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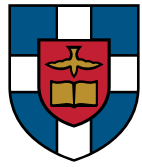

CHRISTOLOGY: BIBLICAL AND HISTORICAL

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Christology: Biblical and Historical

Editorial: Christological Reflections: Biblical and Historical

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At a crucial turning point in Jesus' ministry, he asked his disciples the famous question: "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" (Matt 16:13). Indeed, the answer to this question is the most important answer that can be given to any question. Why? For this simple yet profound reason: Our Lord Jesus Christ is nothing less than the eternal Son, the second person of the Godhead, who has assumed our human nature and as such, utterly unique in his person and work. In fact, apart from Christ's work for us, there is no salvation, life, and eternal joy since he alone is Lord and Savior. As such, apart from a proper articulation, confession, and faith in him alone we stand under his judgment, and there is no hope for us in this life and the life to come.

In light of Scripture's teaching and the confessional orthodoxy of the church regarding who Jesus is and what he has done for us, there is no greater need for the church today than to think rightly and deeply about Jesus biblically,

theologically, and in light of church history. The life and health of the church are directly dependent on a sound and faithful Christology, rooted and grounded in an accurate theology proper. Yet, it must also be stressed, the church does not merely need an accurate Christology confessed, but also one that leads us to faith, trust, and confidence in our Lord Jesus, and an entire life lived in adoration, praise, and obedience to him.

Again, why this is so should be obvious to us if we have understood what Scripture teaches regarding our triune God in the face of the incarnate Son. Given that Jesus is the divine Son, the eternal "Word made flesh" (John 1:1, 14), in him alone is life and life eternal (John 17:3). Repeatedly Scripture reminds us that in Christ alone, all of God's sovereign purposes find their fulfillment (Heb 1:1–3). As Paul beautifully reminds us, in Christ alone, God's eternal plan is to bring "all things in heaven and on earth" under Christ's headship (Eph 1:9–10), which has already begun in his first coming and which will be consummated in his return. Jesus, the incarnate divine Son, is central to God's eternal plan and new creation work. Indeed, as Paul reminds us in his famous Christological hymn: the eternal Son is not only the one through whom the Father has created, but the very purpose of creation is ultimately "for him" (Col 1:16).

Given the centrality of Christ in Scripture and theology, it is not surprising that to misidentify him is a serious matter; indeed, a matter of life and death. In fact, at the heart of *all* heresy and false understandings of the Gospel and Christian theology is a distortion or denial of Christ. One's Christology is a test case for one's entire theology and understanding of the Christian faith. The more our Christology is off from the biblical teaching, especially in terms of his unique, exclusive identity and all-sufficient work, the more our theology will be wrong in other areas. "Ideas have consequences," and the most central "idea" to get right is *who* Jesus is in relation to the triune God and *what* he does for us in his entire life, death, resurrection, ascension, and ultimately his return. There are many beliefs that distinguish Christianity from other worldviews, but none more central and significant as *who* Jesus is and *what* he does for us.

Thinking through all that Scripture says about Jesus, wrestling with the church as she has sought to faithfully confess Christ, is not an easy task but it is absolutely necessary, especially if we are going to think rightly about God, the Gospel, and the entire Christian faith. The study of Christology is not

reserved for academic theologians; it is the privilege, responsibility, and glory of every Christian. The Christian life and the Christian ministry is about knowing God in truth, believing and obeying God's Word in our lives, and being vigilant for the truth of the Gospel by "demolishing arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and taking captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Cor 10:5).

For these reasons (and many more), our focus in this issue of *SBJT* is to return once again to reflect on the person and work of Christ from Scripture and historical theology. Indeed, we must never grow tired of doing so. In a wide-ranging set of articles, the person and work of Christ is articulated for today's church. Standing on the shoulders of theological giants from the past such as Ignatius, Francis Turretin, Andrew Fuller, and John Fawcett, our forebearers have much to teach us about how to express and defend the glories of Christ in the midst of opposition and denial. In addition, biblical and theological reflection on Christ's the true image of God and his relationship to us as the *imago Dei* is crucial in Christological formulation, along with how a classical Christology is to be applied to such issues as suffering and counseling.

The aim of this issue of *SBJT* is to call the church back to what is central: the glory of Christ. My prayer is that these articles will help equip the church to know better who Jesus is and what he has done for us from Scripture and historical theology so that in spending time thinking about the glory and majesty of our Lord Jesus Christ, this issue will lead to a renewed delight to know and proclaim Christ and him alone (Col 1:28). The church first exists to know and proclaim the glory of the triune God in the face of Christ, and a move away from *this* center will always result in theological and spiritual disaster for the church. May it never be so for us.

The Biblical Christology of Ignatius of Antioch: A Case for Scriptural Authority

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During the year 110 AD,[1] a pastor from the city of Antioch in Syria was enroute toward his inevitable martyrdom. It was during this journey from Antioch to Rome that he visited multiple local churches along the way. Through the seven letters written to Ephesus, Tralles, Magnesia, Rome, Smyrna, Philadelphia, and Polycarp,[2] we can surmise that Ignatius of Antioch articulated some of the earliest and most coherent Christological statements following the turn of the first century. In this article, I will argue that Ignatius referenced Old and New Testament Scriptures to articulate his Christology. I will first discuss how Ignatius referenced Scripture in three forms, direct citation, allusion, and imagery.[3] I will then show how Ignatius utilized these three forms to discuss the names of Christ, Christ's unity in the Godhead, and the incarnational narrative.

Ignatius' Use of Scripture

Much work has been done concerning Ignatius and his use of Scripture.[4] However, it is difficult to tell how well a canon of Scripture was developed

during his time of writing.[5] That said, there are many identifiable references to Scripture throughout the writings of Ignatius in various forms.[6] This discussion is helpful in understanding how early Christian articulation of Christology was not conducted in a vacuum, but rather early Christians were embedded in a reading culture centered in Old and New Testament writings which they used as the source for their theological articulation.[7] Given how prominent Scripture is referenced throughout his writings, it is clear that Ignatius held Scripture to an authoritative standard, particularly in regard to his Christology. One of the clearest places Ignatius makes a case for the authority of Scripture is in *Philadelphians* 8.2. In this passage, Ignatius is writing against so-called Judaizers who were causing division in the church. These Judaizers made the claim that they do not have to obey certain teachings of Christ, stating, "Unless I find *it* in the archives, I do not believe *it* in the gospel."[8] According to Ignatius, the "archives" are the Jewish Scriptures, and the "gospel" is not a written gospel account but rather the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

To this claim made by the Judaizers, Ignatius responds that Christ *is* the archives, stating, "But to me the archives are Jesus Christ, the sacred archives his cross and death and his resurrection and the faith which is through him."[9] Some have made the assertion that Ignatius' response is evidence that he was unfamiliar with the Old Testament (OT) and thus, a poor exegete. His comment of Jesus being the archives was an evasion tactic so that he did not have to address Judaizers writings in which they were more comfortable with. Paul Donahue is a proponent of this view claiming, "Ignatius could not win his exegetical argument with his opponents, so he changes the rules; he appeals to a higher, more decisive standard."[10] However, this is unlikely given how the three occasions in which Ignatius' uses verbatim citations are from the OT. Given this, Carleton Paget considers that Ignatius attributed authority to the prophets and the law of Moses.[11]

Rather than evading the Judaizers critiques, Ignatius is reorienting hermeneutical priorities in which Jesus is now the key to understand the OT and the one that the OT is pointing to.[12] The point Ignatius is trying to make is that while he and his opponents both see the OT as important, "they disagree about the degree to which they take precedence over the gospel in exposition of the Christian message."[13] While Ignatius does not explicitly state his hermeneutical priorities, the way in which he views interpreting

Scripture is first starting with Christ and then working backwards. Ultimately, this leaves a reader of the OT seeing how Christ was the fulfillment of it by his life and death.[14] For Ignatius, and the broader Christian world, interpretation of Scripture starts and ends with Christ and his Gospel.

Ignatius viewed Scripture, both the OT and the NT, as a source of authority for his theology. Scripture is particularly influential in the way Ignatius understands Christology. For him, Christ is the ultimate hermeneutical key for how all Scripture is to be interpreted and in which all Scripture points to. I will now discuss the three ways in which Ignatius referenced Scripture, namely, direct citation, allusion, and imagery. Following this discussion on how Ignatius referenced Scripture I will then discuss how he used these forms of scriptural referencing to articulate his Christology.

Ignatius and the Use of Direct Citation

Ignatius directly cites Scripture on at least three occasions.[15] In *Ephesians* 5.3, Ignatius quotes from Proverbs 3:34 and in *Magnesians* 12, Proverbs 18:3. Both of these quotations are introduced by the terms *gegraptai*. In *Trallians* 8.2, he introduces a quotation from Isaiah 52:5 using the term *gar*. In a later section, I will propose that Ignatius used a fourth direct citation from Luke 24:39, introducing the quotation with the word *ephē*. His use of these terms indicates that he has a specific referent of Scripture in mind before he goes on to cite it. Given his use of these citations, we can see that Ignatius had some knowledge of the OT even if he did not regularly cite it explicitly.

Jonathon Lookdaoo points out that it would be a mistake to hold Ignatius to the same standards of modern methods of citation.[16] Evidence of other methods of citation in the ancient church can be found through the author of the *Didache* as well as Paul in his letter to the Colossians. The *Didache* only gives explicit citations of Scripture on two occasions, but this does not hinder the author from using other means of referencing material from the Torah, prophets, and teachings of Jesus.[17] Referencing Paul Foster, Lookadoo points out how Paul is influenced by the OT such as Isaiah 29:13 in his reference to human traditions and commands in Colossians 2:22. Paul also likely has Psalm 110:1 in mind writing about Christ being "seated at the right hand" in Colossians 3:1.[18] Given how other ancient authors can be seen referencing Scripture in their writings without formal indication, it is not beyond the possibility that Ignatius utilized similar methods in his writings.

Ignatius and the Use of Allusion

Given Ignatius was traveling toward his own martyrdom, he likely did not have any physical copies of the Scriptures in his possession. Therefore, he would have had to rely solely on his memory when referencing certain passages. This helps explain why there are so few verbatim quotations. However, this did not hinder Ignatius from continuing to utilize Scripture, as an authoritative source, in his letters. There are other forms in which ancient authors referred to Scripture, one of them being allusions. Lookadoo identifies allusions in the writings of Ignatius to be the use of language similar to that which is found in Scripture.[19] For instance, Olavi Tarvainen considers *Ephesians* 15.1 to be an allusion to Psalm 33:9 in which the Lord speaks existence from silence.[20] Similarly, William Ralph Inge considers that since there are so many allusions to 1 Corinthians in the writings of Ignatius, he must have had Paul's letter memorized by heart.[21]

Ignatius and the Use of Imagery

Aside from direct citations and allusions, Ignatius also employs the use of images as a way of referencing Scripture. Tarvainen makes this connection with Ignatius' discussion on right and wrong doctrine infiltrating the church. In *Trallians* 6.1, Ignatius calls false teachers, foreign weeds. Tarvainen relates Ignatius botanical imagery regarding false teachers with Jesus' teaching in Matthew 15:13 where he makes the claim that not every plant is planted by the Father and will be uprooted.[22] In a similar vein, Tarvainen points out how Ignatius' imagery of the shepherd, sheep, and wolves in regard to false teachers is an association with Jesus teachings about false teachers in Matthew 7:15; 10:6, and Luke 10:3.[23] Ignatius made use of various other images including specific images found in Scripture which are associated with Christ.

