

they can stand “as a testimony to the power of God to save all of us ‘normal’ folk from our discriminatory attitudes, inhospitable actions, and exclusionary social and political forms of life.”²⁷

In today’s context one of the most stigmatized groups of people are the mentally ill. This stigma is demonstrated in a variety of ways. While some progress seems to have been made regarding the language used to describe people with physical disabilities, the same cannot be said for those who struggle with mental illness.²⁸ Again, John Swinton describes this dynamic clearly:

Running alongside the biological and psychological history of people with mental health problems is a form of social experience that is fundamentally degrading, exclusionary, and frequently dehumanizing. When we look into the social experience of people with mental health problems, we discover a level of oppression, prejudice, exclusion, and injustice that is deeply concerning. Negative media images, powerful stigmatizing forces, and exclusion from basic sources of value are just some of the negative experiences that many people experience on a daily basis, simply because they are diagnosed as having a mental health problem.²⁹

When persons in one’s own local church are no longer identified as people but as a pathology (i.e., a crazy person, a loon, a schizoid, etc.), when the illness of a person becomes a source of fear or an opportunity for anxiety that one might be contaminated, then their primary identity as one who has received God’s welcoming hospitality is sadly lost. One of the primary insights from those who work within disability studies is how the broader culture’s perpetuation of using mental disorders as insults or for the purpose of humor directly and negatively influences engagement with persons who are actually suffering

from these disorders.³⁰ Amy Simpson has detailed the ways in which the church often contributes, with its own unique spiritual twist, to stigmatizing the mentally ill. Some of these include: the false narrative that Christians should be happy all the time; the naïve belief that mental illness is always a spiritual and never a medical matter; the desire for churches to be comprised of socially acceptable people; the worry that the mentally ill will create social disruptions; and a theological inability to engage human vulnerabilities.³¹

The subversion and rejection of stigma is dependent upon the previous point regarding hospitality and friendship. Everyone is dependent upon meaningful relationships and friendships for a sense of meaning, joy, and self-worth, but if those with mental illness are deprived of these friendships as a result of others' judgment and fear then these inevitably will lead to a deep loss of their sense of personhood.³² Again, the call here is something that is as ordinary as it is essential and distinctly Christian, namely, the necessity for the church to engage in regular, ordinary friendships with one another and to reject stereotypes that unduly prejudice one's perceptions of the other. For persons with mental health challenges, the illnesses of bipolar disorder and schizophrenia can too easily turn into labels that define people as sick or worse, if people are not vigilant in *seeing* and *befriending* the actual person.³³ Part of the church's mission, then, is to become friends and allies who stand in solidarity with persons with mental health challenges by rejecting societal stereotypes of individuals labeled as dangerous, risky, or pollutants. Of course, this stems from one's own recognition that they too are desperately in need of Christ's welcome and a recognition of their own human vulnerability.

In *Saved by Faith and Hospitality* I voiced my agreement with Heather Vacek's powerful conclusion by suggesting that the

church can only continue the same mission of Jesus and the early church in Luke-Acts by rejecting its obsession with the so-called normal, with its safe and exclusive boundaries that are privileged over the witness that the church is a stigmatized community.³⁴ Vacek stated the matter this way:

[T]o be a stigmatized people: to resist social norms contrary to Christian belief and practice, to eat with outcasts and tax collectors, with sinners, and with those who fail, and to remember that Christian identity is defined by baptism into the body of Christ, not by adherence (or lack of adherence) to social norms.... Being damned by association should be an expected part of Christian witness, but it is a reality difficult to embrace in a society, like modern America, where a safer, more sanitized Christian belief and practice are deemed normative.³⁵

If today's churches are filled only with those whom broader society sees as safe and normal, then in what way are churches continuing the legacy of Jesus and the church in Luke-Acts? Or do churches unwittingly testify that God's welcome and friendship come only to those who are socially acceptable? Luke-Acts demands reflection upon those who are vulnerable and stigmatized in society as well as the broader cultural narratives that result in social exclusion and dehumanizing experiences for these persons. And it demands reflection upon how to provide friendship, welcome, and care for all persons within the church. One rather obvious way to do this, in addition to simply being ready and prepared for new friendships with people outside of one's social circle, is to host different kinds of support groups (or partner with other churches who already are doing this) that provide help for those with mental illnesses. Pastors and leaders

(and seminary professors) might do just a little work to educate themselves on the challenges of mental illness and seek to speak, preach, and pray for one another in ways that deconstruct rather than reaffirm fears.³⁶ Further reflection could also be done upon whether today's ministries empower all people to serve and share their gifts rather than cause them to remain in a perpetual guest-like position.

4. God's Presence in Suffering and Weakness

The experience of suffering can quickly make one question God's presence and goodness within their life, but the Scriptures witness to the reality that God is present within one's suffering and weakness, that God often reveals himself through human vulnerability, and that God accomplishes his mission through suffering. The witness of the Scriptures with respect to human suffering is complex (see section 1), and this point should *not* be taken to imply that suffering or mental illness is an inherent good or something to be sought after. But one should consider how the Scriptures often deconstruct people's notions of power, masculinity, and normalcy as privileged goods. God is often portrayed as acting and working within situations of human vulnerability. This theme is present throughout Scripture but most emphatically declared by Paul's surprising claims that God's power is revealed in the cross of Christ and in his bodily suffering: "I will most gladly boast all the more about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may reside in me. So I take pleasure in weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and in difficulties, for the sake of Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor 12:9–10). But the theme is present in the Lukan writings as well. For example, in Jesus's experience of his deepest moments of suffering and vulnerability, he forgives his executioners (Luke 23:34), enacts salvation for one of the criminals on the cross

(23:39–43), and entrusts himself to his Father with his last breath (23:46). Paul, as an *incarcerated prisoner* on his voyage to Rome, offers faithful proclamations of the gospel before his fellow Jews and Roman governors (Acts 22–26) and is instrumental in saving his fellow crew when they shipwreck on the way to Rome (27:1–28:10).

There are a variety of lessons here for ways in which one can learn from suffering and vulnerability, but the ways God works within suffering are particularly important. First, one's own personal experiences of suffering can enable them to sympathize with others. This is rooted in the remarkable reality that God himself has entered into human suffering through the Son of God who himself "learned obedience from the things he suffered" (Heb 5:7). Christians have the call to sympathize with the pain of others and this is a participation in the divine compassion of the Messiah who had compassion on the sick and the weak.³⁷ Second, God's decision to work through suffering and weakness testifies that vulnerability does not detract from personhood. *Everyone* is beset by the vulnerabilities and weaknesses that characterize human existence, and these can function as reminders that everyone is needy but that they can live into their full personhood when they embrace and acknowledge their vulnerabilities and need for one another. This embrace can expose idolatrous attempts to obtain false security through "the cult of normalcy" and the rejection of one's own limitations. Thomas Reynolds says it this way: "Vulnerability is a positive feature of every human life, a life that becomes its own through dependency upon others in relationships of belonging.... [W]hen we engage another human being at various levels of weakness and disability we confront in ourselves something of their weakness and need."³⁸

The goal here has not been to offer specific and concrete prescriptions for what the church *should do* but rather to provide some theological resources from Jesus and the early church that can help people think about the church's mandate to care for those challenged by mental illness. Remembering Jesus as healer challenges the church to continue the healing ministry of Jesus through offering compassionate care and services that lead to human flourishing. The church as a context for friendship and hospitality with one another offers the possibility of it being a place that celebrates difference and cares for one another in the midst of suffering and vulnerability. The remembrance of Jesus and the early church as those who rejected the fears of cultural stigmas and stereotypes can challenge the church to reject obsessions with normalcy and misguided notions of purity and, instead, look for means to include those that broader society has stigmatized.³⁹ And the realization that God is present and works within suffering can encourage people to find their joy and full personhood in the recognition of mutual dependence upon one another even in the midst of vulnerabilities.

Notes

1. On the statistics, see Kathryn Greene-McCreight, *Darkness is My Only Companion: A Christian Response to Mental Illness*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2015), 24.

2. For more detail on the prevalence of mental illness see Amy Simpson, *Troubled Minds: Mental Illness and the Church's Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 33–56.

3. Jan-Olav Henriksen and Karl Olav Sandnes, *Jesus as Healer: A Gospel for the Body* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 70.

4. Comparing the role of demonic invasion in the Gospel narratives with contemporary experiences of mental illness is incredibly difficult; and while

relevant, it would take me too far afield from my interests here. See, however, Loren T. Stuckenbruck, "The Human Being and Demonic Invasion: Therapeutic Models in Ancient Jewish and Christian Texts," in Stuckenbruck, *The Myth of Rebellious Angels: Studies in Second Temple Judaism and New Testament Texts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017), 161–186.

5. The apostles are portrayed as engaging in healing in Acts 3:1–8; 5:12–16; 6:8; 8:6–7; 9:17–18; 9:32–54; 14:3, 8–10; 15:12; 16:16–18; 19:11–12; 20:7–12; 28:7–9.

6. See Henriksen and Sandnes, *Jesus as Healer*, 86–91.

7. Henriksen and Sandnes, *Jesus as Healer*, 246.

8. Heather H. Vacek, *Madness: American Protestant Responses to Mental Illness* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2015).

9. Quoted in Vacek, *Madness*, 55.

10. See further Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Revelatory Body: Theology as Inductive Art* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 126–129.

11. Allen Verhey, *Remembering Jesus: Christian Community, Scripture, and the Moral Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 101.

12. Amanda Porterfield, *Healing in the History of Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 47.

13. Gary B. Ferngren, *Medicine & Health Care in Early Christianity* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 124. Very helpful here is Willard M. Swartley, *Health, Healing and the Church's Mission: Biblical Perspectives and Moral Priorities* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012).

14. See further Joshua W. Jipp, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017), ch. 1.

15. Plutarch often refers to the table as having the function of "friend-making" (e.g., *Quaest. conv.* 1 [612d–e]).

16. See Jesus's little parable of the two debtors which also functions to interpret hospitality to and with Jesus as a sign of the reconstitution of the sinful woman's relationship with God (Luke 7:36–50). See Joshua W. Jipp, *Divine Visitations and Hospitality to Strangers in Luke-Acts: An Interpretation of the Malta Episode in Acts 28:1–10*, NovTSup 153 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 175–182.

17. Samuel Wells, *A Nazareth Manifesto: Being with God* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015), 78–79.

18. John Swinton, *Resurrecting the Person: Friendship and the Care of People with Mental Health Problems* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2000), 35–36.

19. Swinton, *Resurrecting the Person*, 37.
20. Swinton, *Resurrecting the Person*, 37.
21. See further Wells, *A Nazareth Manifesto*, 129–130.
22. Wells, *A Nazareth Manifesto*, 129–130.
23. See here Joshua W. Jipp, “Hospitable Barbarians: Luke’s Ethnic Reasoning in Acts 28:1–10,” *JTS* 68 (2017): 23–45.
24. John Dominic Crossan, *In Parables: The Challenge of the Historical Jesus* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), 64.
25. See further Jipp, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality*, 33.
26. On Luke–Acts’ subversion of popular physiognomic norms, see Mikeal C. Parsons, *Body and Character in Luke–Acts: The Subversion of Physiognomy in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2006).
27. Amos Yong, *The Bible, Disability, and the Church: A New Vision of the People of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 69.
28. This point is made well by David Steele, “Crazy Talk: The Language of Mental Illness Stigma,” *The Guardian* (September 6): 2012, <https://www.theguardian.com/science/brain-flapping/2012/sep/06/crazy-talk-language-mental-illness-stigma>
29. Swinton, *Resurrecting the Person*, 10.
30. See here the important work of Nancy Eiesland, *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994).
31. Simpson, *Troubled Minds*, 147–165.
32. Swinton, *Resurrecting the Person*, 95.
33. Swinton, *Resurrecting the Person*, 27.
34. Jipp, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality*, 40. On the social construction of the codes and the norms of respectability as it pertains to bodies, see Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, 136–141.
35. Vacek, *Madness*, 168–169.
36. According to Amy Simpson, of the pastors surveyed only 12.5 percent said that mental illness is discussed in an open manner within their churches (*Troubled Minds*, 142).
37. Johnson, *The Revelatory Body*, 126–129.
38. Thomas E. Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion: A Theology of Disability and Hospitality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2008), 117–118.

39. See here Richard Beck, *Unclean: Meditations on Purity, Hospitality, and Mortality* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011).

First Peter and Atonement Theology

Greg Rosauer

A popular theory of atonement portrays Christ's death as a legal exchange: he died in our place suffering the punishment we deserved. In this model the just wrath of God was poured out on Christ at the cross in that he experienced the curse of death in our place. Within this juridical metaphor, Christ's death is also pictured as a sacrifice that appeased God by removing sin and cleansing those who, in Christ, believe. At the heart of it, there is an exchange framed in juridical and sacrificial terms. This theory is generally known as penal substitutionary atonement, and many find it to be a distortion in that it portrays a God who can only forgive by satiating his wrath in the violent killing of his Son.¹ Moreover, this model—especially in popularized versions—tends to disconnect Christ's death from his resurrection. If the mechanism for salvation is primarily about trading places, Christ's resurrection came only as a happy surprise since it seems like a *non sequitur*. Why didn't he stay dead? While the juridical and sacrificial aspects of his death are integral to a biblical understanding of atonement, there is something else at the heart of Christ's work—namely, his victory over death.

In this essay I attempt to demonstrate the congruity of juridical, sacrificial, and victorious aspects of the atonement in 1 Pet 3:18. I argue that the suffering of Christ in 3:18ab is both sacri-

ficial and penal according to Peter's interpretation of Isa 53 in 1 Pet 2:23c. I then offer a theological interpretation of 3:18de by considering Christ's death in the flesh and resurrection by the Spirit in the broader metaphysical context of a patristic atonement model,² which accounts for Christ's victory over death.

1. The Righteous One Delivered Over

First Peter 3:18 seems to draw on a creedal or hymnic formulation of Christ's suffering.³ As such, it is a brief glance at the redemptive significance of Christ's death in support of Peter's admonitions to follow Christ's example (3:8–17), and in so doing, to participate in the salvation that he provides (4:1–19).

ὅτι καὶ Χριστὸς ἅπαξ περὶ ἁμαρτιῶν ἔπαθεν,⁴
 δίκαιος ὑπὲρ ἀδίκων, ἵνα ὑμᾶς προσαγάγῃ τῷ θεῷ
 θανατωθεὶς μὲν σαρκὶ ζωοποιηθεὶς δὲ πνεύματι.

For even Christ suffered once for sins—the Righteous One on behalf of the unrighteous ones—in order that he might bring you to God by being put to death in the flesh yet being made alive by the Spirit.⁵

Peter qualifies Christ's suffering—a euphemism for his death—as a one-time occurrence, implying that it accomplished something in the past that is not repeated in the suffering of Christ's followers. His suffering was qualitatively different in that it was περὶ ἁμαρτιῶν (“for sins”), a phrase that evokes sin-offering language in the OT.⁶ Peter's formulation also recalls his appeal in 2:24a to Christ ὃς τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν αὐτὸς ἀνήνεγκεν (“who himself bore our sins”), and it is reminiscent of διὰ τὰς ἁμαρτίας αὐτῶν (“because of their sins”) in Isa 53:12e LXX. The substitutionary aspect of the sacrificial language becomes clear in 1 Pet 3:18b: δίκαιος ὑπὲρ ἀδίκων (“the righteous one on behalf of the

unrighteous ones"). Whether or not δίκαιος ("righteous one") is a christological title,⁷ here its singular form certainly refers to Christ.⁸ And given the Isaianic background already broached in 2:21–25, it seems likely that Peter's "righteous one" alludes to the "righteous one" (δίκαιον) in Isa 53:11 LXX.⁹ In contrast, the plural ἁδίκων ("unrighteous ones") ostensibly refers to humans generally and to Peter's Christian readers particularly since they were called "out of darkness into his wonderful light" (2:9).

The language of 3:18 is sacrificial, but when Isa 53 is added to the conceptual background, the nature of Christ's death is expanded beyond mere sacrificial metaphor (1:2; 3:18) and ransom imagery (1:18–19).¹⁰ These themes converge in the creedal material of 3:18, but the penal aspect of his substitutionary suffering does not seem immediately apparent to many.¹¹ *Does suffering for sins mean that Christ suffered the punishment of sin under the judgment of God?* Certainly, Peter's purpose in mentioning Christ's substitutionary suffering is not to answer this question, but to comfort and support his readers in the face of persecution. However, the ease with which Peter accesses Isaiah and creedal material in bursts of reflection on the redemptive nature of Christ's death betrays a theological structure to the nature of that redemptive event. He thought it accomplished something as the basis for inspiring exemplary behavior. Though much could be said about Christ's substitutionary suffering in 1 Peter, for the purpose of understanding the penal aspect, I will focus on 2:23c as the background to Christ's vicarious suffering in 3:18.

In 2:21, Peter transitions from imploring slaves to endure unjust suffering to the basis on which they should do so, namely, the example of Christ: "Christ suffered for you [ὕπὲρ ὑμῶν], leaving you an example" (2:21b). Peter is not being redundant here. Christ's suffering "for you" refers to his redemptive sacrificial suffering, and it anticipates the sin-bearing language to

come in 2:24.¹² Yet Christ's suffering, while uniquely "for you" in a redemptive sense, is also an example (ὕπογραμμός) to be followed.¹³ Peter weaves both the redemptive and exemplary themes together in his interpretation of Isaianic material in 2:22–25.¹⁴

Peter portrays Jesus as the blameless Isaianic Servant who, though unjustly persecuted, did not retaliate (2:22–23b). Peter then adds an awkward clause, παρεδίδου δὲ τῷ κρίνοντι δικάίως ("But who delivered... over to the one who judges justly," 2:23c). The active imperfect verb παρεδίδου ("delivered... over") has no direct object, causing some interpreters to supply "his cause"¹⁵ or "his enemies."¹⁶ In this scenario, Christ handed over his cause to be vindicated or handed over his enemies to the judgment of God. Most, however, take the participle as reflexive by supplying "himself."¹⁷ In this case, παραδίδωμι expresses Christ's committing or entrusting himself to God who will vindicate him—e.g., "he entrusted [παρεδίδου] himself to him who judges justly" (NIV).¹⁸ In all these cases, 2:23c completes a sequence of ways in which Peter's readers should emulate Christ's attitude in suffering.¹⁹

Yet, rather than construing 2:23c as merely another way to emulate Christ's attitude, there is reason to suppose that it sets up Peter's reflection on the redemptive nature of Christ's death in the following verses.²⁰ It is a transitional clause even as it is the finishing clause in the sequence of Christ's exemplary behavior.²¹ That is, the lack of a direct object for παραδίδωμι ("delivered... over") causes an ambiguity that results in a double entendre: παραδίδωμι expresses both *the self-abandoning devotion that Christ displayed toward God*, and *the realization that this giving over of himself elicited the justice of God because he took sins upon himself*.²² The latter meaning, which is the focus here, is evoked by Peter's employment of Isa 53 where παραδίδωμι

“delivered... over”) occurs three times (53:6, 12 [2X]).²³ Peter’s use of the term ties into his broader appeal to the context in Isa 53 which itself contributed to the passion traditions in the NT.

Concerning the use of παραδίδωμι in the NT, wherever Christ is the subject or object of the verb the meaning always has his betrayal, suffering, or death in view. Though Christ is always the one being handed over, the one who does the handing over and to whom he is handed over varies. He is handed over from Judas to the Chief Priests, from the Chief Priests and Jews to Pilate, and from Pilate to the cross itself.²⁴ With these iterations in mind, it is understandable why Paul uses the imperfect to describe “the night in which he was handed over [παρεδίδετο]” (1 Cor 11:23). Peter’s use of the imperfect in 2:23c might rely on that traditional eucharist material, but it is especially appropriate for Peter’s aim to show that Christ endured suffering and abuse repeatedly as an example to endure in the same way.²⁵ In other epistles a theological or christological agency overrides any other agency in the verb—either God hands Jesus over (Rom 4:25; 8:32), or Jesus gives himself up (Gal 2:20; Eph 5:2, 25).²⁶

The complexity of who does the handing over and to whom Christ is delivered in the NT is mirrored in the experience of Isaiah’s Servant. Isaiah 53 brings out a troubling tension between the injustice of the Servant’s suffering and the fact that it was the Lord who “delivered him over to our sins” (παρέδωκεν αὐτὸν ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις ἡμῶν, 53:6c LXX).²⁷ In other words, it looked as though the people in Isa 53 were punishing the Servant unjustly (53:4), but in fact he was being offered as an unblemished sacrifice for sins by the Lord. There was a divine sacrificial intent to the Servant’s death which operated behind and above the wicked intent of the people (53:5b, 8b, 10a, 12b).

But the imagery of Isa 53 is not only sacrificial, it is irreducibly juridical as well. In his death “he was reckoned with the lawless”

(ἐν τοῖς ἀνόμοις ἐλογίσθη, 53:12d LXX), which is to say—paradoxically—that he was counted among the lawless who unjustly killed him (53:5a). Thus, in a sacrificial way, he legitimately suffered the penal consequences of “bearing our sins,”²⁸ and so the injustice of his death is in fact the rectifying justice of God in action.

Peter brings out this tension in 1 Pet 2:23c: παρεδίδου δὲ τῷ κρίνοντι δικαίως (“but delivered himself over to the one who *judges justly*”). For Peter, Christ is the exemplar of unjust suffering according to Isa 53, but as in Isaiah so here Christ’s suffering is more complex than simple victimhood. That complexity is signaled by the awkward use of παρεδίδου, thus functioning as a transition to Peter’s reflection on the uniquely redemptive sacrifice of Christ in 2:24–25. Behind the ostensible causes of Christ’s suffering, the higher reality for Peter is that Christ willingly gave himself over to be judged by the just judge—God.²⁹

In 2:24ab, Peter makes two important connections that elucidate this meaning of 2:23c. He draws on Isa 53:4 and 12 LXX in stating that Christ “himself bore our sins” (1 Pet 2:24a), which is then qualified with two prepositional phrases echoing Deut 21:23 LXX (1 Pet 2:24b).

In its two occurrences in Isa 53:12 LXX, παραδίδωμι (“deliver over”) is passive yet it implies that the Lord is giving over the Servant (cf. 53:6c). In the second instance, it links παραδίδωμι closely with the bearing of sins.

καὶ αὐτὸς ἁμαρτίας πολλῶν ἀνήνεγκεν καὶ διὰ τὰς ἁμαρτίας αὐτῶν παρεδόθη.

and he bore the sins of many, and because of their sins
he was delivered over. (Isa 53:12ef)

This conceptual link in the background suggests that Peter's use of παραδίδωμι in 1 Pet 2:23c should be understood in light of the description to come in 2:24a: ὃς τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν αὐτὸς ἀνήνεγκεν ("who himself bore our sins"),³⁰ which, as I've argued, evokes the sacrificial function of Christ's death. The sacrificial language is then extended with the clarification that Christ's bearing of sins was ἐν τῷ σώματι αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὸ ξύλον ("in his body on the tree," 2:24b), which alludes to Deut 21:22–23 LXX.³¹

Now if there is in someone sin, a judgment of death, and he dies and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not sleep upon the tree [οὐκ ἐπικοιμηθήσεται τὸ σῶμα αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τοῦ ξύλου], but with burial you shall bury him that same day, for anyone hanging on a tree is cursed by a god³² [ὅτι κεκατηραμένος ὑπὸ θεοῦ πᾶς κρεμᾶμενος ἐπὶ ξύλου]. (NETS)

As with the sacrificial and juridical matrix of Isa 53 itself, Peter's use of Deut 21:23 with its juridical context complicates any picture of Christ's suffering for sins that is merely sacrificial.³³ The mode of capital punishment in Deuteronomy is not a wooden pole or tree per se. Rather the display of the body on a pole after execution signified the divine accursedness of a person who was (presumably) rightfully put to death. The Romans had managed to combine the mode of execution with the ignominious public exhibition of the criminal's body. As such the cross itself evoked the idea of punishment, but in the covenantal context of Deut 21:23, the penal notion takes a theological turn—i.e., the display of the body ἐπὶ ξύλου ("on a tree") entailed the curse of God.³⁴ Thus, Peter's use of the prepositional phrases ("in his body on the tree") clarifies what it meant for Christ to bear sins: he suffered a divinely cursed death—which compliments Peter's

expression that Christ “delivered himself over to the just judge” (1 Pet 2:23c).³⁵

In sum, Peter’s use of παραδίδωμι (“deliver... over”) expresses both the self-abandoning trust that Christ displayed toward God, and also the realization that this giving over of himself elicited the just judgment of God because he took sins upon himself.³⁶ Christ willingly gave himself over to the justice of God (2:23c), knowing that he was bearing sins (2:24a), and consequently incurred the penalty of death—a death that signified the divine curse (2:24b).

Though redemptive, the purpose of Christ’s suffering is also participatory—“so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness” (2:24c NIV). Peter returns to the death/life merism in 3:18 with reference to Christ’s redemptive suffering and he draws out the participatory implications in 4:1–7, noting later that his readers should “rejoice inasmuch as you participate [κοινωνεῖτε] in the sufferings of Christ” (4:13 NIV). This thread culminates in the expectation of eschatological judgment where Christians “who suffer according to God’s will should commit [παρατιθέσθωσαν] themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good” (4:19 NIV).³⁷ As with the Servant in Isa 53, there is a divine intent behind the suffering of Christians which should prompt them to entrust their lives to God. In this way they are following Christ’s example of self-abandoning trust in God, but their entrusting (παρατίθημι) lacks the uniquely redemptive significance triggered by Christ’s “delivering... over” (παραδίδωμι). This notion of Christ’s sacrificial and penal death stands behind Christ’s substitutionary suffering in 3:18. Thus, the Righteous One suffered the curse of God’s judgment in his body on the tree on behalf of the unrighteous whose sins he bore. He did this ἵνα ὑμᾶς προσάγῃ τῷ θεῷ (“to bring you to God,” 3:18c).

2. Death in the Flesh and Life by the Spirit

The effect of Christ's penal death results in reconciled existence with God. But it is not merely so because a sacrifice and judgment took place. Rather it takes effect by virtue of Christ's human and divine natures as he was "put to death in the flesh yet made alive by the Spirit" (3:18de).³⁸ The two participles, θανατωθείς and ζωοποιηθείς, that modify the reconciling effect of Christ's substitutionary death are instrumental—"by being put to death" and "by being made alive," Christ brought them to God.³⁹ The juxtaposition of these events binds them inextricably together so that Christ's death and resurrection are the *how* of atonement.

The two datives (σάρκι and πνεύματι) that modify the respective participles are debated. Most take them as datives of respect ("in respect to [his] flesh/spirit") or sphere ("in the realm of the flesh/spirit").⁴⁰ Some argue that they are instrumental ("put to death by flesh [i.e., by humans]" and "made alive by the Spirit").⁴¹ These positions maintain that the datives must have a parallel sense. Yet if the material is hymnic or creedal, a formal parallel would not necessitate such a parallel. Poetic language often omits and abbreviates for formal economy while investing the same forms with different senses.⁴² Thomas Schreiner's interpretation seems to be the best way forward: "the two datives are not used in precisely the same way; the first is a dative of reference, and the second is a dative of agency. Christ was put to death with reference to or in the sphere of his body, but on the other hand he was made alive by the Spirit."⁴³ Or as Calvin put it: "*Flesh* here means the outward man; and *Spirit* means the divine power, by which Christ emerged from death a conqueror."⁴⁴

While "flesh" certainly includes the physical body, it connotes something more. The physical body is the visible aspect of limited and perishable human existence—"σάρξ is the perishable

par excellence.”⁴⁵ Peter earlier described this frail and corruptible nature by quoting Isa 40:6: πᾶσα σὰρξ ὡς χόρτος (“All flesh is like grass”).⁴⁶ The flesh, then, is not merely the physical body but the perishable mode in which humans live prior to resurrection.⁴⁷ Thus, when Peter highlights that Christ “bore our sins in his body [ἐν τῷ σώματι αὐτοῦ] on the tree” (2:24), he is instantiating the most conspicuous feature of Christ’s fleshly and perishable existence: the outward man, or in Paul’s terms, the descendant of David.⁴⁸ Thus, it was in that mode and realm of existence that Christ was put to death.