The Biblical Influence of Ignatius' Christology

Ignatius had a Christocentric view of theology and biblical interpretation.[24] It was through a Christocentric lens that he was able to read Scripture and articulate the person and work of Christ. In the sections that follow, I will discuss how Ignatius utilized citation, allusions, and imagery from Scripture to articulate his Christology. This will be shown through his

discussions of the names of Christ, the Son's unity in the Godhead, and the incarnational narrative.

The Names of Christ

Jesus as High Priest

In his letter to the Philadelphians, Ignatius makes the comment, "And the priests *were* good, but the high priest *is* even better: he has been entrusted with the Holy of Holies, who alone has been entrusted with the hidden things of God."[25] This remark comes on the heels of his comment made about Jesus and his gospel *being* the archives. What Ignatius is doing is utilizing OT priestly imagery to describe the role of Christ as the great High Priest of the Church. One of the roles of the high priest was that each year on Yom Kippur they had to enter into the Holy of Holies in the temple in order to make atonement sacrifices for the nation of Israel (Lev 16:1–34). Rather than pointing out the role of Christ in atonement, Ignatius is more concerned that the high priest went into the Holy of Holies alone.

It was Christ alone who acted as the high priest of the Church to stand before God and be "entrusted with hidden things from God."[26] Schoedel comments that these "hidden things" are likely exegetical secrets as in *Letter of Barnabas* 6.10 wherein the Lord places "wisdom and understanding of his secrets in us."[27] However, while exegetical secrets might partially be in view, Lookadoo sees a correlation between Jesus as the high priest and Ignatius' previous discussion about Judaizers and the "archives." Jesus is being entrusted with secrets about himself as God's revelation. Jesus is playing the high priestly role in that he is not holding these secrets from himself, but making them know to creation through his life, death, and resurrection. In other words, Jesus knows the secrets of the Father because he is one with the Father and reveals them through his incarnation.[28]

Ignatius is doing also something similar to that of the author of Hebrews in order to show how Jesus is a high priestly figure, greater than those of the Levitical priesthood. However, the way in which the author of Hebrews and Ignatius discuss Jesus as a high priest have their distinctions. Ignatius is concerned with the high priest's role of entering the Holy of Holies alone in order to hear the secret things of God. The author of Hebrews does not mention this particular role of a high priest but rather focuses on other

aspects of a high priestly role fulfilled in Christ such as offering himself as an atonement sacrifice (Heb 9:11–14).[29] While it is unclear if Ignatius had the book of Hebrews in mind when writing *Philadelphians* 9.1, what is clear is the high priestly imagery sourced from Scripture wherein Christ came as a greater high priest than those who had come before Him.

Jesus as the Door

In the same passage, *Philadelphians* 9.1, Ignatius also refers to Christ as the door. He writes, "He [Jesus] is the door of the Father through which Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and the prophets and apostles and the church enter. All of these are brought into the unity of God."[30] Robert M. Grant sees Jesus' association with being named "the door" to be an allusion to John 10:7 and 9 in which Jesus claims himself to be the door in which sheep enter into the fold of the Father. Grant also sees parallels with John 14:6 in which Jesus claims to be the only way to the Father.[31] Schoedel on the other hand considers this a use of this image of a door as possible parallel to John 10:7, 9; but other ancient sources also used this door imagery such as *Shepherd of Hermas* Sim 9.12–15 and *1 Clement* 48.2–4. There is also the possibility that it was prompted by Psalm 117:20 LXX which states, "This is the Lord's gate, the godly enter through it."[32] Given Jesus being referred to as the door in proximity to also being called a better high priest, Shoedel also sees a likely connection between *Philadelphians* 9.1 and Hebrews 9:3; 10:20 in which the "door" is a reference to the temple "curtain" in which Christ enters into the presence of the Father on our behalf as mediator.[33]

Along similar mediatorial lines, Lookadoo draws a connection between *Philadelphians* 8.2 and 9.1 wherein the point Ignatius is trying to make is that Jesus mediates faith between the Creator and created people of God.[34] Ignatius sees Jesus as the one by whom the prophets, patriarchs, apostles, and now the Church enter through in order to be united to God. Lookadoo also points out that this is not the first time this kind of Johannine language has been used in association with the Philadelphian church. In Revelation, John is writing to the Philadelphians with a message from Jesus. He says, "This is the solemn pronouncement of the Holy One, the True One, who holds the key of David, who opens doors no one can shut, and shuts doors no one can open." In Revelation, Jesus is depicted as the one who allows access through the door, and in Ignatius letter to the Philadelphians, Jesus is

the door itself. He not only invites, but controls who is allowed entrance to the Father.[35]

While one cannot say with absolute certainty Ignatius was dependent on Johannine literature in *Philadelphians* 9.1,[36] the similarities are striking. At any rate, these resemblances between Johannine literature, Ignatius, as well as other ancient Christian writings show that there was common language within the Christian community dependent on the testimony of the person and work of Jesus. Ignatius is utilizing imagery from Scripture in order to show how Jesus is the way to the Father as "the door." According to *Philadelphians* 9.1, Jesus is the high priest who reveals the Father as the revelation of the Father, and it is through Jesus as the door that the anyone can have access to the Father.

Jesus as Savior

Ignatius refers to Jesus as Savior on four occasions.[37] In his letter to the *Magnesians*, Ignatius addresses the church in the name of the "Jesus Christ our Savior." The use of the term Savior in the salutation of a letter is much like that of Paul in 1 Timothy 1:1 and Titus 1:4.[38] Paul considers the Savior as the authority by whom he is able to write to Timothy and Titus. While Ignatius is not immediately articulating much more about the person or work of Christ other than him as Savior, he does give insight into why he refers to Christ as Savior in *Magnesians* 1.2. Ignatius is describing how he is in chains, but being delivered from captivity on earth is not what he is looking forward to. Ignatius considers his imprisonment and impending persecution as a pathway to everlasting life and union with Jesus and the Father. He considers the "abuse of the ruler of this age" to be a way of "escape" to Christ. In other words, Jesus is acting as Ignatius' Savior through his persecution which ends in everlasting life united with God. This is not the only time Ignatius associates Jesus as Savior with the immortality of the believer.

In *Philadelphians* 9.2 and *Smyrnaeans* 7.1, Ignatius ties a correlation between faith in Jesus as Savior and immortality. *Philadelphians* 9.2 lays out one of Ignatius' clear gospel articulations. For Ignatius, "The gospel has something distinctive: the coming of the Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, his suffering and resurrection. For the beloved prophets preached with reference to him, but the gospel is the consummation of immortality. All

things together are good if you believe in love."[39] Jesus, the Savior, has been foretold by the prophets, come, died, and resurrected. Now, those who believe in the Savior in love will receive immortality. In *Polycarp* 2.3, Ignatius calls immortality, "the prize," because it is how we can reach God (Phil 3:14). However, one cannot receive this prize unless they are persuaded of the gospel of Jesus.

Ignatius also makes the connection between the Savior and a believer's immortality in *Smyrnaeans* 7.1. This time however, he is contrasting those who are not true believers of Jesus as the Savior with those who are. The untrue believers refuse to participate in the Eucharist and prayer "because they do not confess the Eucharist to be the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ who suffered for our sins, which the Father raised up by his goodness." Ignatius goes on to claim how those who do not believe in the Savior and refuse him as their gift will die. However, those who love and receive Jesus as Savior will be "risen up" in reference to their future resurrection. The basis for Ignatius' connection between immortality and the flesh of the Savior stem from Jesus in John 6:51–58.[40] In this passage, many followers of Jesus depart from him after he offers that anyone who eats his flesh and drinks his blood would live forever. The same sentiment translates to Ignatius' context nearly a century later wherein the Docetists refused to partake in the Eucharist because of their denial of Jesus' humanity.[41]

The final reference of Jesus as Savior in the letters of Ignatius is found in *Ephesians* 1:1. He writes, "Welcoming in God your much-loved name, which you possess by your righteous nature according to faith and love in Christ Jesus our Savior, you are imitators of God, having rekindled by the blood of God your related task, you completed it perfectly." In this passage, Ignatius is admiring the Ephesian church because of their righteousness which they have attained because of their faith and love in the Savior. The Ephesians have become imitators of Christ through their expression of love toward Ignatius by sending representatives to him at Smyrna to support him in his imprisonment.[42] Jesus Christ is referred to as both Savior and God and the "blood of God" is symbolic of the love Jesus showed through his suffering on the cross. Ignatius is using Pauline language from his own letter to the Ephesians regarding the command to be imitators of Christ and the love he showed in giving his life as a sacrifice and fragrant offering to God (Eph 5:1–2).[43]

Unity of the Godhead

Ignatius' Christology considers not only the person of Jesus, but also his nature regarding his unity to the Godhead. There is an ontological relation Jesus has with the Father and the Holy Spirit evident in the letters of Ignatius which he grounds in both the OT and the NT.

Jesus as the Son of God

To start, Ignatius considers Jesus Christ to be both truly human and truly God. Regarding his humanity, Ignatius make his point clear that Jesus possessed a human nature in his discourse against false teachers and those claiming to be Christians while adhering to false doctrine such as the Docetists.[44] If one was to claim to be a Christian in the first and second century, it was essential for them to believe in the full humanity of Jesus as taught by Scripture. Ignatius refers to the idea of denying Jesus' humanity as a "foreign plant," or "heresy."[45] Both terms are biblical in nature. Regarding botanical imagery, Jesus refers to those who have been sown by the enemy among the good seeds as "poisonous weeds" (Matt 13:40). In Matthew 15:13, Jesus makes the claim that "every plant that my heavenly Father did not plant will be uprooted." This kind of language is almost identical to that which Ignatius uses in *Trallians* 11.1 in which he refers to heresy as "evil offshoots" that "are not the planting of the Father." This particular reference is in regard to those who claimed that Christ's sufferings were in appearance only. Jude also called certain people who denied Christ "autumn trees without fruit … uprooted." Therefore, Ignatius considers the full humanity of Christ and his sufferings to be essential to the gospel message of true Christianity.

Alongside Jesus' full humanity, Ignatius affirmed the fullness of his deity. In *Ephesians* 7.2, Ignatius gives another gospel presentation regarding the nature and work of Jesus making the claim that Jesus is "both fleshly and spiritual, born and unborn, God in man." This language of Christ coming to earth as a man, or in flesh,[46] is consistent with NT language found in John 1:14; 1 Timothy 3:16; 1 John 4:2 and 2 John 1:7. The apostle John in 2 John 1:7 goes as far to make that case, which Ignatius is affirming throughout his writings, that many have come denying that Christ came in the flesh, calling these people deceivers and antichrists.