But what role does the Spirit play in this two-step sequence of reconciliation? Theologically, it seems of little consequence whether the dative πνεύματι connotes respect/sphere (“in the spirit”) or agency (“by the Spirit”); for the former would certainly imply the work of the Holy Spirit. But if the statement was drawn from creedal material, it seems more likely that it refers to the agency of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁹ While the death of Christ is obviously important, given the space that Peter allots to describing it in 3:18ab and in 2:21–25, grammatically, the first clause in the μέν... δέ construction sets up the background for the vital point in the second.⁵⁰ Thus, the stress falls on the instrumentality of Christ’s resurrection in bringing them to God. The death of Christ in the flesh opens upon a new existence by the Spirit. Resurrection is the telos of Christ’s death because it is by the Holy Spirit—which is the Spirit of Christ (1:11–12), the Spirit of God (4:14). But how does that work? What is it about the Spirit that enlivens his body?

Thematically in the NT, Christ’s resurrection is more than a forensic vindication “by the Spirit.”⁵¹ In 3:18, Christ wasn’t made alive because he was judged to be righteous. Of course, he was righteous (2:22), but his sinlessness has more to do with the perfection of his sacrifice than with the efficacy of the Spirit

in resurrection. In Acts, Peter proclaims the injustice of Christ's death, but God does not raise Christ because he was exonerated; rather, he was freed from "the pangs of death because it was not possible for death to keep its hold on him" (Acts 2:24).⁵² The imagery is not merely vindication but victory. It was the singular divine life of the Spirit "by which Christ emerged from death a conqueror."⁵³ Thus, as Reinhard Feldmeier observes, it is Christ's participation in the Spirit that "brings about precisely in the sphere of death the conquest of the same."⁵⁴ Which is to say that the consequence of his death in the flesh can issue only in the reversal of that death because "in him was life" (John 1:4).⁵⁵ "For what does it mean," asks Augustine, "that he was brought to life in the spirit but that the same flesh in which alone he was put to death rose by the life-giving spirit?"⁵⁶

Benjamin Myers describes the development of this logic in what he calls the patristic atonement model with its attendant metaphysical assumptions,⁵⁷ two of which are highlighted here: (1) death is the privation or corruption of being, and (2) God is being or life and he cannot by nature undergo death—he is impassible. Since death is not a positive thing against which God struggles, Peter's language in Acts that death cannot hold Christ down or Calvin's assertion that Christ emerges a conqueror are truly metaphorical. Christ did not overcome death in a cosmic struggle or a hard-won battle against Satan and the powers.⁵⁸ Rather, as easily as light dispels darkness, so too when impassible divine life meets death in the flesh of Christ, the privation is filled and death itself is reversed. Gregory of Nyssa put it like this, "For it is not in the nature of darkness to endure the presence of light, nor can death exist where life is active."⁵⁹ Or to use a metaphor from 1 Peter, "by his wounds you have been healed" (2:24e; cf. Isa 53:5). While modern commentators usually find in this statement a paradox,⁶⁰ a metaphysical commitment to impass-

ble divine life dwelling in the incarnate Christ makes good sense of it. The wound of death in his flesh was met with his life in the Spirit. And as Peter's notion of suffering with Christ is participatory (4:13), so the salvation that he provides for humanity is a participation in resurrected existence: "You have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God" (1:23 NIV). Thus, being truly human, Christ enlivens not only his own body by the Spirit but human nature generally, which had for so long suffered the corruption of sin and death. Athanasius described the participation this way:

Therefore, assuming a body like ours, because all people were liable to the corruption of death, [the Word] surrendered [his body] to death for all humanity, and offered it to the Father. He presented it to the Father as an act of pure love for humanity, so that by all dying in him the law concerning the corruption of humanity might be abolished... and [so] that he might turn back to a state of incorruption those who had fallen into a state of corruption, and bring them to life by the fact of his death, by the body which he made his own, and by the grace of his resurrection.⁶¹

While theologically more developed, Athanasius's meaning seems entirely consistent with 1 Peter's participatory notion of atonement. The imperishable Word took on a perishable human nature "to bring you to God" so that when he succumbed to death *in the flesh* he brought the fullness of his deity *by the Spirit* to fill the gaping wound of death thereby reversing death for his own humanity and for all those who participate in him—who are born again (1:23) and baptized (3:21), which is the grace of his resurrection.

3. Atonement as Sacrificial, Juridical, and Victorious

Undoubtedly, patristic writers drew their atonement logic from the NT itself, concentrated portrayals of which can be found in Colossians and Hebrews. In Col 2:9–15, God forgives our sins by Christ absorbing their legal consequence in himself on the cross (2:14), which is simultaneously the triumph of the cross (2:15) because Paul assumes that in Christ the fullness of deity encountered death in Christ's body (2:9). And in Heb 2:14–17, the author assumes the divine status of Christ (1:2–3) as he works out why the Son took a human nature. He did so to destroy death and the devil (2:14) and to become a priest for us (2:17). In his divinity he is able to overcome death, and in his humanity he is able to offer his death on behalf of our sins. In both Colossians and Hebrews there is a blending of the triumphant victory of Christ with judicial and sacrificial imagery respectively.⁶² The key to their effortless mixture is the humanity and deity of Christ. A seed of the same logic appears in 1 Pet 3:18de in the juxtaposition of flesh and Spirit. On the one hand, *dying in the flesh*, Christ died as a human for our sins (3:18ab) under the just judgment of God (2:23c). On the other hand—and what is more—*being made alive by the Spirit*, Christ conquered death for humanity in his resurrection because the Spirit in him is the fullness of divine life and power.

While penal substitution is a vital aspect of atonement in 1 Pet 3:18, it operates in concert with Christ's victory over the grave. With characteristic profundity, Augustine brings together the sacrificial, juridical, and victorious threads of atonement in saying, "It was of course on our behalf that [Christ], in whom the prince of the world and the lord of death found nothing, did away with the death that he did not deserve."⁶³ Though without sin, Christ delivered himself over to the just judge to suffer a death sentence for sins that he did not deserve—the Righteous

One for the unrighteous—so that in death he might discard death by virtue of his inextinguishable life-giving Spirit.⁶⁴ In doing so, Christ has brought us to God.

Notes

1. E.g., Mark Baker and Joel B. Green show that it is not a caricature of penal substitution proponents to stress that “Jesus died on the cross *so that* God could forgive our sins” (*Recovering the Scandal of the Cross: Atonement in New Testament and Contemporary Contexts*, 2nd ed. [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011], 178); cf. J. Denny Weaver, “Narrative *Christus Victor*: The Answer to Anselmian Atonement Violence,” in *Atonement and Violence: A Theological Conversation*, ed. John Sanders (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006), 7–9.

2. Benjamin Myers, “The Patristic Atonement Model,” in *Locating Atonement: Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics*, ed. Oliver D. Crisp and Fred Sanders (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 71–88.

3. On the use of traditional material in 3:18–22, see John Hall Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 693–697.

4. The textual variants for ἔπαθεν (“suffered”) are numerous. The main alternative is the verb ἀπέθανεν (“died”). The context makes ἔπαθεν more probable. In any case, the meaning is not changed drastically one way or the other. Christ’s suffering is a euphemism for his death which 3:18d clearly demonstrates.

5. All biblical translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

6. Paul Achtemeier notes Lev 5:6–7; 6:23 LXX; Ezek 43:21 LXX; and Heb 5:3 (*1 Peter: A Commentary on First Peter*, Hermeneia [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996], 247). Otfried Hofius views the sacrificial tone as so strong that he translates the phrase “to make atonement for sins” (“The Fourth Servant Song in the New Testament Letters,” in *The Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 in Jewish and Christian Sources*, ed. Bernd Janowski and Peter Stuhlmacher [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004], 187).

7. See Richard B. Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel’s Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 128–129.

8. Peter emphasizes Christ's righteousness in the sense of blamelessness and sinlessness in 1:19 and 2:22–23.

9. Cf. J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter*, WBC (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1988), 202; Earl J. Richard, *Reading 1 Peter, Jude, and 2 Peter: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2000), 156; Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination*, 129; Leonhard Goppelt, *A Commentary on 1 Peter*, ed. Ferdinand Hahn, trans. John E. Alsup (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 252.

10. For arguments on the presence of penal substitution in 1 Pet 1:18–19 see I. Howard Marshall, *Aspects of the Atonement: Cross and Resurrection in the Reconciling of God and Humanity* (London: Paternoster, 2007), 53–54.

11. E.g., Hofius avoids any penal connotation in 3:18 by denying that Isa 53 had any juridical significance for Peter ("Fourth Servant Song," 187). Joel Green resists using *substitution* and related words altogether since "the exemplary character of Jesus's suffering takes center stage in 1 Peter" (John T. Carroll and Joel B. Green, *The Death of Jesus in Early Christianity* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995], 142). More recently, Baker and Green use substitution language for 1 Peter but find that it pertains entirely to sacrificial purification without any juridical let alone penal connotation. Relying on Hofius, they conclude that "Christ's death takes the place of others in such a way that affects their very being, that opens to them 'a new life-reality'" (*Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*, 110).

12. Cf. Joel B. Green, *1 Peter*, Two Horizons New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 88.

13. Cf. Reinhard Feldmeier, who with emphasis states, "*This interleaving of the soteriological singularity and ethical exemplarity of Christ's suffering is characteristic of 1 Peter*" (*The First Letter of Peter: A Commentary on the Greek Text* [Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008], 174).

14. The successive relative clauses, the shift from second to first-person language, and the shift in thematic content were long thought to betray an earlier hymn which formed the basis for 2:22–25. Most recent commentators, however, reject that hypothesis (e.g., Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 192–193; Elliott, *1 Peter*, 548–550; Feldmeier, *First Letter of Peter*, 167–168; Michaels, *1 Peter*, 136–137).

15. Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 111. Similarly, Feldmeier posits that, in contrast to Christ's non-retaliation, he "left it" (i.e., left the rightful retaliation) to God (*First Letter of Peter*, 175). And relatedly, Goppelt suggests that Christ left the judgment to God (*1 Peter*, 212).

16. Michaels, *1 Peter*, 147; Richard, *Reading 1 Peter, Jude, and 2 Peter*, 122.

17. Edward Gordon Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter: The Greek Text, with Introduction, Notes and Essays* (London: Macmillan, 1946), 179–180; Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 201; Mark Dubis, *1 Peter: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010), 78; Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter*, BECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 194; Lewis R. Donelson, *I & II Peter and Jude: A Commentary*, NTL (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 85. Cf. KJV, NRSV, NIV, ESV, NET, CSB, et al. Thomas Schreiner notes that while “himself” is correct, the lack of a direct object and the imperfect tense suggest that what Christ entrusted included himself, his situation, and those involved (*1, 2 Peter, Jude*, NAC [Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2003], 144).

18. Most interpret 2:23c as a parallel of 4:19, which states that those who suffer should “entrust” (παρατίθῃμι) themselves to the creator (e.g., Jobes, *1 Peter*, 197). Cf. πάτερ, εἰς χεῖράς σου παρατίθεται τὸ πνεῦμά μου (“Father, into your hands I commit my spirit” [Luke 23:46, emphasis added]) and parallel in Ps 30:6 LXX.

19. E.g., Martin Williams, *The Doctrine of Salvation in the First Letter of Peter*, SNTSMS 149 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 102.

20. Cf. Ernest Best, *1 Peter*, NCB (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans; London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1982), 121.

21. Mark Dubis observes that 2:23c structurally belongs to context of 2:21–23b as it falls at the end of the second relative clause and right before a new relative clause at the start of 2:24 (*Messianic Woes in First Peter: Suffering and Eschatology in 1 Peter 4:12–19*, StBibLit 33 [New York: Peter Lang, 2002], 179 n. 18).

22. Dubis makes a similar argument for this double meaning (*Messianic Woes in First Peter*, 178–182).

23. Achtemeier’s assertion that “there is no reflection of language from Isaiah 53” in 2:23 is overstated (*1 Peter*, 200). In n.157, he dismisses Ernest Best’s argument that παραδίδωμι links Isa 53:12 and 1 Pet 2:23 (“1 Peter and the Gospel Tradition,” *NTS* 16.2 [1970]: 121); Similarly, Michaels sees no relation between παραδίδωμι in Isa 53 and here (*1 Peter*, 147).

24. In the Gospels, the verb refers to Judas, “the betrayer,” or what he does (Matt 10:4; 26:46, 48; 27:3; Mark 3:19; 14:41, 44; Luke 22:4, 6, 21, 48; John 6:71; 12:4; 13:2, 11, 21; 18:2, 5), the handing over of Jesus to die in general (Matt 17:22; 26:2, 45; 27:26; Mark 9:32; 14:41; 15:15; Luke 9:44; 23:25; 24:7, 20; John 19:16) and more particularly to the Chief Priests, to the Gentiles, and to Pilate

(Matt 20:18; 27:2, 18; Mark 10:33; 15:1, 10; Luke 18:32; 20:20; John 18:30, 35, 36; 19:11). An interesting usage occurs in John 19:30: καὶ κλῖνας τὴν κεφαλὴν παρέδωκεν τὸ πνεῦμα ("and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit"). With no indirect object, this expression conveys that he in fact died; i.e., he handed over his spirit to death. And in Acts 3:13, the Jews in general hand him over to Pilate.

25. Achtemeier adds that the "use of the imperfect tense for the verbs in these clauses, a tense that describes repeated, even habitual, action is also more appropriate to Jesus' whole career than simply to the passion" (*1 Peter*, 201).

26. Horrell notes the "almost formulaic references" in Gal 2:20 and Eph 5:2 ("Jesus Remembered in 1 Peter? Early Jesus Traditions, Isaiah 53, and 1: Peter 2.21–25," in *James, 1 & 2 Peter, and Early Jesus Traditions*, ed. Alicia J. Batten and John S. Kloppenborg, LNTS 478 [London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014], 138). Cf. Martin Hengel, who recognizes variance in the "surrender formula," but nonetheless traces its origins back to Isa 53:6, 12 LXX where παραδίδωμι is used in connection with "our sins" (*The Atonement: The Origins of the Doctrine in the New Testament*, [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981], 35–36).

27. The tension is softened in LXX-Isaiah by portraying the Lord as desirous to take away the Servant's judgment or punishment. E.g., 53:8: ἐν τῇ ταπεινώσει ἡ κρίσις αὐτοῦ ἦρθη ("In his humiliation his judgment was taken away," NETS) vs. מַעַזְר וּמִשְׁפָּט לָקָח ("By oppression and judgment he was taken away"); and in 53:10: καὶ κύριος βούλεται καθάρισαι αὐτὸν τῆς πληγῆς ("and the Lord wants to cleanse him from the wound") vs. וַיִּדְּהָהּ כְּפִי כִּפְאוֹ הַחַלִּי ("Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief," ESV). Nonetheless, the LXX translator can't avoid the implication that the Servant experiences the "corrective punishment of our peace" (παιδεία εἰρήνης ἡμῶν, 53:5) and that it is the Lord who gives him over to death (53:12c).

28. Cf. Williams who refers to Num 14:33–35; Ezek 18:20; and Isa 53 as evidence that "bearing sins" in these contexts "signifies 'bearing the consequences or punishment for sins'" (*Doctrine of Salvation*, 105–107).

29. The Vulg. corrects δικαίως ("justly") with *iniuste* ("unjustly"). Thus, Christ *tradebat autem iudicanti se iniuste* ("delivered himself to him that judged him unjustly," Douay-Rheims), probably referring to Pilate. See Goppelt, *1 Peter*, 212 n. 63. Although the Latin variant is undoubtedly a corruption, whoever introduced it probably had trouble making sense of παραδίδωμι because of its negative associations in the Gospel narratives.

30. Contra Goppelt, *1 Peter*, 212.

31. Though different forms, the words in 1 Pet 2:24b follow the same sequence as in Deut 21:23a: οὐκ ἐπικοιμηθήσεται τὸ σῶμα αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τοῦ

ξύλου (“his body on the tree shall not sleep”). Given the Petrine tradition of using “on the tree” (ἐπὶ ξύλου, Acts 5:30; 10:39) to refer to Christ’s death on the cross, and the development of this tradition by Paul in Gal 3:13 to explain the scandal of the cross as Christ “becoming a curse for us” (γενόμενος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν κατόρα), it seems probable that 1 Pet 2:24b has the same covenantal and juridical background in view but developed in the context of Isa 53. Cf. Williams, *Doctrine of Salvation*, 107–109. Contra Michaels, who sees only a superficial euphuism for the cross in ξύλον (“tree”) with no link to the context of Deut 21:23. Consequently, Michaels states that “the point [of 2:24ab] is simply that he carried [sins] away” (1 Peter, 148), an interpretation which ignores the sacrificial and juridical contexts integral to the redemptive significance of Christ’s suffering in 1 Peter.

32. Contrary to the NETS, it seems unlikely that the text has a god other than the Lord in view since Deut 4:32–35 expressly denies there is any other god. The anarthrous noun could refer to the divinity in general, which by deuteronomic standards is the one God, the Lord.

33. Contra Hofius, who suggests that *despite* Isa 53, “Christ’s death is seen in these sentences not as the substitutionary bearing of the penal consequences of our sin, but as an event of sanctifying atonement” (“Fourth Servant Song,” 186).

34. See Max Wilcox, who notes that the LXX leans towards the meaning of “being cursed by God” (“Upon the Tree: Deut 21:22–23 in the New Testament,” *JBL* 96.1 [1977]: 87). On the use of Deut 21:23 as divine curse, see Ardel B. Caneday, “Anyone Hung upon a Pole is under God’s Curse”: Deuteronomy 21:22–23 in Old and New Covenant Contexts,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 18.3 (2014): 121–136.

35. Cf. Williams, who notes 1 Pet 2:23–24 demonstrates “that Christ endured the penal consequences of human sin. In v. 23 Peter testifies that God is ‘the one who judges justly’, and then in the very next verse (v. 24) he affirms that ‘he [Christ] himself bore our sins in his body on the cross’” (*Doctrine of Salvation*, 265).

36. Cf. this double meaning with the interpretations in Alan M. Stibbs and Andrew F. Walls, *The First Epistle General of Peter*, TNTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1959), 119; Frank G. Carver, *The Cross and the Spirit* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1987), 97.

37. Cf. Dubis, *Messianic Woes in First Peter*, 181–182; David R. Nienhuis, “1–2 Peter,” in *T & T Clark Companion to Atonement*, ed. Adam J. Johnson, Bloomsbury Companions (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017), 687.

38. To clarify, I am not arguing here that Peter had a Chalcedonian notion of Christ’s two natures in mind. Rather, I am suggesting that the best explanation

of the *how* of atonement can be developed from Peter's assertion of the tradition that Christ died in the flesh and was made alive by the Spirit and from metaphysical commitments in patristic Christology.

39. Cf. Jobes, *1 Peter*, 241–242. The NET also takes it this way. Cf. Acts 9:7 which has adverbial causal participles in a μέν... δέ construction.

40. Dative of respect could be taken in two senses: (1) the constituent parts of his person body and soul, or (2) his two modes of existence pre- and post-resurrection (cf. Rom 8:1–11; 1 Cor 15:35–50; 1 Tim 3:16). Augustine rejects the notion that Christ's soul/spirit dies (*Letter* 164.7.19), and few contemporary scholars take the first position (David J. MacLeod, "The Suffering of Christ: Exemplary, Substitutionary, and Triumphant [1 Peter 3:18–22 and Possible Parallels: Ephesians 4:8–9 and 1 Peter 4:6]," *Emmaus Journal* 14 [2005]: 3–43). Most interpreters take variations on the second position, which tends to mix with the dative of sphere (Michaels, *1 Peter*, 204; Duane F. Watson, "Early Jesus Tradition in 1 Peter 3:18–22," in *James, 1 & 2 Peter, and Early Jesus Traditions*, ed. Alicia J. Batten and John S. Kloppenborg, LNTS 478 [London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014], 154; Richard, *Reading 1 Peter, Jude, and 2 Peter*, 158; Jobes, *1 Peter*, 242).

41. Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 250; Douglas Harink, *1 & 2 Peter*, Brazos Theological Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2009), 98. Problems emerge quickly with the reading that Christ was killed "by flesh" (i.e., by human agency). In 4:1, Peter returns to the idea of Christ suffering "in the flesh," this time to encourage his readers to endure suffering "in reference to the flesh" or "in the realm of fleshly existence."

42. E.g., in 1 Tim 3:16, the formal hymnic parallels are not matched with a parallel sense in the datives: ὃς ἐφανερώθη ἐν σαρκί, / ἐδικαιώθη ἐν πνεύματι ("He appeared in the flesh," / "was vindicated by the Spirit").

43. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 184. Cf. Dubis, *1 Peter*, 118; Feldmeier, *First Letter of Peter*, 201–202; Goppelt, *1 Peter*, 254.

44. Jean Calvin, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews and the First and Second Epistles of St Peter*, ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance, trans. William B. Johnston, vol. 12, Calvin's New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans; Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1994), 292.

45. Jörg Frey, *The Glory of the Crucified One: Christology and Theology in the Gospel of John*, trans. Wayne Coppins and Christoph Heilig, The Baylor-Mohr Siebeck Studies in Early Christianity (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2018), 281.

46. 1 Pet 1:24 (ESV). Cf. Gen 6:3; Jer 17:5; Sir 14:17–18.

47. This connotation is operative in Peter's later usages. Because of Christ's suffering in the flesh, Peter admonishes his readers "to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God" (4:2 ESV). And redirecting the flesh/Spirit contrast in 3:18, Peter applies it to the enigmatic dead in 4:6: κριθῶσι μὲν κατὰ ἀνθρώπους σαρκὶ ζῶσι δὲ κατὰ θεὸν πνεύματι ("though judged according to human beings in the flesh, they might live according to God by the Spirit").

48. See Rom 1:3–4.

49. Cf., Rom 1:4; 8:11; and esp. 1 Tim 3:16. Moreover, the agency of the Spirit makes better sense of relative pronoun at the start of the next verse (1 Pet 3:19): ἐν ᾧ... ("By whom..."). On which see Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 252.

50. Dubis, *1 Peter*, 33.

51. As it is in 1 Tim 3:16.

52. Cf. Pol. *Phil.* 1:2.

53. Calvin, *Epistle of Paul*, 292.

54. Feldmeier is here applying Rom 4:17 to understand 1 Pet 3:18 (*First Letter of Peter*, 202).

55. "His life," as John Webster stated, "is not simply created life given infinite duration but eschatological or *original* life, life derived from nothing other than his participation in the infinite being of God without cause. The resurrection of Jesus is the temporal enactment of the eternal relation of Father and Son. 'As the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself' (Jn 5.26). It is this inner-Trinitarian reality, the eternal relation of paternity and filiation, intrinsic to the divine perfection, which is the ultimate ontological ground of Jesus' resurrection. Jesus' risen life is divine life, and his resurrection is the elucidation and confirmation of his antecedent deity, by virtue of which he is the one he is. From the standpoint of the resurrection, Jesus' entire temporal career is to be understood as the dwelling among us of the grace, truth and glory of God's own life" ("Resurrection and Scripture," in *Christology and Scripture: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Andrew T. Lincoln and Angus Paddison, LNTS 348 [London: T&T Clark, 2007], 139).

56. Augustine, *Letter* 164.6.18 (*Letters* 156–210, trans. Roland J Teske, vol. II:3 of *The Works of Saint Augustine*, ed. Boniface Ramsey [Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2004], 71).

57. Myers, "The Patristic Atonement Model," 73–74.

58. Contra Gregory A. Boyd, *God at War: The Bible & Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997); more recently expressed in his

The Crucifixion of the Warrior God, 2 vols. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2017), Part VI.

59. Gregory of Nyssa as quoted by Myers, “The Patristic Atonement Model,” 79.

60. Characteristic of many modern commentators, Elliot avoids any metaphysical meaning while stating powerfully the effect of Christ’s suffering: “The chief point here... is that the bruise or bruising is a metonymy for Christ’s entire ordeal of suffering and effects the healing of the servants/slaves that their own suffering could not. Along with 2:21a and 24 it further underlines the substitutionary nature and power of Christ’s suffering and death.... Christ is not simply an example but an enabler, one whose own bruising brings about the healing of others, a healing that, as v 25 indicates, involves restoration of communion with God” (1 Peter, 536–537).

61. Athanasius, *De incarnatione* 8.4 (as quoted in Alistair E. McGrath, *The Christian Theology Reader*, 5th ed. [Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016], 288).

62. Cf. Fleming Rutledge, *The Crucifixion: Understanding the Death of Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 376.

63. Augustine, *Letter* 164.7.19 (*Letters* 156–210, 71).

64. The Spirit “by whom” (ἐν ᾧ) Christ manifests his triumph over all authorities and powers (3:19–22). Verses 19–22 form an *inclusio* with the occurrence of πορευθεῖς (“going”) in both vv. 19 and 22. The participle also extends Peter’s usage of the creedal material by completing the redemptive sequence in Christ’s accession and reign. The intervening material enigmatically mentions the Noahic deluge which prefigured salvation through baptism because of Christ’s resurrection.

Peter's Gospel to the Martyrs

David D. Danielson II

Εἰς τοῦτο γὰρ καὶ νεκροῖς εὐηγγελίσθη, ἵνα κριθῶσιν μὲν κατὰ ἀνθρώπους σαρκί, ζῶσιν δὲ κατὰ θεὸν πνεύματι.

For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does. (1 Pet 4:6)¹

After almost two thousand years, Peter's gospel to the dead (1 Pet 4:6) continues to strike readers as a "curious and strange text."² Who proclaimed good news and when? Who listened and where?³ In the mid-twentieth century, W.J. Dalton identified four views on the identity of the "dead."⁴ More recently, David Horrell has distilled the debate as between two views regarding the substantival adjective νεκροῖς ("the dead"). One view is that human beings who were "already dead" encountered the gospel message in the realm of the dead. The other view is that people heard and believed the gospel on earth but had "since died" before Peter wrote his epistle.⁵ Whereas Horrell takes the "already dead" view, this essay will argue for a version of the "since died" view.⁶ In particular, I will argue that "the dead" of

1 Pet 4:6 were Anatolian Christians who had been slandered in court, found guilty, and put to death. In the Great Assize (1 Pet 4:5), God will conduct a trial *de novo* with respect to those who suffered and died as Christians (1 Pet 4:15–17). The good news for these dead is that the lower court’s judgment will be thrown out, and the divine court will award to these defendants far more than compensatory damages—namely, resurrection. In a word, then, Peter’s gospel to the dead was good news for the Anatolian martyrs and good news to his readers.⁷

First, I will address the historical question: What kinds of persecution did Peter’s readers face? Much of recent Petrine scholarship has depicted persecution of Christians in first-century Asia Minor as local and sporadic, consisting of verbal assault and social ostracism. On this view, Peter’s readers faced persecutions, but not prosecutions. Pagan hostility was local, popular, and informal. This account needs to be revised.

Second, I will offer a new take on 1 Pet 4:6 by framing the identity of “the dead” in terms of the concessive clause “they were judged.” Interpreters have understood this aorist passive subjunctive (κριθῶσιν) in essentially three ways: judged by God, criticized by humans, or judged in court. The third seems most likely, revealing a martyriological significance in this “curious and strange text.”⁸

1. Persecutions in Asia Minor

What kinds of persecution had “grieved” the churches in Asia Minor? Did some Christians stand trial for their participation in what one Roman governor called “a perverse and immoderate superstition”?⁹ Or were persecutions merely unofficial forms of social hostility?

1.1 The Current Consensus: Unofficial Persecution View

While older scholarship posited that the Roman Empire made persecution of Christians a matter of official policy,¹⁰ the current consensus holds that the persecutions suffered by Peter's readers were unofficial.¹¹ This view precludes a martyriological interpretation of 1 Pet 4:6. Three points typify the unofficial persecution position.