Drawing upon temple imagery, Ignatius considers the omniscience and omnipresence of the Son in *Ephesians* 15.3. He claims, "Nothing escapes the notice of the Lord, but even our secrets are near him. Therefore we should do everything because he is dwelling in us, that we may be his temples and he may be our God in us, which indeed he is and he will be made known before our very eyes by which we may rightly love him." For those who know and rightly love Jesus, he dwells within them as temples. Lookadoo points out two ways Ignatius uses the term *theos* to describe Jesus in his letter to the Ephesians. The first is "God in us,"[47] referring to the location in which Jesus dwells in Ignatius and the Ephesian church, similar to the way Paul refers to God dwells in believers as temples in 1 Corinthians 13:6. The second is "our God"[48] denoting that Jesus is the object of Ignatius and the Ephesian church's worship.[49] This temple imagery is sourced from the OT wherein the God of Israel dwelled among his people in the temple at Jerusalem (1 Kgs 8:10–13). King Solomon goes on to attest to the omnipresence of God in 1 Kings 8:27–28 in that while he might have built God a temple to reside, the highest heaven cannot even contain God. In the OT, the temple served as a place where God resided and was worshiped. Now, according to the NT, Christ retains the omnipresent nature of God residing in those who believe and worship him as temples.

The Son and the Father

Regarding his relation to the Father, Jesus is the Son of God the Father. Ignatius refers to Jesus as the Son of God on two occasions.[50] In *Ephesians* 20.2, Ignatius is describing the one faith in which he and the Ephesian church share in. This faith is "in Jesus Christ, who according to the flesh was from the family of David, the Son of Man and Son of God." He refers to Jesus as the Son of God to contrast his divine nature from his fleshly, human nature as the Son of David. The Christ was prophesied to be the Son of David throughout the OT (2 Sam 7:12–16; Isa 9:7; Ps 2; 110) and fulfilled in Jesus in the NT (Matt 1:20; 21:9; 22:42; Mark 12:35; Luke 1:32; 20:41; John 7:47; Rom 1:3; 2 Tim 2:8; Rev 5:5).

The NT also attests to the deity of Jesus being the Son of God (Mark 1:1; Luke 1:35; Jn 11:4: 20:31; 2 Cor 1:19; Gal 2:20; Eph 4:13; Heb 4:14; 6:6; 1 John 4:15). Throughout the gospels, Jesus identifies with the Father, calling God Father and claiming to be united with him (John 10:30).

In John's gospel, Jesus is identified with the Father as being the Word of God and the Creator. Ignatius picks up on this with his use of allusion to Psalm 33:9 in *Ephesians* 15.1. He refers to Jesus as the "one teacher who spoke and it happened" in reference to Psalm 33:9 that gives God credit for speaking the world into existence. In *Magnesians* 8:2, Jesus is called the "Word that came forth from silence, who in everything pleased the one who sent him." He is the Word who in his divinity spoke through silence in creation and in his incarnation reveals the Father who sent him. Grant considers this reference to Jesus as the Word as stemming from John 1:18 in which no one has seen the Father but the Son who reveals the Father.[51] The Father's being pleased is a reference to John 8:29 wherein the incarnate Son always does what is pleasing to the Father, such as his going to the cross for the sins of humanity.

The Son and the Holy Spirit

Ignatius makes mention of the Holy Spirit as being an active member of the Godhead, united with the Father and the Son. In reference to the Son, the Spirit is the one by which Jesus was conceived of the virgin Mary. Ignatius describes the humanity of Jesus being born by Mary through the seed of David, and the divinity of Jesus being born of the Spirit (Matt 1:18; Luke 1:35). According to Ignatius in *Magnesians* 9.2, the Spirit is also the one by whom the prophets spoke of Jesus as their expectant teacher, being disciples of him before he came became incarnate (Matt 2:23; Luke 24:44). In the opening of his letter to the Philadelphians, the Son and Spirit work together in appointing and establishing the ecclesiological structure of the local church.[52] He goes on in *Philadelphians* 7.2 to implore the church to obey the Holy Spirit who instructs the church in imitation of Jesus who is of the Father which is an allusion to Pauline language of imitation (1 Cor 1:11; Phil 3:17; 1 Thess 1:6).

Finally, for Ignatius, the only true faith that flourishes is one that consists of faith and love in the Son, the Father, and the Spirit (2 Cor 13:14). He supports this idea in *Ephesians* 9.1 wherein he describes the church as the temple of the Father and individual believers as the building stones. This is yet another use of temple imagery and NT allusions to believers being stones fitted together for the sake of being constructed into God's temple (Eph 2:20–22; 1 Pet 2:5). For Ignatius, believers, having been prepared

for the building of God, are "hoisted up to the heights by the crane of Jesus Christ, which is the cross, using as a rope the Holy Spirit, and your faith lifts you up, and love *is* the way that leads to God." Again, we see faith and love as the mechanism for which the believer is united to the unified Godhead of the Father, Son, and Spirit. Jesus made a way for humanity to reach God through his sacrifice on the cross and the Spirit is the one who helped humanity reach Christ through faith.[53] Using Pauline language, those who love God are first known and prepared by God to live according to his purposes (Rom 8:28; 1 Cor 2:9; 8:3; cf. 1 John 4:7–5:3).[54] After showing that Ignatius viewed Jesus as both human and divine, in unity with the Godhead, we will now move do discuss how his use of Scripture influenced his articulation of incarnational Christology.

Incarnational Narrative

For Ignatius, to be a Christian meant to affirm the gospel of Jesus Christ which was his incarnational narrative.[55] Michael J. Svigel argues that the early church maintained catholic unity in their "clear and distinct incarnational narrative," asserting, "the 'centering' force of catholic Christianity was not merely any notion of 'Jesus Christ,' but the Jesus Christ who was the divine Son of God, who was born, suffered, died, rose again, and ascended to heaven in the flesh."[56] One of the clearest examples of Ignatius' incarnational narrative comes from *Trallians* 9.1–2 which states,

> Therefore be deaf whenever anyone speaks to you apart from Jesus Christ, the one of the family of David, the one of Mary, he who truly was born, both ate and drank, truly was persecuted by Pontius Pilate, truly was crucified and died, being seen by those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, who also truly was raised from the dead, his Father having raised him. In the same way he also, his Father, will likewise raise up us who believe in him in Christ Jesus, without whom we do not have true life.

I will elaborate on this incarnational narrative by showing how Ignatius relied on Scriptural evidence to articulate his Christology regarding the pre-existence, birth, life, suffering and death, resurrection, ascension, and return of Christ.

Pre-Existence

Before becoming incarnate, Jesus existed eternally as God the Son. Ignatius identifies Jesus as existing before the foundations of the world because it was Jesus as God the Son who created the world by speaking it into existence.[57] In *Magnesians* 8.2, Ignatius refers to Jesus as the Son of God and the Word of God, in reference to John 1:1 (c.f. Gen 1:1), who came forth from silence.[58] Svigel holds that, by coming forth from silence, Ignatius is referring to the fact that "whenever God revealed himself to humankind throughout history, he did so by means of the Son, or Logos, who is also God."[59] This is supported by Ignatius' statement in *Romans* 8.2 where he calls Jesus "the unerring mouth by whom the Father has truly spoken, will make this known to you, that I speak truly." As the pre-existent Son, Jesus created all things and reveals God to humanity.

Birth

The birth of Jesus is described as God the Son taking on flesh as the seed of David, being conceived through the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin, Mary. As the seed of David,[60] Ignatius is identifying Jesus as the true Messiah promised by God foretold by the prophets (2 Sam 7:12–16; Isa 9:7; Ps 2; 110). Ignatius makes it a point in *Trallians* 9.1 to show that Jesus was truly born to emphasize the act of God the Son taking on flesh (John 1:14). According to the various gospel accounts of Jesus' birth narrative, Ignatius affirms the virgin birth through Mary (Matt 1:18–25; Luke 1:26–38; cf. Isa 7:14).[61] For Ignatius, to be a Christian meant to affirm Jesus as the Messiah who was born of the virgin Mary, according to the Scriptures.

Life

Not only did Ignatius expect Christians to hold to the pre-incarnate existence and miraculous birth of Jesus, but they were also expected to affirm the testimony of Scripture regarding his earthly acts. In *Trallians* 9.2, one cannot speak of Christ apart from the fact that he truly ate and drank. As Svigel points out, for Ignatius, Jesus experienced a real day-to-day life in the physical world. He ate and drank like other people, living as "perfect man."[62] In *Ephesians* 18.2 and *Smyrnaeans* 1.1, Ignatius also references the event of Jesus' baptism by John as a key aspect of the incarnational narrative. In *Ephesians* 18.2, Jesus was baptized "so that by his suffering he might purify

the water." This is likely an allusion to Mark 10:38–39 (cf. Luke 12:50) wherein Jesus compares his baptism and the "cup" of wrath to self-sacrifice.[63] In *Smyrnaeans* 1.1, Ignatius adds that Jesus was baptized by John, "that all righteousness might be fulfilled by him," an allusion to Matthew 3:15. It is possible that Ignatius is showing how Christ's baptism was a prefigure of his sufferings. Like his disciples who would later be baptized as a sign of being dead to sin and brought back to life in Jesus (Rom 6:4), he was modeling this through his own baptism and fulfilled in his suffering on the cross. It is too this suffering we will now turn.

Suffering and Death

Against heretical teaching promulgated by groups such as the Docetists, Ignatius believes that true Christianity holds to the real, physical suffering of Jesus. After giving the incarnational narrative in *Trallians* 9.1–2, Ignatius addresses false teachings which claim that Jesus suffered "in appearance only." Ignatius refers to those who hold to this view as "atheists" and "unbelievers" signifying these are not true members of the Christian faith. He makes a claim similar to that of Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:12–17 who rebukes those who do not affirm the resurrection. Like Paul who says if there is no resurrection then there is no point to the Christian faith, Ignatius claims that if Christ did not truly suffer in the flesh, then his persecution is of no cause and he dies for nothing.

Ignatius affirms his position in *Smyrnaeans* 2.1 claiming that Christ truly suffered in the flesh so that we might be saved. He then turns this heretical teaching back on those who hold to it claiming, "And just as they think, so also will it happen to them, being bodiless and ghost-like." Rick Brannan comments, "Ignatius here, in his arguing against Docetism, puts the outcome of the Docetists back on themselves. As the Docetists believe in separation of body and spirit, Ignatius assents and agrees with them that in their eternal torment, apart from the glory of Christ, they will be bodiless and ghost-like."[64] For Ignatius, to be Christian was to maintain orthodox Christology regarding Jesus physical suffering. The consequences of not affirming the physical suffering of Jesus meant facing eternal judgment.

The physical suffering Jesus faced, recorded by Ignatius, was crucifixion, being nailed to a tree, and ultimately, death.[65] He was sent to the cross under the order of Pontius Pilate as stated in Scripture (Matt 27:11–26;

Mark 15:1 – 15; Luke 23:1 – 25; John 18:28 – 19:16). Pilate being mentioned in the incarnational narrative does not only appear in the gospel accounts but also throughout the early church in the NT. Paul makes mention of Pilate's role in the crucifixion in 1 Timothy 6:13. He also professed this to Jews and Gentiles at an Antiochene synagogue in Acts 13:28. The apostle Peter likewise made mention of Pilate in the incarnational narrative (Acts 3:13; 4:27). In Acts 4:27, Peter mentions both Pilate and Herod responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus. The only other account in which Herod is included is mentioned associated with the crucifixion is in Luke's gospel. Ignatius likely would have been familiar with the crucifixion account of Luke – Acts because of his mention of Herod the tetrarch in tandem with Pontius Pilate in *Smyrnaeans* 1.2.

In agreement with Scripture, Ignatius believed Jesus suffered and died for our sins.[66] Borrowing language from Paul, in *Romans* 6.1, Ignatius claimed that Jesus died on his behalf (Rom 5:8). Through faith in the death of Jesus, the believer's life will arise, and they will "escape death."[67] Jesus' death leading to the eternal life of the believer is a common theme throughout the NT. John 3:16 states that the Father sent the Son so that those who believe in him will not face death, but experience eternal life. Paul in 1 Corinthians 5:15 – 21 writes that Christ died so that those who believe in him would be reconciled to God through the forgiveness of their sins. For Ignatius, Christ's suffering and death cannot be divorced from the gospel and incarnational narrative of Jesus, nor can his resurrection.

Resurrection

The resurrection of Jesus was essential to the incarnational narrative of the early church as affirmed by Ignatius. Like his discussion on the suffering and death of Jesus, Ignatius makes it a point to affirm a real, physical resurrection. In Smyrnaeans 3:1, Ignatius uses a direct citation from Luke 24:39. He introduces his citation with the word, ephē. What follows is an address Jesus made to his disciples following his resurrection in which he tells them to "Take hold. Touch me and see that I am not a bodiless demon."[68] Jesus was making a point to the disciples that he had not only risen from the dead, but his bodily resurrection was real and physical. Ignatius in Smyrnaeans 3.3 goes on to affirm that the disciples ate and drank with the risen Jesus (Luke 24:43).

Following Luke's account of the resurrection, Jesus goes on to address his disciples claiming that all that he had done in his life was a fulfillment of that which had already been foretold by the Law, Prophets, and Psalms (Luke 24:44). Ignatius makes the same reference in his gospel presentation in *Philadelphians* 9.2. After affirming the suffering and resurrection of Jesus, Ignatius writes, "For the beloved prophets preached with reference to him, but the gospel is the consummation of immortality. All things together are good if you believe in love." According to Ignatius, the suffering and resurrection of Jesus was not something made up by Jesus or his followers after his death, but rather an essential component of the sovereign plan of God for human history, particularly those who believe in him.

Ascension

Following Jesus' resurrection, he assumed his rightful place seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven. In *Magnesians* 7.2, Jesus is described as coming from the one Father, was with the one, "and returned to the one" (John 1:18; 16:28). Svigel notes that while Ignatius does not make explicit mention of Jesus' physical movement from earth to the Father in heaven, he asserts, "Ignatius could not speak in the way he did about the living Christ without presupposing his exalted position in heaven."[69] For instance, in *Ephesians* 5.1, Jesus is described as currently being united to the church and the Father. Ignatius explains how believers are united to Christ through their future resurrection.[70] This is not the first the church at Rome have heard about their being united to Christ through their resurrection. In Romans 6:6, the apostle Paul claims, "For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, we will certainly also be united in the likeness of his resurrection." This concept of unity with Christ implies that Christ not only resurrected himself, but is still alive and is physically residing outside of the earthly realm.[71]

Return

The final component of Ignatius' incarnational narrative is the return of Christ. According to Scripture, Jesus is coming back from heaven at the end of the age to resurrect the dead and execute his sovereign judgment on the earth (John 5:26–29). Ignatius alludes to this coming judgment in *Ephesians* 11.1 wherein he claims, "These are the last times."[72] He refers to

humanity's time leading up to the coming judgment as God's extension of patience. However, there are only two options for humanity, to "fear coming wrath" or "love the present grace." Those who avoid coming wrath will face resurrection in and with Christ.

In *Trallians* 9.2, the Father is described as raising Jesus from the dead and in the last days will also raise those who believe from the dead. While the Father is the one mentioned to raise believers in the last day, this does not leave Jesus out of the equation. According to Ignatius, the Father and Son both participated in Jesus' resurrection.[73] Jesus is also described as doing nothing without the Father,[74] which includes his own resurrection. Given the teaching of Scripture and Ignatius' unity between the Father and the Son, it is the Son who will execute judgment in the future and raise believers from the dead to be united with him. The one true faith in Jesus is "the medicine of immortality, the antidote that we should not die but live in Jesus Christ forever."[75]

Conclusion

For Ignatius, Scripture was the primary source for articulating his Christology. The way in which he employed the use of Scripture to articulate his Christology was through direct citations, allusions, and imagery. Through these three forms of referencing Scripture, Ignatius articulated his Christology through discussing various names of Jesus, the unity of the Son in the Godhead, and the incarnational narrative.

Christology in the early church was not something that developed but rather was articulated by a careful interpretation of Scripture as God's authoritative revelation. As seen through his seven letters, Ignatius of Antioch's Christology was impressively articulate for the early second century. The reason being, given his placement within a Christian reading culture, he was not only familiar with both the OT and the NT but was heavily dependent on Scripture as his source of authority in articulating and formulating his Christology.

1 There is a general consensus concerning the dating of the Ignatian letters between the years 98 – 117 AD which is during the reign of Emperor Trajan. For more on the dating of Ignatius' letters see, Michael J. Svigel, *The Center and the Source: Second Century Incarnational Christology and Early Catholic Christianity*, Gorgias Dissertations 66 (Gorgias Press LLC, 2016), 50 – 52.

2 Quotations from Ignatius' seven letters are sourced from Rick Brannan, trans., *The Apostolic Fathers: A New Translation* (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2017).

3 See Stanley E. Porter, "Allusions and Echoes," in *As It Is Written: Studying Paul's Use of Scripture*, Symposium Serie 50 (Society of Biblical Literature, 2008). Porter distinguishes between an echo and an allusion with an allusion being a reference to a particular text without using direct citation. The way Porter describes an echo is similar to how imagery is used in this paper, referring to particular pictorial themes mentioned in Scripture.

4 Contributors to *The New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers* volume have done prominent work in this field having cataloged various potential references to Scripture throughout the writings of Apostolic Fathers. They categorize each possible reference to Scripture in four classes: A, B, C, and D. Class A represents a reference that is beyond a reasonable doubt sourced directly from Scripture. Class B are references with high degrees of probability that a particular Scripture is referenced. Class C is a lower degree of probability and Class D show possibility but it there is too much uncertainty to allow any reliance. See J. Vernon Bartlet et al., *The New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers* (Clarendon Press, 1905), iii.

5 William R. Schoedel holds to the opinion that Ignatius "reflects scant interest in the Hebrew Scriptures." This is likely because Ignatius was only known to cite three Scriptures verbatim after being introduced with the phrase. "it is written." Schoedel admits that other allusions to Scripture can be found in Ignatius' writings, but he primarily relied on secondary sources and oral material. William R. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Commentary on the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch*, ed. Helmut Koester, Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Fortress Press, 1985), 9.

6 Unless otherwise noted all Bible quotations come from the NET 2nd ed.

7 For a discussion on the nature of the Greco-Roman world existing as a reading culture and early Christianities place within their own reading culture centered around Old and New Testament texts, see Harry Y. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts* (Yale University Press, 1995).

8 *Phld*. 8.2.

9 *Phld*. 8.2.

10 Paul J. Donahue, "Jewish Christianity in the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch," *Vigiliae Christianae* 32, no. 2 (1978), 86.

11 See James Carleton Paget, "The Old Testament in the Apostolic Fathers," in *Studies on the Text of the New Testament and Early Christianity: Essays in Honor of Michael W. Holmes on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, ed. Juan Hernandez Jr. et al., New Testament Tools, Studies and Documents (Brill, 2015), 50:457 – 58. Paget links authority to prophets in *Magnesians*. 8.2; 9.2; *Philadelphians* 5.2; 9.1, 2; *Smyrnaeans*. 5.2; 7.2 and the Law of Moses in *Smyrnaeans* 5.2.

12 See Jonathon Lookadoo, "Ignatius of Antioch and Scripture," *Zeitschrift Für Antikes Christentum / Journal of Ancient Christianity* 23, no. 2 (2019): 207.

13 Paget, "The Old Testament in the Apostolic Fathers," 459.

14 Jonathon Lookadoo, *The High Priest and the Temple: Metaphorical Depictions of Jesus in the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament 473 (Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 64.

15 While Ignatius utilizes direct citation of Scripture far less than allegory and imagery, this does not denigrate the fact that he knew Scripture and had it in mind as a referent as he wrote his letters. Rather he was so embedded in a Christian reading culture that despite not having physical copies of texts, the words of Scripture still flowed through his writings because he had taken the Scripture he had heard and read to memory and let the words of Scripture transform his worldview and speech. See Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church*, 10 – 41.

16 Lookadoo, "Ignatius of Antioch and Scripture," 211.

17 See Clayton N. Jefford, "Authority and Perspective in the Didache," in *The Didache: A Missing Piece of the Puzzle in Early Christianity*, ed. Jonathan A. Draper and Clayton N. Jefford, Early Christianity and Its Literature 14 (SBL Press, 2015), 52 – 55. Jefford lists cross references between the *Didache* and Scripture to show how the author the *Didache* was likely utilizing Scripture as his source material.

18 Paul Foster, *Colossians* (Black's New Testament Commentaries; London: T&T Clark Bloomsbury, 2016), 52 – 60 cited in Lookadoo, "Ignatius and Scripture," 210.

19 Lookadoo, "Ignatius and Scripture," 213.

20 Olavi Tarvainen, *Faith and Love in Ignatius of Antioch* (trans. Jonathon Lookadoo; Pickwick Publications, 2016), 31.

21 William Ralph Inge, "Ignatius," in *The New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers*, by J. Vernon Bartlet et al. (Clarendon Press, 1905), 67.

22 Tarvainen, *Faith and Love*, 25–26.

23 *Phld*. 2.1–2. See Tarvainen, *30.

24 See Lookadoo, *The High Priest and the Temple*, 7.

25 *Phld*. 9.1, emphasis original.

26 *Phld*. 9.1.

27 *Letter of Barnabas*, 6.10. See Brannan, *The Apostolic Fathers*.

28 See Lookadoo, *The High Priest and the Temple*, 74.

29 For more comparative analysis of *Philadelphians* 9.1 and the book of Hebrews, see Lookadoo, *The High Priest and the Temple*, 74–77.

30 *Phld*. 9.1.

31 Robert M. Grant, *The Apostolic Fathers: A New Translation and Commentary: Ignatius of Antioch* (Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1964), 4, 107.

32 Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 210.

33 See note 20 in Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 210.

34 See Lookadoo, *The High Priest and the Temple*, 87.

35 Lookadoo, *The High Priest and the Temple*, 90.

36 For more discussion on whether Ignatius was dependent on Johannine literature when writing his letters, see Inge, "Ignatius," 81–83 and note 118 in Lookadoo, *The High Priest and the Temple*, 91.

37 *Eph*. 1.1; *Magn*., Sal.; *Phld*. 9.2; *Smyrn*. 7.1.

38 Robert M. Grant also sees allusions to Pauline salutations, commenting, The expression "Christ Jesus our Savior" (Eph. 1:1; cf. Smyrn. 7:1) is fairly common in Paul's epistle to Titus 1:4; 2:13; 3:6 (cf. 2 Tim. 1:10). Grant, *The Apostolic Fathers: Ignatius of Antioch*, 57.