First, at the time of the letter's composition (ca. AD 60–95), the Roman Empire had not proscribed the Christian faith.¹² Christians of this period did not face “organized Roman persecution,” nor had they been dubbed “enemies of the state.”¹³ In fact, the correspondence of Trajan and Pliny shows a lack of imperial policy regarding the Christian movement.¹⁴

Second, the suffering of Peter's readers was popular and consisted largely of verbal assault and social antipathy. John Elliott refers to the “disparagement and abuse” inflicted by “hostile unbelievers.”¹⁵ Likewise, J. Ramsey Michaels states that “the actual abuse of Christians with which [Peter] seems most concerned is verbal abuse (e.g., 2:12, 15, 23; 3:9, 16; 4:4, 14b).”¹⁶ According to Paul Achtemeier, Peter's readers faced “reproach and obloquy (1 Pet 4:14)....”¹⁷ And for Karen Jobes, the letter depicts “verbal slander, malicious talk, and false accusations (1:6; 2:12, 15; 3:9, 16; 4:12, 16).”¹⁸

Third, any aggressions and violence against Christians generally were local and sporadic. Outbursts of hostility (e.g., against Stephen in Acts 7:54–60) occurred because of “the flare-up of local hatreds rather than because Roman officials were engaged in the regular discharge of official policy.”¹⁹

In sum, Elliott notes that “anti-Christian actions against individuals or groups were sporadic, generally mob-incited, locally restricted, and unsystematic in nature.”²⁰ Probably for this reason, Dalton says that martyrdom in 1 Pet 4:6 would be “foreign

to the context.”²¹ Accordingly, Martin Williams finds death via “formal legal proceedings” to be unlikely “since there is nothing in 1 Peter to suggest that, at this time, there existed an official policy of state-organised persecution resulting in martyrdom.”²² Thus, a reference to martyrs in 1 Pet 4:6 is flatly dismissed.

1.2 Recovery of the Median Persecution View

Travis Williams has offered a forceful rejoinder to the unofficial persecution view by examining *inter alia* the structures of civic and judicial authority in first-century Roman Anatolia.²³ According to him, the unofficial view is not a recent development.²⁴ And the official/unofficial dichotomy oversimplifies earlier Petrine scholarship. Many who are said to hold the official view were in fact more nuanced than current scholarship concedes.²⁵ Thus, T. Williams argues for a third position that he sees in previous Petrine scholarship, and which he dubs the “median” view of persecution.²⁶

The median view hypothesizes a combination of official and unofficial hostility against first-century Christians. This hostility was not “the result of *laws* passed down by the Roman government which proscribed the Christian faith” but stemmed from “the important *influence* of the Neronian pogroms, both on the local populace as well as on governing officials.” Nero’s violence is thought “to have set a *precedent* for the treatment of Christians.”²⁷ Moreover, several texts in 1 Peter (2:11–17; 3:14b–16) could easily reflect “a more formal conflict situation,” and “there is no more natural environment in which to envision these events than the Anatolian courts.”²⁸ In particular, the remarks of 4:15–19 reflect the criminalized status of Christianity in this period.²⁹

During this time, “believers were not actively sought by the local or provincial authorities.” Any prosecution of Christians

occurred because of "official accusations" brought by individuals.³⁰ Most criminal cases, including capital cases such as "adultery, sacrilege, and murder," had to be tried by the provincial governor, who would make yearly circuits of the province.³¹ If a governor decided to hear a case, "the formal procedure of a trial, the rendering of a verdict, and the dispensing of appropriate punishments were all dependent upon the personal discretion of the governor."³²

At the same time, "relatively few [Christians] ever suffered capital punishment" during the first three centuries of Christian history.³³ Thus, "destructive, escalated conflict [was] more often sporadic and episodic rather than permanent and decisive."³⁴ Reasons for this include personal risks to the accuser, who could suffer penalties if the accused Christian recanted; the caprice and broad discretion exercised by the provincial governor in both verdict and sentencing; and the scarcity of the governor's judicial presence, who alone in the province could impose capital punishments.³⁵ The costs of attending the governor's tribunal must also have deterred would-be litigants.³⁶ These and still other reasons³⁷ explain why an "effectively illegal" religion did not regularly meet with violent suppression by Roman authorities.

Though evidence for an official view of persecution is lacking,³⁸ the unofficial persecution view has overcompensated. It will not do simply "to pose as alternatives informal public hostility and official Roman persecution."³⁹ Such a dichotomy falsely assumes "a hard and fast separation... between popular animosity and official persecution."⁴⁰ The work of T. Williams has recovered the median persecution view, prevalent among earlier scholarship, by recognizing how Nero's pogroms would have impacted local authorities.⁴¹

In summary, a strong argument can be made that Christianity was effectively illegal at the time of Peter's writing. The officially

sanctioned action of Nero against Christians, in Rome no less, associated Christians with criminal behavior or at least with imperial condemnation. In this light, Peter's reference to "governors as sent by [God] to punish those who do evil" (2:14) is striking. His emphasis upon doing good and not evil in the public eye (2:11–12; 2:15–16; 2:19–21; 3:16–17) seems to imply that slander against Christians included content of a criminal nature (4:15–16).

2. Gospel to the Martyrs

Taking the median view of persecution, this study reframes the question of "the dead" in the interpretation of 1 Pet 4:6a: In what sense were they "judged" (κριθῶσιν)? Intriguingly, interpreters who disagree on the identity of "the dead" overlap in their assessment of "judged." In this section, three interpretations of "judged" (κριθῶσιν) will be assessed. For ease, I will refer to 1 Pet 4:6b as the "judgment clause" or the "concessive clause."

Preliminarily, the meaning of "judged" partly hinges upon the meanings of its two adverbial modifiers: κατὰ ἀνθρώπους ("according to humans") and σαρκί ("in/by/with respect to the flesh"). The latter will be addressed in section 2.2. The former has been understood to indicate (i) the *nature* of those judged (i.e., "as/like humans"), (ii) the *standard* of their being judged (i.e., "according to human standards"), or (iii) the *perspective* from which they are judged (i.e., "according to a human perspective").

2.1 Were the Dead Judged by God?

Some understand the word "judged" to mean "judged by God." There are two variations within this view: death as divine judgment or divine judgment on the Last Day.

The first version asserts that death is God's judgment on sin. As God warned Adam, the consequence of disobedience would

be death (Gen 2:17).⁴² On this reading of the judgment clause, all human beings who live in the fleshly realm (σάρκι) experience divine judgment in the form of death.

Death as divine judgment fits into the "since died" reading for Dalton, who says that through participation in Christ, believers are brought through "the lot common to all men" into life.⁴³ Alan Stibbs writes that when believers hear and receive the gospel, they die, and thus "the judgment due to them as sinners is fully accomplished in this world, i.e. *in the flesh*..."⁴⁴

Proponents of the "already dead" view also assert this meaning of "judged." J.W.C. Wand writes: "The point is that the dead have already suffered some judgment either in the manner of their death or in the penalties they have undergone in their life on the earth."⁴⁵ C.E.B. Cranfield explains the concessive clause to mean "though they have died, as all men must (death itself being regarded as God's judgment)."⁴⁶ For Goppelt, "condemnation is executed in their death," as attested in scriptural and early Jewish sources.⁴⁷ Horrell also appeals to a scriptural basis to describe death "as a sign of judgment for sin," but he notes that "I Peter insists that this is a human perspective."⁴⁸

A second version of the judged-by-God view is proposed by Bo Reicke, who argues that "judged" in 4:6 refers to God's judgment on the Last Day, just as it did in 4:5.⁴⁹ The downfall of the death-as-divine-judgment view is twofold. First, it sharply distinguishes between two species of God's judgment in the span of three clauses.⁵⁰ In 4:5, the Last Day judgment is in view, whereas in 4:6, the judgment stated is a biblical gloss on death. The accompanying modifiers in 4:6, "according to humans" and "in the flesh," make such a nuance semantically possible, but one wonders if a simpler solution lies at hand. Second, the death-as-divine-judgment view must interpret "according to humans" as indicating the common lot of humanity, what I have called

the *nature* translation. Yet several scholars argue that the modifier κατὰ ἀνθρώπους (“according to humans”) indicates standard or perspective. If they are right, it would be absurd to assert a divine judgment according to human standards, and it is unlikely that unbelieving pagans would have appealed to a scriptural view of death.⁵¹

A Last Day judgment in 4:6b is more persuasive, as argued by Reicke. For him, both “dead” and “judge” should be interpreted consistently in 4:5–6, and the word γάρ (“For,” 4:6) presents the gospel proclamation to “the dead” as the legal basis for God’s judgment of all “living and dead” (v. 5).⁵² If “the dead” have not changed between the two verses, why should the meaning of “judge” change?⁵³ The tense/mood of “judged” (κριθῶσιν) is no obstacle, since the aorist subjunctive could refer to past, present, or future time.⁵⁴

The obvious obstacle to this reading is construing the word σαρκί (“in the flesh”) to mean “physically.”⁵⁵ Reicke seeks to resolve this difficulty by demonstrating early Jewish and early Christian belief in a universal resurrection of righteous and wicked unto both life and judgment.⁵⁶ However, this attempt must be deemed unsuccessful. Earlier in the letter, Peter quotes from Isa 40 to depict the frailty and mortality of human generations: “All flesh [πᾶσα σὰρξ] is grass...” (1:24). More at hand, the parallel between 3:18 and 4:6 is unmistakable.⁵⁷ In 3:18, Peter writes: “For Christ also suffered once for sins... being put to death in the flesh [σαρκί] but made alive in the spirit [πνεύματι].” According to Karen Jobes, most scholars find these two datives pointing “either to two spheres of Christ’s existence (the earthly sphere versus the eschatological) or to two modes of his personal existence (in human form before his death and in glorified form after his resurrection).”⁵⁸ Either sense would fit with the usage of σαρκί (“in the flesh”) both in 4:1, “Christ

suffered in the flesh [σάρκι],” and in 4:2, where believers are to pursue God’s will during “the rest of the time in the flesh [ἐν σαρκί].”⁵⁹ Throughout the letter, σάρξ (“flesh”) serves as a synecdoche for frail, mortal existence on earth. Contra Reicke, the modifier σαρκί (“in the flesh”) is not a blunt reference to physicality. Rather, Peter writes that the “dead” were “judged” in the realm/existence characterized by mortal “flesh.”

2.2 Were the Dead Criticized by Humans?

A second view holds that “the dead” were criticized by humans. According to this view, those who had believed the gospel had faced ridicule and slander during their time “in the flesh,” and the Last Judgment not only holds their critics accountable (4:5) but vindicates these berated believers through resurrection (4:6).

According to Selwyn, the Thessalonian conundrum was “modified and accentuated by the fact of persecution and social ostracism at the hands of men who lived wholly for the flesh and scorned all idea of future retribution and eternal life. ‘What good is Christianity,’ they said, ‘when like the rest of us you die?’”⁶⁰ Dalton refers to the apparent condemnation of death, which is, from a human and pagan perspective, “the final verdict on human destiny, the verdict of annihilation.”⁶¹ And Jobes comments, “Accountability after death was not widely taught in the pagan world.”⁶² Proponents of this view thus find an echo of pagan criticism in Peter’s reference to fallen believers as simply “the dead.”

Lexically, the word κρίνω (“to judge”) can mean “pass an unfavorable judgment upon, criticize, find fault with, condemn.”⁶³ The strength of the criticized-by-humans view is that this meaning of “judged” fits both with the context 4:1–4 (which culminates in the phrase “and they malign you”) and with the repeated references in 1 Peter to verbal hostility. “The Gen-

tiles... with their maligning, slander, and reproach (4:4; cf. 2:12; 3:9, 16; 4:14) actively faulted the Christians according to their own God-opposed norms....”⁶⁴ These considerations combine with the unofficial persecution view to support an interpretation of “judged” as “criticized.”

In addition, this view rightly connects the identity of “the dead” with the meaning of “judged,” but like the judged-by-God view, it errs in letting the state of death interpret the type of judgment that Peter has in mind. Rather, the judgment or criticism of “the dead” occurs prior to their death. While the aorist subjunctive κριθῶσιν (“judged”) could refer to discourse contemporaneous with Peter’s letter,⁶⁵ the modifier σαρκί (“in the flesh”) implies that the judging occurred during their lives, not after their deaths. More fundamentally, the criticized-by-humans view overlooks the juxtaposition of “judge” and “judged” in 4:5–6, and it assumes without proof that Gentile criticism occurred only in informal settings. While rare, slander against Christians, especially accusations of criminal behavior (4:15), could lead to judicial proceedings.

2.3 Were the Dead Judged in Court?

I propose here a third view of the concessive clause: the dead had been “judged in court.” In a few instances known to Peter, believers in Asia Minor had been tried in court, where they were found guilty “according to human standards” and put to death, marking the end of their time “in the flesh.” To be clear, the verb κριθῶσιν (“they were judged”) refers simply to their trials. The results—a guilty verdict and a death sentence—emerge from Peter’s somewhat awkward reference to them as “the dead.”

The judged-in-court view argues first from the antithesis of the purpose clause (4:6bc), which thus balances execution and resurrection: “judged by human standards” vs. “live by God’s

standard.” As seen above, interpreters variously connect “judged” and being “dead,” whether as a scriptural gloss (judged-by-God view) or as a prong of pagan polemic (criticized-by-humans view). Actually, the solution is straightforward: God’s decision (future) to grant life will foil human decisions (past) to inflict capital punishment. Outside of the verse, one can identify contextual and structural support for this view. First, the parallel with 3:18de supports this interpretation:⁶⁶

3:18d	A	though [Christ was] <i>put to death</i>		in the fleshly realm
4:6b	A'	though [<i>the dead</i>] were <i>judged</i>	by human standards ⁶⁷	in the fleshly realm
3:18e	B	yet [he was] made alive		in the spiritual realm
4:6c	B'	yet they should live	by God's standard	in the spiritual realm

Whereas the agents of execution and resurrection are implied in 3:18, they come to the fore in 4:6. The positive results are identical: just as Christ was made alive by God (B), believers will live by God’s standard of judgment (B’). Or negatively, Christ was executed by humans (A), and certain believers, now dead, had been judged by human standards (A’).

Second, the sequence of suffering in 4:1–6 repeats that of Christ, who suffered both popular hostility and capital punishment. Admonishing slaves, Peter writes, “For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly [πάσχων ἀδίκως]” (2:19). Peter goes on to narrate the exemplary suffering of Christ (2:21), who “committed no sin,” was “reviled” and “suffered” (πάσχων), “continued entrusting himself [παρεδίδου] to him who judges justly [τῷ κρίνοντι

δικαίως],” and died. Full vindication waits until Christ’s resurrection (3:18) and ascension (3:22). With different points of emphasis, a similar sequence appears in 4:1–5: believers “suffered” (παθών), having “ceased from sin,” and were maligned, and all will face “him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.” The sequence is compressed in 4:6: “the dead” had heard the gospel, “were judged by human standards,” and will “live according to God’s standard.” Thus, like Christ, “those who suffer” (οἱ πάσχοντες) must do good and thus “entrust their lives [παραιτιθέσθωσαν τὰς ψυχὰς αὐτῶν] to the faithful creator” (4:19). The template for believers is thus the Passion narrative, in which verbal aggression led to judicially guided violence. In the end (4:5, 7), the story of these Anatolian believers (4:6) will recapitulate the story of Christ: “suffering unjustly” (2:19) will give way to God “judging justly” (2:23).