39 Schoedel does not see any evidence of low-Christology here in *Philadelphians* 9.2. He states, "The title "savior," to be sure, is rare in Ignatius. But when it does occur, it does not stand opposed to any devaluation of Christ's high dignity (*Eph.* 1.1; *Mag.* inscr). On the contrary it once appears in an anti-docetic context (Sm. 7.1)." Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 211.

40 See Grant, *The Apostolic Fathers: Ignatius of Antioch*, 120.

41 See Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 240.

42 See Grant, *The Apostolic Fathers: Ignatius of Antioch*, 31.

43 These are just but a few of the names of Jesus mentioned in the letters of Ignatius which find their basis in Scripture. Other names found throughout his writings include: Christ (*Eph*. 2:1), Physician (*Eph*. 7.2), Teacher (*Eph*. 15.1), Lord (*Phld*. 1.1), and Shepherd (*Phld*. 2.1).

44 While much scholarship has tried to blur the lines between "orthodox Christianity" and "lost Christianities," it is obvious these lines were not blurred for Ignatius. He considered clear boundaries between what a Christian was and was not primarily based on their Christology. Those who denied the humanity of Christ, such as the Docetists, were not Christian in the eyes of Ignatius. Some have considered this to be a pitfall of Ignatius, showing him to be intolerant of varying viewpoints within Christianity. For Walter Bauer, Ignatius was likely in the minority because speaking with authority like a dictator making demands and is viewed as being frantically concerned of losing power. See Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, ed. Gerhard Krodel, trans. Robert A. Kraft (Fortress Press, 1971), 62–63. For Judith Lieu, terminology such as "orthodoxy" in conversations regarding the early church is an anachronistic and we ought to avoid imposing our modern conceptions of orthodoxy back into the first and second centuries. See Judith Lieu, *Neither Jew Nor Greek?: Constructing Early Christianity*, 2nd ed., Cornerstones (Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 147. However, other scholars have shown that there was a unifying factor of orthodoxy in early Christianity and that "unifying factor among 'catholic' Christians was *faithfulness to the incarnational narrative* in which the one Creator God sent His divine Son/Logos to become incarnate as a fleshly human being, who died for the sins of humanity, rose bodily from the dead, and ascended bodily to heaven." Svigel, *The Center and the Source*, 20.

45 *Tral*. 6.1. The word *hairesis* is used on numerous occasions throughout the NT to describe sects of Judaism (Acts 5:17; 15:5; 26:5), Christianity in the eyes of Judaism (Acts 24:14), and teachings that caused division in the early church (1 Cor 11:19; Gal 5:20; 2 Pet 2:1).

46 For a discussion on the textual variant of whether *Ephesians* 7.2 should be read as *en anthrōpō theos* or *en sarki genomenos theos*, see note 19 in Svigel, *The Center and the Source*, 72–73.

47 *Eph*. 15.3

48 *Eph*., Sal.; 18.2.

49 Lookadoo, *The High Priest and the Temple*, 204–205.

50 *Ephesians* 20.2; *Smyrnaeans* 1.1.

51 Grant, *The Apostolic Fathers: Ignatius of Antioch*, 4, 62.

52 Grant, *The Apostolic Fathers: Ignatius of Antioch*, 99.

53 For a discussion on temple and crane imagery in *Philadelphians* 9.1, see Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 65–67.

54 See Grant, *The Apostolic Fathers: Ignatius of Antioch*, 41.

55 By "incarnational narrative" I am referring to the narrative arch told in Scripture of the divine Son of God who pre-existed, was born, lived, suffered, died, resurrected, ascended, and is coming back again.

56 Svigel, *The Center and the Source*, 30.

57 *Eph*. 15.1. C.f. Ps 33:9.

58 See note 48. Jesus being said to come forth from silence is not a Gnostic reference, but rather a Scriptural one from John 1:18 wherein Jesus is described as revealing the Father, whom no one has seen.

59 Svigel, *The Center and the Source*, 102.

60 *Eph.* 18.2; 20.2; *Tral.* 9.1; *Rom.* 7.3; *Smyrn.* 9.1

61 *Eph.* 7.2; 18.2; 19.1; *Tral.* 9:1; *Smyrn.* 1.1

62 C.f. *Eph.* 7.2; 18.2; *Magn.* 11.1; *Trall.* 9.1; *Smyrn.* 4.2. See Svigel, *The Center and the Source*, 166–67.

63 According to Grant, "Ignatius could have been aware that baptism was related to suffering if he considered the saying in Mark 10:38–39, in which both "cup" and "baptism" are used in reference to the self-sacrifice, first of Christ and second of his disciples. Just as the Christian dies with Christ in baptism (Rom. 6:3–11; Col. 3:3), so Christ's sufferings were prefigured in his own baptism." Grant, *The Apostolic Fathers: Ignatius of Antioch*, 49.

64 See note 2 in Brannan, *The Apostolic Fathers*, *Smyrn*. 2.1.

65 *Smyn.* 1.2.

66 *Smyrn*. 7.1.

67 *Tral.* 2.1, c.f. *Magn*. 9.1.

68 Compare *Smyrn*. 3.1 Λάβετε, ψηλαφήσατέ με καὶ ἴδετε, ὅτι οὐκ εἰμὶ δαιμόνιον ἀσώματον, with Luke 24:39, ψηλαφήσατέ με καὶ ἴδετε, ὅτι πνεῦμα σάρκα καὶ ὀστέα οὐκ ἔχει καθὼς ἐμὲ θεωρεῖτε ἔχοντα. Ignatius uses the same phrase, "Touch me and see" followed by similar implications that when the disciples touch Jesus, they will realize he has risen in the physical flesh.

69 Svigel, *The Center and the Source*, 168.

70 *Rom*. 4.3.

71 There are other rolls Jesus currently plays in his place in heaven. Svigel writes, As the exalted Lord, Jesus is the object of faith, hope, love, prayer and worship (C.f. *Eph.* 2.2; 4.2; 14.1; 20.1; 21.2; *Magn.* 11.1; *Rom.* insc.; *Phld.* 11.2; *Smryn.* 1.1). And as savior, teacher, and shepherd, he is the present means of salvation and source of life (Cf. *Eph.* 3.2; 9.1–2; 11.1; 20.2; *Magn.* insc.; 1.2; 5.2; 9.1–2; *Trall.* 1.1; 6.1; *Rom.* 8.2; 9.1; *Phld.* insc.; *Smyrn.* 4.2; 8.2; 9.2; *Pol.* insc.; 3.2.). Svigel, *The Center and the Source*, 168.

72 C.f. 1 Cor 7:29; 1 John 2.18.

73 In *Smyrn*. 2.1, Jesus is described as raising himself from the dead. In *Tral*. 9.2, the Father raised Jesus from the dead. This is not a contradiction, but rather an affirmation of unity between the Father and the Son (c.f. *Magn*. 7.1)

74 *Magn* 7.1.

75 *Eph*. 20.2.

Grace, Infused Habits, and Christ's Humanity: A Comparison Between Thomas Aquinas and Francis Turretin[1]

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The theology of infused habits in Francis Turretin exemplifies well the complexities of studying continuities and discontinuities in post-Reformation theology.[2] The Reformed Orthodox engaged critically with the medieval scholastic tradition that preceded them, maintaining the core commitments of the Protestant Reformation.[3] This reality is clearly illustrated by Francis Turretin's interaction with Thomas Aquinas' theology of infused habits.[4] Here, I propose a comparative analysis of Aquinas and Turretin, trying to understand how Turretin integrates scholastic elements into the Reformed system. My thesis is that Turretin appropriates the ontological and transformative dimensions of the Thomistic doctrine of infused habits yet reinterprets them within a covenantal and Reformed framework that restricts their function exclusively to the sphere of regeneration and sanctification, without compromising the doctrine of justification by faith (*sola fide*). Thus, the incorporation of infused habits is generally treated

as a soteriological reality — infused by the Spirit into the believer for the purposes of spiritual renewal. However, the case of Christ is unique in that he receives the infused habits of grace not for personal salvation, but as a transformative endowment intrinsically ordered to his mediatorial office. In this way, habitual grace in Christ preserves both the integrity of his true humanity and the orthodox contours of Chalcedonian Christology.

To prove my argument, the paper is divided into three sections. First, I examine the distinct ontological frameworks within which Aquinas and Turretin develop their respective doctrines of grace. Second, I analyze their conceptions of habitual grace, with special attention to its ontological nature, function, and relation to the doctrine of justification. Third, I compare how each theologian applies the notion of habitual grace to the human soul of Christ, highlighting both their doctrinal continuities and theological departures.

Grace and Participation: Two Forms of Ontology

This section aims to clarify the distinct theological frameworks in which Aquinas and Turretin develop their respective doctrines of grace. While Aquinas articulates grace within a metaphysical structure shaped by participation and the divine processions, Turretin appropriates similar categories within a covenantal framework, where metaphysical concepts like habitus and participation are subordinated to God's voluntary condescension and the economy of the covenant.[5] Grasping these contextual distinctions will be essential for understanding Turretin's emphases and the modifications he proposes in his theology of infused habits.

Aquinas: Participative Trinitarian Ontology

Aquinas's concepts of grace, participation, and habits are deeply rooted in a Trinitarian speculative framework. The Dominican master elaborates on this by arguing that Gift is a proper name of the Holy Spirit.[6] As such, the Spirit is, within the persons of the Trinity, "the Gift common to the Father and the Son, the Gift which the resurrection of Christ obtains for men."[7] On this basis, Aquinas maintains that the Holy Spirit — given in the economy as Gift — is the principle through whom rational creatures are drawn into

participation in the divine life, through the mediation of created habits of grace.[8]

Commenting on John 4:10, Aquinas explains that the grace dispensed by the Spirit is twofold: not only are gifts communicated, but the Spirit himself, as their unfailing source, is also given to human beings.[9] In other words, grace is never given apart from the Giver; the Holy Spirit himself is always present in the bestowal of grace.[10] This dual donation — the Giver and the gift — forms the basis for Aquinas's fundamental distinction between *gratia increata* and *gratia create* (created grace and uncreated grace).[11] The uncreated Gift is the Holy Spirit himself, "a gift given gratuitously that is indeed uncreated."[12] Accordingly, any manifestation of grace in the human soul must be considered created, since "God alone is the cause of grace."[13]

Understanding this dual donation is central to Aquinas's theology of participation. In his *Commentary on Romans* (5:5), he argues that the Holy Spirit — the love proceeding from the Father and the Son — is given in such a way that the soul is transformed by participation in divine love.[14] According to Emery, this means that "The uncreated Gift (the Holy Spirit himself) comes into hearts by producing there a created gift (charity as a participation in Love)."[15] In other words, through the transforming power of *gratia creata*, human beings are disposed to receive the uncreated Gift in person.[16]

Francis Turretin: Covenantal Ontology

Compared to Aquinas's participatory metaphysics, Turretin develops his doctrine of grace within a federal framework marked by God's sovereign condescension and covenantal economy. Although, like Aquinas, he acknowledges a certain form of participation in God — "analogical, accidental and extrinsic"[17] — he explicitly places this participation within the federal structure of God's dealings with humanity and with evidently less emphasis on the speculative elements of Trinitarian theology.

The concept of grace, according to Turretin, cannot be separated from the concept of covenant. This federal relationship stands "at the very center of religion," since it consists in "the communion of God with man and [embraces] in its compass all the benefits of God towards man and his duties towards God."[18] In this way, the gifts of grace that justify, restore, and

renew human beings flow from God's covenantal initiative to enter into communion with his creatures out of sheer mercy.[19]

Turretin follows the classic Reformed distinction between the covenant of nature (*foedus naturae*) and the covenant of grace (*foedus gratiae*).[20] The first covenant was established before the fall with God as Creator, promising eternal life to innocent man on condition of perfect obedience.[21] This relationship was not a mere legal contract or a "religion of works" but a form of divine generosity.[22] Unlike human covenants, which typically involve mutual participation and equality between parties, this covenant rests solely upon "the infinite condescension" of God, who freely "willed to enter into a covenant with his creatures" without any obligation.[23] Consequently, when this covenant was broken, humanity was left condemned, subject to death and divine judgment.

In response to this rupture, God freely instituted a second covenant: the covenant of grace. Turretin describes this saying that:

> That first covenant having been broken by the fall of man, God might (if he had wished to *deal in strict justice* with our first parents) immediately after their sin have delivered men over to death … But *it did not please him to use that supreme justice* … rather moved with pity, he devised and instituted a remedy … by *graciously* sanctioning a new covenant in Christ, in which we have the method not only of escaping from that misery, but also of attaining unto most perfect happiness.[24]

This second covenant is therefore wholly a work of divine mercy. It is not merely an agreement, but the means by which God restores communion with those who rebelled against him.[25]

Central to the covenant of grace is the doctrine of the Trinity. While the external works of the Godhead are inseparable (*opera Trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt*), they can be distinguished by order and by terms: the appropriation to each divine person according to their distinctive personal mode of subsistence or the *terminus* of the divine operation.[26] Based on this, Turretin argues that the Father institutes the plan of salvation, the Son fulfills the covenant as Mediator, and the Spirit applies its benefits to the elect:

> God, the Father, concurs in it because he first instituted this method of communicating himself and gave his Son in virtue of that constitution … God, the Son, both as the cause and foundation of the covenant through his own blood … God, the Spirit, as the cause together with the Father and the Son, and the matter … and the earnest of the heavenly inheritance.[27]

The Father sends the Son as Mediator; the Son, by his obedience and death, removes the enmity between God and humanity; and the Spirit, as Turretin notes, heals and renews us from within, "sanctifying and converting us and by converting, reconciling us to God."[28] Thus, all the blessings of salvation — including justification, the infusion of holy habits, and the renewal of the image of God — flow from this Trinitarian covenantal economy that dispenses God's unmerited favor toward sinners.

In this context, one of the most significant differences between Aquinas and Turretin is in their use of the speculative elements of the Trinitarian theology. Although Turretin adopts several key Thomistic distinctions — including the modal distinction (*distinctio modalis*)[29] — his reception of the psychological analogy is far more restrained. Whereas Aquinas builds his theology of grace upon the foundation of intellectual and volitional processions, Turretin explicitly rejects the legitimacy of deriving the Spirit's name as "Love" and "Gift" from the divine will, due to the lack of sufficient Scriptural support.[30] He says such images "entangle rather than explain" the Trinitarian mystery and should not serve as doctrinal foundations.[31] This position reflects a more sober and reserved ontology, one that avoids projecting human psychological acts onto the mystery of God[32] — a move that, in turn, logically shapes the ontological framework he constructs for articulating his theology of grace.

Summary

In this section, I have tried to show that, even though Aquinas and Turretin share a common theological ground when speaking of grace, as a gift from God that is both unearned and transformative, they place that grace within different ontological frameworks. For Aquinas, grace is best understood as a form of participation in the uncreated Gift of the Spirit. Turretin, on the other hand, frames grace within a covenantal ontology. Although the Genevan Reformer does not entirely dismiss the idea of analogical

participation, he roots grace's function and distribution in God's sovereign willingness to bind himself by covenant. Seeing this contrast helps clarify how Turretin can use certain Thomistic ideas — especially the notion of infused habits — without detaching them from his covenantal focus.

Theology of the Infused Habits

In the previous section, I showed how Turretin and Aquinas framed the doctrine of grace within two distinct contexts. In this section, I will examine how each author develops the doctrine of infused habits, with particular attention to how Reformed theology — as represented by Turretin — critically appropriates the Thomistic category of infused habits in its account of regeneration and sanctification, while firmly rejecting any role for these habits in justification.

Infused Habits in Thomas Aquinas

According to Cleveland, Aquinas was the first to connect Aristotle's understanding of habits and insert it into a Christian theological framework, particularly within his doctrine of participation.[33] Unlike the Aristotelian model, in which habits are acquired through the repetition of acts, Thomas teaches that certain habits — the supernatural ones — are infused directly by God to order man to his ultimate end.[34] For this reason, the Dominican master distinguishes between acquired and infused habits, emphasizing that the latter do not arise from nature. On the contrary, these supernatural habits dispose the soul to act according to grace, as with faith, hope, and charity.[35]

For Aquinas, the natural powers of the human creature cannot by themselves attain the supernatural end of union with God. As he observes, "the gift of grace surpasses every capability of created nature … it is nothing short of a partaking of the Divine Nature."[36] For the creature to reach its ultimate perfection — supernatural beatitude — its nature must be elevated by a *donum superadditum* — a gratuitous gift that configures and perfects its nature without destroying it.[37] Consequently, as Aquinas put it, "the gift of grace is a kind of quality" infused into the soul — a permanent disposition enabling the subject to act according to the divine good.[38]

Building on this foundation, Aquinas contends that habitual grace — the ontological root from which the infused virtues emerge[39] — is both necessary and transformative to attain beatitude in union with God. He explains that, in order to live a just life, human beings require divine assistance on two levels: (1) they need a habitual gift that heals corrupted nature and elevates it to perform meritorious acts that surpass its natural capacity; and (2) they need the operative grace by which God moves the soul to act.[40] Without these divine gifts, the soul remains incapable of avoiding sin.[41] Habitual grace, then, does not belong to the state of pure nature but presupposes a gratuitous elevation of nature beyond its created capacity toward the formal participation in the divine life.[42]

This gift is not to be understood as a purely external act, but as the true indwelling of the Spirit within the human soul. Aquinas develops this point in this way:

> Sanctifying grace disposes the soul to possess the divine person; and this is signified when it is said that the Holy Spirit is given according to the gift of grace. Nevertheless the gift itself of grace is from the Holy Spirit; which is meant by the words, the charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. [43]

Here, as Emery points out, Aquinas says that "the saints are conformed or assimilated" in sanctifying grace, such that the persons of the Trinity "are sent into the human heart in their invisible mission."[44] Yet Aquinas insists that this possession is impossible without a prior disposition in the soul that ontologically disposes it to receive the Divine Person — namely, habitual grace.[45] Therefore, *gratia creata* is not the Gift itself, but the necessary condition for the soul to receive the eternal Gift of the Holy Spirit. The coordination between *gratia creata* and *gratia increata* is essential to Aquinas's theology of participation: the rational creature can possess the Spirit — the Gift himself — only if it has first been inwardly transformed by a habitual grace that configures it to God without any confusion between the divine and the human.[46]

In sum, as Marteen Wisse observes, Aquinas decisively integrates the notion of infused habit into the Christian tradition, endowing the Aristotelian structure with theological content: the theological virtues are

gifts from God because they direct man toward him as his ultimate end, are infused solely by grace, and are known only through revelation.[47] Thus, while the infused habits refer to the particular virtues and gifts produced by grace, habitual grace designates the underlying supernatural habit by which the soul is ontologically elevated and disposed toward the vision of God.

Infused Habits in Francis Turretin

The Reformation did not completely discard the Thomistic category of infused habits. Although Martin Luther himself directly rejected this notion, many later Reformers — and especially the theologians of the seventeenth century — integrated the Thomistic distinction between acquired and infused habits into their theology of regeneration and sanctification.[48] As J. V. Fesko notes:

> Reformed theologians committed to justification *sola fide* can set aside the role of infused habits as the legal ground for justification. But this still leaves significant insights and categories for the Reformed doctrine of sanctification. Infused habits provide a helpful metaphysical rubric to explain sanctification and a theological platform to discuss virtue ethics. God indeed speaks and raises people from the dead and justifies them by faith alone, but he also changes and sanctifies by infusing a new heart, or habit, into redeemed sinners. Reformed theologians of both the Reformation and Reformed Orthodox periods recognized these truths and constructively employed infused habits in their doctrines of sanctification.[49]

Turretin stands firmly within this tradition: his theology of infused habits retains Aristotelian-Thomistic terminology but reinterprets it within a distinctly covenantal framework.

First, Turretin explicitly rejects the scholastic notion of a state of pure nature (*status puræ naturæ*), insisting that humanity was created from the beginning in original righteousness inherently integrated into the *imago Dei*.[50] According to the Catholic tradition, including Aquinas, this righteousness was viewed as a *donum superadditum*, bestowed in addition to "the native gifts and power of the entire man."[51] By contrast, Turretin and the Reformed orthodox maintain that original righteousness, though a gratuitous gift from God, was not super added to human nature, but

was "necessary to the perfection of innocent man."[52] Thus, Turretin argues, "he cannot be said to have been created in a state of pure nature who was adorned with this from the beginning."[53] Accordingly, original righteousness is best understood as a connatural and gratuitous infused habit oriented toward the moral perfection of the soul, leaving no space for a hypothetical natural state devoid of grace.[54]

This distinction is important because Turretin argues the Fall did not destroy the rational nature of humanity (its natural faculties). Still, it did remove the supernatural gifts God had conferred upon the soul—namely, righteousness and immortality.[55] While this loss does not affect the essence of the image of God, it does impair its proper form and function. Sin has left humanity with disordered faculties, incapable of producing holy acts apart from an inward renewal by grace: "although there always remains in it a natural power of understanding and willing, still the moral habit or disposition of judging and willing properly has so failed that it can no longer be moved to a right exercise of itself … unless the faculty itself is first renovated."[56] In this sense, such renewal cannot originate from fallen humanity but must come through the intervention of the Holy Spirit.