Furthermore, a trial-execution sequence explains why Peter’s thought leaps from βλασφημοῦντες (“and they malign you,” 4:4) to τῷ ἐτοίμῳ ἔχοντι κρίναι ζῶντας καὶ νεκρούς (“him who is ready to judge the living and the dead,” 4:5). Mere mockery in the streets does not seem to warrant this warning. On the other hand, this sudden climax makes good sense if the slander of 4:4 had resulted in a miscarriage of justice. God’s judgment looms over not libel but lynching.

Finally, a martyriological interpretation of 4:6 resonates with the key pairing of νεκρῶν (“the dead”) and κρίνω (“to judge”). When God judges (κρίναι) all the dead (4:5), he will vindicate a particular group of dead people (4:6), namely, those who heard the gospel and were “judged” (κριθῶσιν) in court.⁶⁸ In these two instances, the word κρίνω (“to judge”) involves different agents but carries the same basic sense—“to engage in a judicial process.”⁶⁹ In 4:6, “judged” does not mean either “criticized”⁷⁰ or “condemned through a legal process,”⁷¹ for the one “ready

to judge" (4:5) will not merely "criticize" or only "condemn." Rather, God will declare to some human beings life and to others an unnamed alternative.⁷² To depict this speech act, Peter and other NT authors picture a great and final trial over which God will preside, judging "impartially according to each one's deeds" (1:17). The twice pairing of "dead" and "judge" thus effects an eclipse: divine judgment will overwhelm all human judgments. God's opponents will answer for their actions (4:5). As for the faithful dead (4:6), their death sentences will be contravened by God's verdict of life—a fitting end to the larger section (3:18–4:6).

In summary, the judged-in-court view is plausible both historically and lexically. This reading attends to the key parallel with 3:18, balances death with resurrection within 4:6, and realizes the theological and rhetorical potential of Peter's repetitions.

3. Conclusion

The breathless quality of Peter's gospel to the dead, with its high concentration of universals, has lent itself to a netherworldly reading (people already dead hearing the gospel) and to claims about the enigmatic nature of Scripture.⁷³ Yet it seems historically probable that this text was written at a time when Christianity was effectively illegal—at minimum, some Christians were being accused of criminal conduct (2:12; 4:15).⁷⁴

Interpreters have sometimes suggested that "martyrs" could be a subset of Peter's "dead,"⁷⁵ yet they have looked outside of the letter for an explanation that sits, unencrypted, in the text: awaiting the Judge of all humanity, these believers had stood trial before human judges and had subsequently died. In 1 Pet 4:6, a beautiful catena of universals identifies martyrs with Christ, dignifies their deaths,⁷⁶ and foretells future vindication.

The brevity, psychology, and universality of 1 Pet 4:1–6 verge on poetry. In a poem, an author may achieve economy and potency through ambiguity and double entendre. One such point is βλασφημοῦντες (4:4), which lacks a direct object and could be translated “and they malign”⁷⁷ or “and they blaspheme.”⁷⁸ The former directs insults against believers; the latter, against God himself, to whom they will give account (4:5). In fact, both are in play, and Peter effects the ambiguity by omitting the direct object. “When unbelievers slander the Christians, they also, wittingly or no, slander God.”⁷⁹

Similarly, Peter creates polyvalence in the terms “dead” and “judge.” The expression “him who is ready to judge the living and dead” (4:5) takes on several meanings. In 4:5, it identifies God as one who holds the slanderous accountable for their blasphemy, yet it points forward to 4:6, where believers will “live by God’s standard,” recalling God’s final judgment of all. One day, Peter writes, God will condemn the living Gentiles who wrongly prosecuted and executed those who did God’s will, and he will vindicate these dead believers. Having heard of Christ’s suffering and glories, they were tried by merely human standards, found guilty, and killed. On the Last Day, these believers will stand before God. Overturning the sentence of the lower courts, the High Court will rule in favor of the martyrs “that they should live.”

Notes

1. All quotations of 1 Peter are from the English Standard Version (ESV), unless indicated otherwise.

2. Martin Luther as quoted by Paul J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 287 n. 141.

3. Though I do not recall Professor Glenn's interpretation of 1 Pet 4:6, he led our intermediate Greek class through the whole of 1 Peter, addressing the finer points of syntax and imparting to us his love for the letter. Outside of class, both Ed and his wife, Jackie, have been kind mentors and generous hosts. I dedicate this essay to Ed, my Greek professor and mentor, whose noble work and manner of life (τὰ καλὰ ἔργα καὶ ἡ καλὴ ἀναστοφίη, 1 Pet 2:12) leaves us an example to follow.

4. W.J. Dalton, *Christ's Proclamation to the Spirits: A Study of 1 Peter 3:18-4:6*, AnBib 23 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1965), 42-51.

5. David Horrell, "Who are 'The Dead' and When was the Gospel Preached to Them? The Interpretation of 1 Pet 4.6," *NTS* 48 (2003), 72.

6. For sake of argument, Horrell's historical assertion is granted in this essay, namely, that the Thessalonian conundrum (1 Thes 4:13-18) is not the background for 1 Pet 4:6 ("Who are 'The Dead,'" 74-76). Similar reasoning led Leonhard Goppelt to dismiss the "since died" view (*A Commentary on 1 Peter*, ed. Ferdinand Hahn, trans. John E. Alsup [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993], 289).

7. Mainly for ease, I will refer to the author of 1 Peter as "Peter."

8. Throughout this essay, "martyr" is used simply to refer to an early Christian whose death is tied in part to Graeco-Roman hostility against the Christian sect.

9. "Superstitionem pravam, immodicam," Pliny as quoted by Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 32.

10. Martin Williams gives a succinct summary of the exegetical and historical arguments in favor of the "unofficial" persecution view and against the "official" persecution view (*The Doctrine of Salvation in the First Letter of Peter*, SNTSMS 149 [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011], 5-8). The latter is roundly rejected by John H. Elliott, *1 Peter*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 98; Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 29-33; J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter*, WBC 49 (Waco, TX: Word, 1988), lxiii; Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter*, BECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005), 8-10.

11. Jobes claims that "virtually all commentators" since Edward Gordon Selwyn (*The First Epistle of St. Peter* [London: Macmillan, 1947]) hold this view (*1 Peter*, 9).

12. E.g., Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 314.

13. Elliott, *1 Peter*, 102-103.

14. E.g., Michaels: "The range of Pliny's questions demonstrate that there

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was as yet no fixed imperial policy toward Christians, and Trajan confirms explicitly that this is the case" (*1 Peter*, lxvi).

15. Elliott, *1 Peter*, 98.

16. Michaels concludes that the lack of evidence of "outright persecution" implies a provenance "between Nero and Domitian" (*1 Peter*, lxiii).

17. Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 314.

18. Jobs, *1 Peter*, 9.

19. Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 36.

20. Elliott, *1 Peter*, 98. Cf. Achtemeier: "Yet Christianity was not declared formally illegal until 249 CE under the emperor Decius" (*1 Peter*, 314).

21. Dalton, *Christ's Proclamation*, 275. Elsewhere, though, he admits that a Christian of this time period had to reckon with "the possibility of death, a possibility always increasing with the increasing hostility and violence of the pagan population" (*Christ's Proclamation*, 263).

22. M. Williams, *Doctrine of Salvation*, 221.

23. Travis B. Williams, *Persecution in 1 Peter: Differentiating and Contextualizing Early Christian Suffering*, SNT 145 (Boston: Brill, 2012). This work is an expansion of the doctoral thesis which he wrote under Horrell (see the anticipatory remarks in David Horrell, *1 Peter*, NTG [London: T&T Clark, 2008], 56–57).

24. Contra Elliott, who says that "only in more recent time has a consensus emerged," locating this development in the 1970s (*1 Peter*, 98). See T. Williams's bibliography of "its early proponents" (*Persecution*, 6 n. 9).

25. T. Williams, *Persecution*, 7.

26. T. Williams, *Persecution*, 8.

27. T. Williams, *Persecution*, 9. See pp. 179–236 for his compelling historical cause and effect argument.

28. T. Williams, *Persecution*, 316.

29. T. Williams, *Persecution*, 296.

30. T. Williams, *Persecution*, 296.

31. T. Williams, *Persecution*, 162–163.

32. T. Williams, *Persecution*, 177.

33. T. Williams, *Persecution*, 236.

34. T. Williams, *Persecution*, 227.

35. T. Williams, *Persecution*, 227–232.
36. T. Williams, *Persecution*, 154.
37. T. Williams, *Persecution*, 233–234.
38. E.g., T. Williams concludes that Domitian did not execute a systematic oppression of Christians (*Persecution*, 210–217).
39. Horrell, *1 Peter*, 56–57.
40. Paul A. Holloway, *Coping with Prejudice*, WUNT 244 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 4. The labor of Holloway's work is to depict "anti-Christian 'hostility and antagonism'" as "social prejudice with all that that means" (*Coping with Prejudice*, 5, italics original).
41. As T. Williams notes: "Upon entering their provinces, governors—who were sent out from Rome and therefore who may have possessed a personal knowledge of the Neronian persecution—would have wielded complete judicial freedom to try and condemn Christians at their own discretion" (*Persecution*, 224–225).
42. Cf. Ps 90:7–8.
43. Dalton, *Christ's Proclamation*, 274–277.
44. Alan Stibbs and Andrew Walls, *The First Epistle General of Peter*, TNTC (London: Tyndale Press, 1959), 151. Cf. Earl J. Richard, *Reading 1 Peter, Jude, and 2 Peter: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Macon, GA: Smith & Helwys, 2000), 174–175.
45. J.W.C. Wand, *The General Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude* (London: Methuen & C. Ltd., 1934), 105.
46. C.E.B. Cranfield, *I and II Peter and Jude*, TBC (London: SCM, 1960), 110.
47. Goppelt, *1 Peter*, 290.
48. David Horrell, *The Epistles of Peter and Jude* (London: Epworth, 1998), 79.
49. Bo Reicke, *The Disobedient Spirits and Christian Baptism: A Study of 1 Peter III.19 and Its Context*, ASNU 13 (Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1946), 205–206.
50. This criticism is fatal to the interpretation of Carl Skrade who finds in the word "judged" a conflation of death and separation from God ("The Descent of the Servant: A Study of I Peter 3:13–4:6" [ThD diss., Union Theological Seminary, 1966], 332–334).
51. E.g., Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 288; Elliott, *1 Peter*, 736–737.

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52. Reicke, *Disobedient Spirits*, 205–206.

53. On the relation of vv. 5–6, some complain that a gospel to the “already dead” would present a tangent from the main point of 3:13–4:5. To this point, three responses can be made. First, authors often go off-topic, and it is hard to forbid them to do otherwise. Second, the author may be admitting a “reluctance” to pronounce certain judgment upon unbelievers, as noted by Horrell (“Who Are ‘The Dead,’” 79–80), following Michaels (*1 Peter*, 182). Thirdly, this apparent tangent may have contextual warrant. Reicke refers back to 3:13–17 and suggests that 4:6 “may be connected with [the author’s] desire to urge the Christians to communicate the Gospel in their paganish environment...” (*Disobedient Spirits*, 210).

54. Daniel Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 463: “It should be added here that the tenses in the subjunctive, as with the other potential moods, involve only *aspect* (kind of action), not time. Only in the indicative mood is time a part of the tense.”

55. So also Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 288.

56. Reicke, *Disobedient Spirits*, 206–210.

57. So also M. Williams, *Doctrine of Salvation*, 220.

58. For these and two other options, see Jobes, *1 Peter*, 240–241; and M. Williams, *Doctrine of Salvation*, 191–193.

59. 4:2 differs slightly from 3:18; 4:1; and 4:6 by including the preposition ἐν (“in or by”). This difference is probably due to syntax. In 4:2, σαρκί (“in the flesh”) functions adjectivally, standing in first attributive position to the noun τὸν χρόνον (“the time”). In the other instances, it modifies the verbs “put to death,” “suffered,” and “judged,” respectively.

60. Selwyn, *First Epistle*, 338.

61. Dalton, *Christ’s Proclamation*, 274.

62. Jobes, *1 Peter*, 270.

63. BDAG, s.v. “κρίνω,” 2b. The lexicon oddly records the usage in 1 Pet 4:6 under 2a, “judge, pass judgment upon, express an opinion about.” See my discussion both here and in subsection 2.3.

64. Elliott, *1 Peter*, 738.

65. See note 56 above.

66. My translation.

67. Or “from the perspective of humans... from the perspective of God.” The difference is one of accent.

68. "The dead" of 4:5 is universal in light of God's universal judgment; "the dead" of 4:6 is particular, insofar as only some were "judged according to human standards."

69. BDAG, s.v. "κρίνω," 5a ("of a human court").

70. At one point in his discussion, Michaels remarks that those who "condemn the righteous" will "face God's condemnation" (1 Peter, lxiii).

71. As Selwyn notes: "κριθῶσι does not refer to legal sentences upon men, which would require κατακριθῶσι..." (First Epistle, 215). Cf. BDAG, s.v. "καταρίνω," (to "pronounce a sentence after determination of guilt").

72. "What will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?" (1 Pet 4:17). See Horrell who warns against trespassing the humility of 1 Peter itself ("Who are 'The Dead,'" 79–80).

73. Horrell, "Who are 'The Dead,'" 85–86, 89.

74. T. Williams, *Persecution*, 306.

75. E.g., Selwyn, *First Epistle*, 338.

76. Whether the defendant was executed or exonerated, one must recognize "the public humiliation that was part and parcel to Roman jurisprudence" (T. Williams, *Persecution*, 281).