By this, in second place, Turretin developed a precise Reformed soteriology integrating infused habits within the broader structure of his theology of effectual calling. Turretin distinguishes two aspects of spiritual transformation, one passive and another active:

> Habitual or passive conversion takes place by the infusion of supernatural habits by the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, actual or active conversion takes place by the exercise of these good habits by which the acts of faith and repentance are both given by God and elicited from man. Through the former, man is renovated and converted by God. Through the latter, man, renovated and converted by God, turns himself to God and performs acts. The former is more properly called regeneration because it is like a new birth by which the man is reformed after the image of his Creator. The latter, however, is called conversion because it includes the operation of the man himself. Now although in the order of time, they can scarcely be distinguished in adults (in whom the action of God converting man is never without the action of man turning himself to God), still in the order of nature and causality the habitual ought to precede the actual and the action of God the action of man.[57]

The first — habitual conversion — corresponds to regeneration; the second — actual conversion — follows as the effect and exercise of the habits infused.[58]

Understanding this twofold distinction is key to grasping Turretin's concept of habitual grace. Although he used the Thomistic categories, he more precisely grounded them within the *ordo salutis* characteristic of Reformed theology. He explains this, arguing that habitual grace is the formal principle (*principium formale*) that precedes all moral action. Therefore, for the soul to act spiritually, it must first be renewed by grace. The soul cannot elicit acts of understanding and willing that are truly spiritual unless it has been inwardly renewed "by a supernatural disposition and habits."[59] A infusing new, holy disposition must spiritually and morally elevate the soul before producing any spiritual fruit, because "an evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit, unless from an evil it is first made a good tree."[60] This is why Turretin and the Reformed Orthodox describe regeneration as a sovereign and vivifying act of God:

> Therefore this is the first degree of efficacious grace by which God regenerates the minds of the elect by a certain intimate and wonderful operation and creates them as it were anew by i*nfusing his vivifying Spirit*, who, gliding into the inmost recesses of the soul, reforms the mind itself, healing its depraved inclinations and prejudices, endues it with strength and elicits the formal principle to spiritual and saving acts … Also, we obtain the new birth, from which acts of faith and love flow forth (1 Jn. 4:7; 5:1).[61]

Turretin sees this work as restoring faculties once lost through the Fall. The "new heart," the "new mind," the "seed of God" — all these biblical metaphors, for him, signify a real and enduring restoration in the soul's structure. These holy dispositions, implanted by the Spirit at regeneration, form the basis upon which the believer cooperates with grace, grows in virtue, and progressively conforms to Christ's image.[62]

The main divergence between Aquinas and Turretin concerning infused habits lies in two elements. First, a key divergence between Aquinas and Turretin lies in the order of the Spirit's indwelling and the infusion of grace. For Aquinas, the soul must first be ontologically disposed by *gratia creata* in order to receive the Divine Person; habitual grace functions

as a created disposition that renders the soul "fit" for the presence of the uncreated Gift.[63] In other words, the Spirit indwells only where his created effect — habitual grace — has already prepared the soul. Turretin, however, inverts this causal order. Within his covenantal framework, the Spirit himself is the efficient cause of regeneration and the infusion of holy habits: he comes and brings with him that supernatural grace which renews and disposes the soul toward holiness.[64] Thus, whereas Aquinas conceives of habitual grace as *praeparatio ad inhabitationem Spiritus*, Turretin describes it as the immediate effect of the Spirit's indwelling. This difference reflects not a rejection of participation per se, but a deeper divergence in how divine communion is mediated — Aquinas locating it within a metaphysical order of participation through created dispositions, while Turretin grounds it in the Spirit's sovereign and immediate operation within a federal economy of grace.

Second, they differ in their soteriological function.[65] Aquinas argues that justification entails an ontological change in the soul by infusing a divine quality — sanctifying grace. This grace, understood as an infused habit, internally transforms the person and makes him inherently righteous.[66] In other words, the justified soul possesses an inherent righteousness that enables communion with God. This righteousness is not limited to an external declaration. Still, it requires an interior transformation through the infused gift, such that "there is no internal change in the external status of the believer."[67]

Turretin, on the other hand — together with Reformed orthodoxy and theologians like John Owen — firmly denies this.[68] While acknowledging infused habits as gifts of regeneration and sanctification, they play no role in justification.[69] This distinction between imputation and infusion lies at the heart of the Protestant Reformation. Roman Catholics argued that justification occurs by the infusion of a habit of grace specifically at baptism, which "makes the person inherently righteous, on which basis God judges him to be righteous."[70] In contrast, the Reformers and their successors were clear "that justification is a forensic declaration of righteousness based solely upon the imputed righteousness of Christ to sinners."[71] Without this distinction, as Cleveland notes, the believer would be justified based on "something within himself."[72]

Turretin maintains the same emphasis. He says that in justification "The righteousness of Christ alone imputed to us is the foundation and meritorious cause upon which our absolute sentence rests … for no other reason does God bestow the pardon of sin and the right to life."[73] He rejects the Roman position as "a false hypothesis — as if justification consists in an infusion of righteousness," arguing instead that "faith is the instrument … receiving and applying Christ's righteousness," not the ground of justification itself.[74] Although justification and sanctification are inseparably joined, they remain "really distinct."[75] As Turretin concludes, "these two benefits should be distinguished and never confounded … yet they should never be torn asunder."[76]

Summary

In this section, I have attempted to demonstrate that Turretin critically retrieved Aquinas's doctrine of infused habits. Turretin, like Aquinas, emphasizes that grace must ultimately be understood as a divine act of communication — something human beings cannot attain naturally. This emphasis was particularly useful in countering the errors of the Arminian and Socinian systems. However, the theological advance made by authors like Turretin and Owen lies in their insistence that this doctrine must remain within the boundaries of regeneration and sanctification, rejecting any use of these habits as a basis for justification. Understanding the distinction between the forensic imputation of Christ's righteousness and the infused habits that renew the believer's faculties was a way in which Reformed tradition preserved both the primacy of divine grace and the integrity of human transformation.

Habitual Grace in Christ's Human Soul

In the previous section, I showed how Turretin and Aquinas share important points but exhibit significant differences, especially in their anthropology and soteriology. In this section, I will explore how each author develops the doctrine of infused habits as it applies specifically to the person of Christ, paying particular attention to how Turretin appropriates Thomistic theology in a critical way that remains consistent with Reformed theology.

Thomas Aquinas: The Fullness of Habitual Grace in Christ's Humanity

Aquinas's doctrine of habitual grace finds its fullest and most paradigmatic realization in the humanity of Christ. He is, following Legge's explanation, the primary locus of the Spirit's invisible mission of grace within redemptive history.[77] Grounded in the primacy of the Spirit's work in Christ, Aquinas makes his distinction between two kinds of grace in him: (1) the grace of union (*gratia unionis*) — the personal assumption of human nature by the Word — and (2) habitual grace (*gratia habitualis*) — a created, supernatural habit infused into Christ's soul, by which his human faculties are sanctified and perfectly ordered to God.[78]

The grace of union is the gratuitous gift by which the human nature of Christ is personally united to the divine person of the Son — "the union of His soul with the Word of God."[79] This grace is not a habit or quality inhering in the soul, but a singular ontological relation constituted by the hypostatic union, whereby Christ's humanity is taken up into the personal existence of the divine Word while remaining fully human.[80] However, as Aquinas explains, while the grace of union establishes Christ's personal identity as the divine Son, it does not in itself perfect the operations of his human soul. For this, a second and distinct mode of grace is required — habitual grace.[81]

Consequently, in order to be perfected, Christ's soul must also receive "a union of operation … and we call this grace."[82] This union, which perfects the soul for beatific enjoyment, exceeds the capacity of any created nature and elevates Christ's humanity to its fullest perfection.[83] The purpose of this grace, Legge elaborates, is "to empower Christ as man by giving him the habitus that rightly prepares and enables his human nature for the actions that he will undertake,"[84] while at the same time safeguarding the orthodox distinction of Christ's two natures.[85]

This union of operations is intimately connected with the beatific vision in Aquinas. He teaches that Christ's soul, personally united to the Word, was "perfected with a light participated from the divine nature," enabling it to behold God's essence from the very first instant of his conception.[86] By reason of the hypostatic union, Christ enjoys not only the uncreated beatitude of the Word but also, Aquinas insists, "It was necessary that in his human nature there should also be a created beatitude," which establishes his soul in the ultimate end proper to man.[87] This vision, though surpassing

the natural power of reason, remains connatural to the soul as made in the image of God; whereas "the uncreated knowledge is in every way above it."[88]

The immediate vision of God enjoyed by Christ's human soul is possible only because "Christ as man receives the whole Spirit (*totum Spiritum*) and all the Spirit's gifts."[89] According to Aquinas, "the fullness of Christ is the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from him, consubstantial with him in nature, in power and in majesty."[90] In Legge's words, Christ is "truly a man of the Spirit, the Word-made-flesh whose every gesture is anointed by the Spirit's invisible unction," for "as the Word cannot be without the Spirit whom he breathes forth, neither can the Word incarnate act without the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit."[91]

Unlike the rest of human beings, Christ had this grace from the very first instance of his Incarnation (Luke 1:35; John 10:36; 1:14), and his humanity was endowed with "the fullness of grace sanctifying His body and His soul."[92] In Christ, as in no one else (Joel 2:2), was "poured out the whole Spirit (*totum spiritum*)" just as it is written: "for God does not give the Spirit by measure (John 3:34); and the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon him (Isa 11:2)."[93] Such plenitude, unique to the incarnate Son, grounds his role as the head of the Church, from whom the grace of the Spirit flows to all who are united to him, a reality described for Aquinas as *gratia capitis* (grace of headship).

According to Aquinas, Christ is constituted as the head of the Church precisely in virtue of his assumed human nature.[94] It is only because of the fullness of grace that is found in him — habitual grace in its highest degree — that Christ can be "the head of the mystical body," the fountain from which grace flows to all intellectual creatures. In other words, through this grace of headship, Christ exercises the unique capacity to dispense grace "into others for the sake of salvation."[95]

In Aquinas's theology, these two dimensions — the fullness of grace in Christ and how grace is communicated, although distinct, are closely related and deeply interconnected.[96] On the one hand, Christ, as man, possesses the most perfect "source of grace," insofar as his humanity is entirely filled with the Spirit. On the other hand, this grace is not static; it is dispensed to others "through the instrumental actions of his humanity."[97] Thus, Christ's humanity functions both as the vessel that most fully contains the Spirit and as the

instrument by which grace is poured out into the Church; he is "a fount of living water, pouring forth salvation for the whole world."[98]

However, this capital grace, or grace of headship, is not limited to the categories of instrumentality and efficient causality; it also includes the principle of participation, since the body members "must be conformed to their head."[99] For this, the Holy Spirit fulfills two central functions: he guides us to know our Principle — namely, to know Christ by faith — and he conforms us to that same Principle, "giving us a share in Christ's sonship and holiness."[100] As Legge explains:

> The knowledge of the Son given by the Holy Spirit is a sanctifying knowledge that brings us to the Son, conforming us to Christ's humanity (including his suffering, death, and resurrection), thus "transforming" and "assimilating" us to his filial divinity. In short, it belongs to the Holy Spirit to make us like his principle.[101]

Therefore, when we receive the Holy Spirit, we participate in the grace of Christ and are conformed to him in his human nature, which includes his sufferings, his path to Calvary, and his resurrection.[102] All of this is made possible by the work of "the Holy Spirit, who, coming to us through the historical acts of his humanity, conforms us to Christ and gives us a share in his sonship, making us adopted sons and daughters of the Father."[103] In other words, the grace of the Spirit in Christ's soul is "a pattern for our sanctification and glorification, and then, when the Holy Spirit comes to us, he configures us to Christ our exemplar."[104]

Francis Turretin: Christ's Plenitude of the Spirit as the Mediator of the Covenant

Habitual grace is central to Turretin's understanding of Christ's human operations. He, in formal continuity with the scholastic tradition, maintains the classical distinction between *gratia unionis* and *gratia habitualis*:

> The effects of the hypostatical union are twofold: some refer to the human nature of Christ; others to the person subsisting in both natures. To the former are commonly ascribed both the grace of eminence (which is the dignity of human nature above all creatures, arising from the union of the same with the