77. ESV; cf. M. Williams, *Doctrine of Salvation*, 216; Jobes, 1 Peter, 261; Elliott, 1 Peter, 727–728.

78. E.g., Goppelt, 1 Peter, 287.

79. Achtemeier, 1 Peter, 284. Cf. Goppelt, 1 Peter, 287; Michaels, 1 Peter, 234; Jobes, 1 Peter, 270.

Prayer in Apocalyptic Perspective

Brian J. Tabb

The symbolic visions in the book of Revelation challenge readers to resist worldly compromise, spiritual complacency, and false teaching.¹ They also reassure struggling saints to hold fast to the testimony of Jesus and maintain hope that the sovereign God will finally save his people, judge his foes, and consummate his kingdom through the reigning and returning Lord. These visions offer a divine perspective on what is true, valuable, and lasting. They expose the ungodly nature of the world's political, cultural, economic, and religious systems destined for destruction, and they reorient the worldviews and values of God's people around God's eternal kingdom.²

Revelation's portrayal of "the prayers of the saints" is one subtle yet significant way that the book encourages embattled believers to press on in confident hope. The Apocalypse explicitly mentions "the prayers of the saints" only three times (5:8; 8:3–4). However, these petitions—along with the martyrs' cries for vindication in 6:10—play a crucial role in the book's unfolding drama of new exodus salvation and judgment. This essay seeks to explore the OT background, structural importance, and theological significance of petitionary prayer in the book of Revelation.

1. The Saints' Prayers as Incense (5:8)

The first clear mention of prayer in the Apocalypse comes in 5:8, where John describes the four living creatures and twenty-four elders falling down before the Lamb who is found worthy to take the sealed scroll. Each of these heavenly worshipers holds “a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are *the prayers of the saints*” (αἱ προσευχαὶ τῶν ἁγίων).³ The harp (κιθάρα) frequently accompanies praise and thanksgiving to God in the OT.⁴ Elsewhere in Revelation, the redeemed hold harps as they sing “a new song” and “the song of Moses ... the song of the Lamb” (14:2–3; 15:2–3), bringing together the two great saving events in redemptive history: the exodus from Egypt and the cross of Christ.⁵ The golden bowls in their hands contain incense (θυμιάματα), which John identifies as the prayers of God’s people.⁶

Incense was a staple of Jewish worship in the tabernacle and the temple throughout biblical history (Exod 30:1–10; 1 Chr 6:34; 28:18; Luke 1:9–10). The altar of incense (θυσιαστήριον θυμιάματος) stood before the veil separating the holy place from the most holy place, where the Lord promised to meet with his people (Exod 30:1, 6). The high priest burned a regular incense offering every morning and evening (30:7–8), the same times prescribed for the daily burnt offerings on the altar at the entrance of the tent of meeting (29:38–42).⁷

The symbolic depiction of prayers as incense in Rev 5:8 reflects the close association of prayer with sacrifice and offerings in Ps 141:2 (140:2 LXX): “Let my prayer be counted as incense before you, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice!”⁸ Some interpreters posit that the psalmist envisions his prayer replacing the formal temple offerings,⁹ while others reason that prayer regularly accompanies sacrifices and offerings.¹⁰ More likely, the psalmist here presents his prayer as analogous to

those offerings as pleasing acts of worship and devotion to the Lord.¹¹ The Greek translators of the psalm express this comparison with the conjunction ὥς: “Let my prayer succeed *as incense* [ὥς θυμίαμα] before you” (NETS). The sweet smell and ascending smoke from burning incense in the tabernacle or temple offer a vivid picture of pious petitions entering into God’s glorious presence.

Revelation 5:8 draws upon this symbolic association of incense and prayer in the OT and Jewish literature, but John goes further by presenting heavenly beings bringing the saints’ sweet-smelling prayers directly into the heavenly throne room. The OT priests regularly offered incense “before the Lord” (ἐναντί κυρίου) in the tent of meeting (Exod 30:8 LXX). However, the Apocalypse strikingly presents those holding the bowls of incense prostrating themselves “before the Lamb” (ἐνώπιον τοῦ ἀρνίου) after he is revealed as the one worthy to open the Almighty’s sealed scroll. Moreover, they extol the Lamb as “worthy” using the same language of worship offered to the Creator God in 4:11 (ἄξιός ἐστι, 5:9; cf. 5:12). These parallels signal that “Christ is being adored on absolutely equal terms with God the creator!”¹²

The depiction of the saints’ prayers as golden bowls of incense contributes to Revelation’s perspective on petitionary prayer in at least three ways. First, this reassures God’s people that their prayers are acceptable to God and effective in his cosmic purposes. The twenty-four elders hold these golden bowls in the heavenly throne room in the presence of the Almighty and the Lamb. “This picture brings assurance to the church that a powerful angelic ministry is operating in heaven on their behalf, even though the church is still suffering on earth.”¹³

Second, John introduces the golden bowls of incense-prayers at the pivotal point when the Lamb takes the sealed scroll from

the Almighty and heaven erupts with praise and expectation. The heavenly scroll in Rev 5:1, modeled after the double-sided scroll in Ezek 2:9–10, contains God’s eschatological plan of judgment and salvation.¹⁴ The seals indicate that its contents are secret and inscrutable until Jesus, the worthy seal-breaker, discloses and executes them.¹⁵ The context in which John introduces “the prayers of the saints” (5:8) suggests that these petitions concern “the progress of the gospel on earth” and “focus on God’s work on earth in salvation and judgment.”¹⁶ The mention of these prayers in the heavenly drama of Rev 5 serves “to prepare the way for their role in the coming of God’s kingdom on earth.”¹⁷

Third, the dramatic heavenly scene in Rev 5 depicts Jesus the Lamb rightfully receiving the prayers and praise of God’s people. This reinforces the book’s presentation of Jesus sharing fully in the identity, authority, prerogatives, and activity of the one true God.

2. The Martyrs’ Cries for Vindication (6:9–11)

The next prayer scene in the Apocalypse comes in 6:9–11. When the Lamb opens the scroll’s fifth seal, John sees under the altar the souls of martyrs who cry out, “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” (6:9–10).¹⁸ Interpreters debate whether the “altar” here refers to the altar of burnt offering, the altar of incense, or a fusion of the two. The sacrificial connotations of “blood” and the location “under the altar” relate most closely to the OT description of the altar of burnt offering, where the priest poured out the blood of sacrificial victims at the altar’s base (Lev. 4:18, 30, 34).¹⁹ Alternatively, Beale identifies the altar in 6:9 with the golden altar of incense situated near the most holy place, since the book elsewhere refers to the altar of incense in

8:3–5 and 9:13.²⁰ He reasons that “the imagery of the altar brings to mind the ideas of both sacrifice and prayers, as incense, asking God to vindicate those who have been persecuted for righteousness’ sake.”²¹ More likely, the Apocalypse consistently refers to a singular “altar” for sacrifice and prayer in the heavenly sanctuary, which combines the functions and imagery of the two altars in Israel’s tabernacle and temples.²² John’s reference to the souls under the altar as “slain” (σφάζω) recalls the repeated depiction of the “slain” Lamb (5:6, 9, 12), which may imply “a kind of participation in the shed blood of the Lamb”²³ or may signal that Christ’s followers “will have their sacrificial suffering and apparent defeat turned into ultimate victory.”²⁴

John Paul Heil asserts that the martyrs’ cries set “the agenda for the remainder of the book.”²⁵ They do not seek personal pay-back but call for God to reveal his righteous justice on a cosmic scale,²⁶ for “the Judge of all the earth [to] do what is just” (Gen 18:25). Their question “how long?” (ἕως πότε) resonates with OT appeals such as Ps 12:1–3 LXX (13:1–3 MT):

How long, O Lord [ἕως πότε, κύριε], will you totally forget me?

How long [ἕως πότε] will you turn your face from me?

How long [ἕως πότε] shall my enemy be exalted over me?²⁷

In particular, the martyrs’ question, “How long?” and their appeal for God to “avenge our blood” in Rev 6:10 likely allude to Ps 78 LXX (79 MT).²⁸ Asaph’s psalm of lament begins by recounting how the nations have entered God’s inheritance, defiled his sanctuary, and poured out the blood of his people like water (vv. 1–4). The psalm then includes a series of petitions for God to rescue his people and pour out wrath on the nations

that have brought reproach and shame upon them (vv. 5–12).²⁹ The martyrs' query (ἕως πότε) and their call for vindication (οὐ κρίνεις καὶ ἐκδικεῖς τὸ αἷμα ἡμῶν) closely parallel Ps 78:5, 10 LXX:

How long, O Lord [ἕως πότε, κύριε], will you be utterly angry, will your jealousy burn like fire?

Let *the avenging of the outpoured blood* [ἡ ἐκδίκησις τοῦ αἵματος] of your slaves be known among the nations before our eyes. (NETS)

In Rev 6 and Ps 78 LXX, the question “How long?” highlights the present sufferings and disgrace experienced by God's people and asks when God will intervene to reverse their situation and bring justice and deliverance. The psalmist appeals to God's compassion for his people (v. 8), the glory of his name (v. 9), and the greatness of his arm (v. 11) vowing to recount God's praise (v. 13) even while waiting for him to act. In contrast, Revelation records God's initial and ultimate response to his people's question, “How long?”

The Almighty hears the martyrs' urgent petitions and responds initially by giving them each a white robe and instructing them to “rest a little while” (Rev 6:11). God covers their shame and comforts his slain saints by inviting them to experience blissful rest in heaven (cf. 14:13). The white robes are not the martyrs' glorified resurrection bodies; rather, they signify their worthiness and purity as those who have remained faithful to Christ and thus have “conquered” (3:4–5; 12:11), even as they await comprehensive vindication at the resurrection.³⁰ In the next chapter, John sees a great multitude “clothed in white robes” (περιβεβλημένους στολὰς λευκάς) standing before the Lamb (7:9–10). In 7:14, the heavenly elder explains to John that

those clothed in white robes “are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” Thus, the saints who are “slain” like the Lamb also experience redemption by his blood and corporately share in the Lamb’s ironic yet decisive victory.³¹

In addition to God’s initial response of comfort and heavenly vindication in 6:11, the Apocalypse also reveals God’s ultimate answer to the prayers of slain saints. In the midst of the climactic bowl judgments, an angel declares, “Just are you, O Holy One, who is and who was, for you brought these judgments. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink. It is what they deserve!” (16:5–6). Then the altar speaks, “Yes, Lord God the Almighty, true and just are your judgments!” (16:7). It is noteworthy that this affirmation of the Almighty’s true and just judgments comes from “the altar,” where the martyrs cry out for justice and the prayers of the saints are offered as incense (6:9; 8:3). The voice in 16:7 may come from the angel presenting believers’ prayers at the altar (8:3–4);³² but most likely, “the altar” is a metonymic reference to the martyrs themselves who are “under the altar” (6:9).³³ The judgment reflects the principle of *lex talionis*: those who shed blood will drink blood. The Almighty “gives to people only what they have given to others, and his judgment is testimony to his justice and equity.”³⁴ The victims who cried out at the altar are now the victors agreeing with God’s just judgments. Thus, the Apocalypse presents the consummate bowl judgments as the Almighty’s faithful and fitting response to the petitions of his persecuted people.

3. The Altar of Incense and Judgment (8:3–5)

The Apocalypse returns to “the prayers of the saints” in 8:3–5 in a transitional scene that concludes the opening of the scroll’s

seven seals (8:1) and introduces the seven angels with seven trumpets (8:2, 6). John writes,

And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and he was given much incense to offer with *the prayers of all the saints* [ταῖς προσευχαῖς τῶν ἁγίων πάντων] on the golden altar before the throne, and *the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints* [ὁ καπνὸς τῶν θυμιαμάτων ταῖς προσευχαῖς τῶν ἁγίων], rose before God from the hand of the angel. Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth, and there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake. (8:3–5)

When the Lamb takes the sealed scroll in ch. 5, the twenty-four elders bring incense-prayers in golden bowls. Here in ch. 8, the angel offers those prayers with incense on the altar, like a priest serving in the tabernacle (Lev 16:12). This is presumably the same heavenly altar sprinkled by the martyrs' blood in Rev 6:9. The reference to *all* the saints' prayers doubtless includes the martyrs' appeals for justice in 6:10. The mingled prayers and incense rise before God as a dramatic depiction of believer's petitions effectively reaching God's throne with angelic authorization.

The direct answer to these prayers comes in 8:5, where the same priestly angel who offered the prayers in 8:3 fills his censer with fire from the altar and hurls it to the earth. The storm theophany in 8:5—peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake—recalls God's awesome presence at Mount Sinai (Exod 19:16–19). The Sinai imagery occurs earlier in 4:5, where the lightning, rumblings, and thunder establish the divine throne as the central place where “God's holiness and power

are openly revealed.”³⁵ The Apocalypse reintroduces these theophanic phenomena at the conclusion of septets of seals, trumpets, and bowls (8:5; 11:19; 16:18).³⁶ Thus, we see the glorious God of thunder, who rules from his heavenly throne, execute his awesome judgments on the earth, culminating in the seven bowls of divine wrath.³⁷

The Apocalypse reinforces the connection between prayer and divine judgment in several ways. First, the initial trumpets in 8:7–8 include “fire” (πῦρ), which brings destruction on the earth and sea. This repetition of fire closely links these divine acts with “the fire from the altar” that the angel hurls to the earth as the incense and prayers ascend to God (8:4–5).

Second, when the sixth trumpet sounds, John hears “a voice from the four horns of the golden altar before God” (9:13). Elsewhere in Revelation, the martyrs “under the altar” (ὑποκάτω τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου) cry out for vindication (6:9–10), the saints’ prayers are offered with incense “on the altar” (ἐπὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον, 8:3), and the angel fills his censer “with fire from the altar” (ἐκ τοῦ πυρὸς τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου, 8:5). The voice in 9:13 is variously understood as belonging to God,³⁸ the ministering angel (8:3–5),³⁹ or simply the altar itself.⁴⁰ Alternatively, as in 16:7, this voice from the altar may refer to the martyrs’ unified appeal for justice (6:9). Regardless of the precise identification of the voice, John has already associated the golden altar with the saints’ prayers and thus links those petitions here with the sixth trumpet. According to Robert Mounce, “John is recalling the fundamental truth that the prayers of God’s people play an active role in the eschatological drama.”⁴¹ Specifically, God’s righteous acts of judgment issue forth from the altar in response to his people’s prayers for justice.⁴²

Third, in 14:18, an angel with “authority over the fire” comes from the altar and announces the time to harvest grapes for the

winepress of God's wrath (v. 19; cf. 19:15; Isa 63:1–6).⁴³ This may be the same priestly angel who offers the saints' prayers and takes fire from the altar in 8:3–5, who now prepares for the "blood" to flow from the winepress of divine wrath (14:20) to avenge the "blood" of the saints (6:10; 16:6; 18:24; 19:2).

Fourth, in 15:7, "one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God." Elsewhere in Revelation, "golden bowls" (φιάλας χρυσᾶς) appear only in 5:8, where they are filled with incense-prayers. Regardless of whether or not the golden bowls full of wrath in 15:7 are precisely the same as those in 5:8, the unique lexical repetition of "golden bowls" implies that the last septet of judgments is a further, more definitive answer to the petitions of God's people in 5:8 and 8:3–4 (cf. 6:9–11).⁴⁴

Thus, the Apocalypse presents the judgment cycles of seals, trumpets, and bowls as God's direct and definitive answer to the effective prayers of the saints.⁴⁵ The heavenly altar under which the slain martyrs cry (6:9–10) and on which the angel presents the saints' petitions as a fragrant offering (8:3–4) is also the place from which divine fire falls, bringing righteous retribution (8:5; 9:13) and leading to approving praise for the Almighty (16:7).

4. Come, Lord Jesus! (22:20)

The book of Revelation closes with two prayers. The final verse expresses John's epistolary prayer-wish, "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen" (22:21). This stylized closing prayer is typical of other NT letters and recalls the book's only other reference to grace (χάρις) in the introductory blessing in 1:3.

In 22:20, Christ reasserts his promise, "Surely I am coming soon" (ναί, ἔρχομαι ταχύ, cf. 22:7, 12). John responds with the expectant and assenting prayer, "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!" (Ἀμήν· ἔρχου κύριε Ἰησοῦ; 22:20). Jesus's "coming" is a major

theme in the Apocalypse that is introduced in 1:7, alluding to Dan 7:13, “Behold, he is coming [ἔρχεται] with the clouds.” Most commentators interpret Christ’s “coming with the clouds” as a reference to the parousia at the end of history,⁴⁶ but Ian Paul avers that here and elsewhere in the NT Jesus’s “coming” as the Son of Man depicts Christ’s “victorious ascent to the right hand of the Father.”⁴⁷ In 16:15, Jesus interrupts the presentation of the sixth bowl judgment to exhort faithful readers, “Behold, I am coming like a thief!” He also declares three times in the epilogue, “I am coming soon” (22:7, 12, 20).

Revelation depicts the exalted Son of Man approaching the Ancient of Days and being crowned on the cloud, now sitting on the throne of heaven (3:21; 5:7; 14:14). Christ will also return at the end of history as the rightful sovereign to execute judgment and divine wrath on the forces of evil, establishing his everlasting kingdom (19:11–16; cf. 11:15). In fact, Revelation applies OT descriptions of Yahweh’s “coming” to Christ’s parousia.⁴⁸ For example, Isa 40:10 asserts, “See, the Lord *comes* [ἔρχεται] with strength, and his arm rules with power; behold, *his recompense is with him* [ὁ μισθὸς αὐτοῦ μετ’ αὐτοῦ], and his work before him” (NETS).⁴⁹ In Rev 22:12, Jesus declares, “See, *I am coming soon* [ἔρχομαι ταχύ] and *my recompense is with me* [ὁ μισθός μου μετ’ ἐμοῦ], to repay each one as his work is.”⁵⁰ The expectation of the consummate coming of Yahweh at Christ’s parousia impels believers to faithfully endure and maintain hope amidst suffering as they join with John in declaring, “Come, Lord Jesus!” (22:20). Bauckham observes that apart from Paul’s Aramaic prayer *Maranatha* in 1 Cor 16:22, “it is only in the last few verses of Revelation ... that the ‘coming’ of Jesus is explicitly the object of prayer.”⁵¹

5. Conclusion

In this essay I have considered how the Apocalypse subtly yet systematically links the prayers of God's people with the cycles of divine judgment. The book refers directly to "the prayers of the saints" three times (5:8; 8:3–4), prominently depicts the slain martyrs crying out for vindication (6:9–11), and closes with the yearning appeal, "Come, Lord Jesus!" (22:20). Revelation closely associates these prayers with the temple imagery of incense, golden bowls, and the altar, which feature prominently at key junctures in the septets of seals, trumpets, and bowls. The golden bowls of incense that represent the prayers of the saints (5:8) anticipate the seven golden bowls filled with divine wrath in 15:7, which the angels pour out on the earth (16:1). Revelation first refers to the heavenly altar when the fifth seal is opened and the slain martyrs *under* the altar cry out for divine justice (6:9–10). Immediately following the opening of the seventh seal and the introduction of the angels with seven trumpets (8:1–2), a priestly angel offers the saints' prayers with incense *on* the altar following the seal judgments and then fills his censer with fire *from* the altar and throws it on the earth (8:3–5). Voices from the altar in 9:13 and 16:7 during the trumpet and bowl cycles reinforce the link between the saints' petitions and God's response of judgment.

Elsewhere the Scriptures clearly state that God hears the prayers of his people and acts in response to these prayers. Two examples will suffice. First, God delivers his people from Egypt in direct response to their cries for help. According to Exodus 2:24, "God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob." God then tells Moses that he has seen his people's oppression, has heard their cry, knows their sufferings, and has now "come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians" (3:7–9). Sec-

ond, in Acts 4:23–30 the early church prays for boldness amidst opposition and receives an immediate answer in v. 31: “And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.” In the same vein, Revelation discloses God’s eschatological response to his people’s prayers. John vividly portrays these prayers carried by heavenly beings into God’s throne room and offered with incense on the heavenly altar. These prayers play a crucial, instrumental role in the consummation of God’s purposes in judgment and salvation. Each of the book’s three major judgment cycles is linked to the prayers of the saints explicitly (6:9–11; 8:3–4) or implicitly through the imagery of the heavenly altar (8:5; 9:13; 14:18; 15:7; 16:7; cf. 6:9) and golden bowls (15:7; 16:1; cf. 5:8).

Thus, Revelation’s depiction of the prayers of the saints offers strong assurance and encouragement to God’s suffering people. As in times past, the Almighty hears and receives his people’s prayers, which ascend to his throne like sweet-smelling incense. God offers present comfort to his slain saints who cry out, “How long?,” as he grants them rest and clothes them in white robes (6:10–11). The Apocalypse also holds out further hope for God’s suffering people by showing how he responds to their appeals for justice by giving their enemies what they deserve (16:5–7) and by stressing the surety and imminence of Christ’s return (1:7; 22:7, 12, 20).

In Matthew 6:9–10, Jesus teaches his disciples to pray, “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” Bauckham aptly states that the prayers in the Apocalypse “are fully eschatological—that is, they are prayers for the coming of God’s kingdom.”⁵² Revelation presents God consummating his kingdom

and establishing his will through the present reign and future return of Jesus Christ (cf. 11:15–18; 12:10). After God judges his enemies in response to his people’s cries for justice, his glorious throne moves from heaven to earth as the central reality of the new Jerusalem (22:1, 3).⁵³

In the book’s concluding vision of the glorious temple-city, God’s people no longer pray for justice or salvation because all enemies have been judged and all threats have been removed. The saints will behold God’s face and worship him forever (22:3–4). When God has finally and fully answered all his people’s prayers, their earnest petitions will give way to exuberant praise. As Gary Millar observes, “All that remains is endless delight, worship and surprise at the endless magnificence of the glory of God.”⁵⁴ This glorious hope of perfect justice, redemption, and restoration should compel God’s people to hold fast to the testimony of Jesus and to pray with John, “Amen. Come Lord Jesus!” (Rev 22:20).

Notes

1. This essay adapts and expands upon material in Brian J. Tabb, *All Things New: Revelation as Canonical Capstone*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 48 (London: Apollos; Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019), 140–43.

2. Revelation’s visions “create a symbolic world which readers can enter into so fully that it affects them and changes their perception of the world,” according to Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, NTT (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 10.

3. Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the ESV.

4. Cf. Pss 33:2; 43:4; 57:8; 71:22; 81:2; 92:3; 98:5; 108:2; 147:7; 150:3.

5. Most translations render καί “and” in Rev 15:3, but the conjunction may function epexegetically (“that is”), identifying the songs of Moses and the Lamb as a single hymn. Cf. Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, BECNT (Grand

Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 564; G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 793; Steven Grabiner, *Revelation's Hymns: Commentary on the Cosmic Conflict*, LNTS 511 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), 186; Stephen S. Smalley, *The Revelation to John: A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Apocalypse* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 385–86.

6. The relative clause “which are the prayers of the saints” is grammatically difficult, as the feminine relative pronoun αἱ does not agree with its likely antecedent “incense” (θυμιαμάτων), which is neuter. αἱ may modify the feminine noun “bowls” (φιάλας), but its feminine gender likely results from attraction to the feminine noun “prayers” (προσευχαί) in its own clause. See Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 1–7: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1992), 397; David Mathewson, *Revelation: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), 77.

7. For discussion of the correspondence between these offerings inside and outside of the tabernacle, see T. Desmond Alexander, *Exodus*, ApOTC 2 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 602.

8. Cf. Esther Y. L. Ng, “Prayer in Revelation,” in *Teach Us to Pray: Prayer in the Bible and the World*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1990), 130.

9. Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms: A Commentary*, trans. H. C. Oswald, 2 vols. (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988–1989), 2:527.

10. Nancy L DeClossé-Walford, Rolf A. Jacobson, and Beth LaNeel Tanner, *The Book of Psalms*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 974. For example, according to 1 Chr 23:13 LXX Aaron and his sons are set apart “to offer incense (θυμιᾶν) before the Lord, to minister (λειτουργεῖν) and to pray (ἐπεύχεσθαι) in his name forever.” Similarly, Judith’s prayer coincides with the evening offering of incense in Jdt 9:1, and the people pray outside the temple at the hour of incense in Luke 1:10.

11. Tremper Longman, III, *Psalms: An Introduction and Commentary*, TNTC 15–16 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 458.

12. David G. Peterson, *Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 272.

13. G. K. Beale and David H. Campbell, *The Book of Revelation: A Shorter Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 116.

14. See Tabb, *All Things New*, 213–14.

15. The seals in 5:1 recall Dan 12:4, 9 and Isa 29:11. “The texts are brought

together because of their almost identical wording and the common idea of a sealed book that conceals divine revelation and is associated with judgment," according to Beale, *Revelation*, 337–38.

16. J. Gary Millar, *Calling on the Name of the Lord: A Biblical Theology of Prayer*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 38 (London: Apollos; Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016), 227.

17. Richard Bauckham, "Prayer in the Book of Revelation," in *Into God's Presence: Prayer in the New Testament*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 255.

18. 1 Enoch 47:1–2 likewise refers to the blood of the righteous and repeated prayers that ascend to the Lord until "judgment is executed for them."

19. Bauckham, "Prayer," 260.

20. Beale, *Revelation*, 391–92; Ian Paul, *Revelation*, TNTC 20 (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 2018), 171.

21. Beale, *Revelation*, 392.

22. Osborne, *Revelation*, 284–85; Craig R. Koester, *Revelation: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 38A (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 398. See Rev 6:9; 8:3, 5; 9:13; 11:1; 14:18; 16:7.

23. Bauckham, "Prayer," 260–61.

24. Beale, *Revelation*, 392.

25. John Paul Heil, "The Fifth Seal (Rev 6,9–11) as a Key to the Book of Revelation," *Bib* 74 (1993): 242.

26. Bauckham, "Prayer," 261.

27. NETS. Cf. Pss 6:3; 13:1–2; 79:4–6, 10.

28. This allusion is noted also in G. K. Beale and Sean McDonough, "Revelation," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 1104.

29. This outline of Ps 79 is similar to that in DeClaissé-Walford, Jacobson, and Tanner, *Psalms*, 626–29.

30. Beale, *Revelation*, 394. Contra R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John*, ICC 44 (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1920), 1:184–88.

31. Beale, *Revelation*, 438.

32. Osborne, *Revelation*, 584–85.

33. Koester, *Revelation*, 648.

34. Paul, *Revelation*, 46.

35. Laszlo Gallusz, *The Throne Motif in the Book of Revelation*, LNTS 487 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014), 125.

36. This repetition is one of the strongest evidences for progressive parallelism or recapitulation in the seals, trumpets and bowls, as noted by Beale, *Revelation*, 124. Alternatively, Thomas rejects the recapitulation reading in favor of a telescopic or “dove-tailing” view in which the seventh seal contains the seven trumpets and the seventh trumpet contains the seven bowls. See Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 8–22: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 527–42.

37. “It is the manifestation of God’s numinous holiness that effects the final judgment of the world,” according to Bauckham, “Prayer,” 257.

38. Osborne, *Revelation*, 378.

39. Koester, *Revelation*, 465–66.

40. David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, WBC 52B (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 536; Brian K. Blount, *Revelation: A Commentary*, NTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2013), 181.

41. Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, rev. ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 193. Cf. Beale, *Revelation*, 505–6.

42. Heinz Giesen, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes*, RNT (Regensburg: Verlag F. Pustet, 1997), 223.

43. “Angels with power over fire and water (16:5) reflect Jewish traditions that linked angels to fire, wind, clouds, and thunder,” according to Koester, *Revelation*, 625. Cf. Jub. 2:2; 1 En. 60:11–21; LAB 38:3; T. Ab. 12:14; 13:11; Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, 846.

44. Giesen, *Offenbarung*, 346; Mounce, *Revelation*, 289; Beale, *Revelation*, 806.

45. Similarly Bauckham, “Prayer,” 259.

46. For example, Mounce, *Revelation*, 50–51; Osborne, *Revelation*, 69–70; Koester, *Revelation*, 229; Giesen, *Offenbarung*, 80. For additional discussion of the use of Dan 7:13 in Rev 1:7 and elsewhere, see Tabb, *All Things New*, 48–53.

47. Paul, *Revelation*, 63.

48. Edward Adams, “The ‘Coming of God’ Tradition and Its Influence on New Testament Parousia Texts,” in *Biblical Traditions in Transmission: Essays in Honour of Michael A. Knibb*, ed. Judith Lieu, et al., JSJSup 111 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 19.

49. Emphasis added. Cf. Pss 96:13; 98:9; Isa 66:15; Zech 14:5, 9; Bauckham, *Theology*, 29; Adams, “Coming of God,” 3–8; Tabb, *All Things New*, 34.

50. Own translation, emphases added.

51. Bauckham, “Prayer,” 269.

52. Bauckham, “Prayer,” 252–253.

53. Cf. Gallusz, *Throne Motif*, 335.

54. Millar, *Calling*, 229.

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