> divine nature, by which flesh is a property of the Son of God-which can be said of no other creature) and habitual graces (to wit, those remarkable gifts which the divine nature bestowed upon the human, which although the highest and most perfect in their own order, still order of created gifts; yet they were greater than any angels or saints both in the dignity of the subject and in the perfection of parts and of degrees). Hence it is said, "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him." (Jn. 3:34).[105]

Turretin, avoiding any Christological confusion that would compromise the integrity of either nature, distinguishes between the effects upon Christ's human nature and those that pertain to the person of the Son, who subsists in two natures. For this reason, the Genevan Reformer differentiates between two gifts bestowed upon human nature by virtue of the hypostatic union: the grace of eminence — the grace of union — and habitual grace. While the former signifies the unique dignity of Christ's humanity by virtue of its personal union with the second person of the Trinity, the latter corresponds to the infused gifts or habits that perfect the faculties of Christ's soul.[106] As in Aquinas, Turretin clarifies that although these gifts are "the highest and most perfect in their own order," they nonetheless remain created gifts.[107]

Turretin argues that habitual grace consists of "remarkable gifts … bestowed" upon Christ's human nature because Scripture says, "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him."[108] In Christ, habitual grace is full and complete, as Scripture affirms that he was "full of grace and truth" (Jn. 1:14).[109] However, also in line with Aquinas, Turretin recognizes that these gifts are finite and that grace is "a created thing." Therefore, the presence of grace in Christ must be understood relatively: (1) In comparison to others, the grace in Christ is far greater than that bestowed upon angels or human beings. Whereas creatures receive a "fullness of sufficiency" for their salvation, in Christ, there is a "fullness of abundance," which enables him to communicate that grace to others (Jn. 1:16); (2) In terms of degrees, Christ receives all the degrees of grace that a creature can receive according to the law of God. In other words, everything that falls within the "created grace" category is found in him. Consequently, the grace in Christ is not merely a superior version of the grace that other saints receive but is unique in its universality and in the way it dwells in his incarnate divine person.[110]

Turretin adds a distinction in dialogue with scholastic theology: the grace in Christ is both extensive (in the variety of gifts) and intensive (in the degree of perfection). He affirms that the gifts of the Holy Spirit were bestowed upon the humanity of Christ in their highest fullness, both in extension and in intensity, so that they were "permanent and fixed," not as a "transient or perishable movement," but as habits that Christ exercised "as often and in whatever measure he pleased," especially for his role as Mediator of the covenant.[111]

Although it is evident that Turretin is retrieving Thomistic categories to speak of habitual grace in Christ, his argument does not rest on a blind appropriation of tradition, but rather on the revelation of Scripture, which bears witness to the presence of these gifts of the Spirit in Christ.[112] Therefore, Thomistic distinctions, in this sense, are useful only insofar as they remain faithful to Scripture and do not compromise other areas of Reformed Orthodoxy. For this reason, Turretin is willing to engage critically with the medieval scholastic tradition, including Aquinas, either by rejecting problematic elements of Thomism or by retrieving key concepts while reconfiguring them with greater precision within a covenantal ontology.

When treating the habitual grace in Christ's humanity, Turretin maintains that it must be understood in the context of Christ's state of humiliation and mediatorial obedience. Although Christ was sanctified from the moment of his conception by the work of the Holy Spirit—"From this miraculous conception of Christ by the Holy Ghost arises the absolute holiness of Christ and his exemption from all sin, both imputed and inherent"[113]—he did not yet enjoy the fullness of beatitude proper to the glorified state.[114] In contrast to Aquinas, who asserts that Christ received the beatific vision from the very first instant of his conception, Turretin frames habitual grace not as an immediate ontological participation in glory through the beatific vision, but rather as a bestowal of created perfections that equip Christ for his office as Mediator in his condition as *viator* (pilgrim).

Consequently, when Turretin develops his doctrine of Christ's knowledge, he directly opposes the scholastics who attributed three kinds of knowledge to Christ: beatific, infused, and acquired. The Reformed theologian denies the presence of the beatific vision during Christ's earthly life, reserving it for his exalted state. While Christ's soul was perfectly holy and endowed with infused grace, his knowledge was limited during his earthly life. He grew

in wisdom through experience (Luke 2:52).[115] This distinction was key in Turretin's theology because Christ was *viator* and not yet *comprehensor* during his earthly ministry: "he could not at that time enjoy the benefit of an attainer in the most full happiness of human nature."[116]

Summary

In this final section, I have sought to present how Turretin applied the doctrine of infused habits to the person of Christ, arguing that he appropriated Thomistic categories critically and within a Reformed framework. Turretin affirms the presence of habitual grace in Christ's soul yet locates it within a covenantal structure, particularly concerning his mediatorial office in a state of humiliation. This critical retrieval of Thomistic categories allows Turretin to openly reject those elements that lack a clear biblical foundation or conflict with Reformed theology, such as the beatific vision or the notion of innate comprehensive knowledge. In this way, Turretin secures a vision of Christ's habitual grace that is both biblically grounded and dogmatically coherent, fully integrated within an ontology consistent with the federal structure of redemptive history.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that Turretin, as an example of Reformed Orthodoxy, retrieved the ontological and transformative dimensions of the Thomistic doctrine of infused habits. Still, he reinterprets them within a covenantal ontology and a Reformed framework. Turretin, with the Reformed Orthodoxy, holds that these habits must be understood exclusively in regeneration and sanctification, leaving no room for a place in justification. Finally, as has been proved, when this doctrine is applied to the humanity of Christ, Turretin emphasizes that he receives habitual grace as a transformative gift, yet holds no to the beatific vision from the first instant or a perfection in his human knowledge. By contrast, the Genevan Reformer is clear that the ontological elements of the infused habits in Christ are particularly disposed to his role as the Mediator of the Covenant between God and humanity.

1 Throughout this article, the following abbreviations of primary sources will be used: (1) *Summ.* (Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*); (2) *On Truth* (Aquinas, *On the Truth*); (3) *Sent.* (Aquinas, *Commentary on the Sentences*); (4) *Comm. Rom.* (Aquinas, *Commentary on Romans*); (5) *Comm. Eph.* (Aquinas, *Commentary on Ephesians*); (6) *Comm. John* (Aquinas, *Commentary on John*); (7) *Comm. Matt.* (Aquinas, *Commentary on Matthew*); (8) *Inst.* (Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*); (9) *Works* (John Owen, *Works*).

2 For treatise on the complexities of Reformed Orthodoxy, see Richard A Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725,* 2nd edition, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003). The Utrecht School of Reformed Theology has contribution to this subject, see, for example, Willem J. van Asselt et al., *Introduction to Reformed Scholasticism*, Reformed Historical-Theological Studies (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2011); Willem J. van Asselt and Eef Dekker, *Reformation and Scholasticism: An Ecumenical Enterprise*, Texts and Studies in Reformation and Post-Reformation Thought (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001); H. J. Selderhuis, *A Companion to Reformed Orthodoxy*, vol. 40, Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition (Leiden The Netherlands: Brill, 2013).

3 Muller explains that the period of High Orthodoxy (ca. 1640 – 1725) was defined as an era of great theological systematization that greatly advanced Reformed theology's codification. This period was also marked by better integration of tradition into the Reformed system, including contributions from Medieval scholasticism. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, 1:31 – 32. Richard Muller put it in this way in *Ad fontes argumentorum*: "Reformed orthodoxy was, after all, a living movement reflective of its own contexts and not merely a carbon copy of the thought of the Reformers: but what we can declare, with some confidence, is that the developing tradition of Reformed theology in the seventeenth century paid close attention to its roots in the Reformation and was concerned as it encountered new adversaries and new problems." Richard A. Muller, *After Calvin: Studies in the Development of a Theological Tradition*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 53.

4 Several works have been done in the field of infused habits in Reformed Theology, but these two have been particularly important for my understanding of Turretin's theology. Colin Robert McCulloch, "Sanctified by the Spirit: Applying John Owen's Concept of Spirit-Infused Habitual Grace to Divergent Models of Sanctification within the Biblical Counseling Movement" (SBTS, 2022), https://hdl.handle.net/10392/6758; Christopher Cleveland, *Thomism in John Owen* (Ashgate, 2013).

5 J. V. Fesko, "Aquinas's Doctrine of Justification and Infused Habits in Reformed Soteriology," in *Aquinas Among the Protestants* (John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2017).

6 Aquinas, *Summ.* I. Q38. For a more extended treatment on the idea of the Holy Spirit as properly Gift, see Emery, *The Trinitarian Theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 249 – 258.

7 Emery explains that the Holy Spirit is Gift from all eternity but is given in time to creatures. In this sense, Aquinas argues that it is fitting for the Holy Spirit to be given to creatures, since he is properly Gift in relation to the other persons of the Trinity eternally. Emery, *The Trinitarian Theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 249.

8 Emery, *The Trinitarian Theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas*.

9 Aquinas, *Comm. John*. C4, L2, no. 577.

10 According to the Dominican master, "The word 'gift' imports an aptitude for being given...Thus, a divine person can 'be given,' and can be a 'gift.'" Aquinas, *Summ*, I. Q38, a.1.

11 Emery, *The Trinitarian Theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 253.

12 Aquinas, *Sent.* II. D26. Q1. a.1.

13 Aquinas, *Summ*. I – II. Q112, a. 1.

14 Aquinas, *Comm. Rom*. C5. L1, no 392; Gilles Emery, "The Holy Spirit in Aquinas's Commentary on Romans," in *Reading Romans with St. Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Matthew Levering and Michael Dauphinais (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2012), 151;

15 Emery, "The Holy Spirit in Aquinas's Commentary on Romans," 151.

16 Emery, "The Holy Spirit in Aquinas's Commentary on Romans," 151. For Aquinas, "The holy Spirit assimilates to himself the human beings to whom he is given. To receive the charity by which God loves us is thus to participate in the personal property of the holy Spirit, that is to say, to participate in the person of the holy Spirit (just as becoming 'sons of God' is to participate in the personal property of the Son). By such participation in the holy Spirit, human beings 'are made lovers of God.'" Emery, "The Holy Spirit in Aquinas's Commentary on Romans," 151.

17 Turretin, *Inst*. 2:1. 10. IV.

18 Turretin, *Inst*. 2:12. 1. I.

19 As I mentioned earlier, J. V. Fesko argues that within Reformed theology there is an ontological component that explains the mystery of union with Christ and renewal by the Spirit, which infused habits help to clarify. For this reason, Fesko refers to this concept as covenantal ontology. J. V. Fesko, "Aquinas's Doctrine of Justification and Infused Habits in Reformed Soteriology," 261.

20 When Turretin explains the nature of this covenant, he explicitly identifies it as a covenant of "works" because it "depended upon works or his proper obedience." *Inst.* 1:8. 3. V.

21 Turretin, *Inst.* 1:8. 3. V. According to Turretin, this covenant is called natural, legal, and of works because it is founded upon the nature of man, who possesses a law engraved within him and depends upon his works to fulfill it.

22 Mark J. Beach, *Christ and the Covenant: Francis Turretin's Federal Theology as a Defense of the Doctrine of Grace*, Reformed Historical Theology, v. 1 (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), 78. For an extensive treatment on the subject, see 78–147. For historical research on the reception of the Federal theology of Turretin, see 19–64.

23 Turretin, *Inst.* 1:8. 3. I. God could have, as Turretin notes, "prescribed obedience to man (created by him) without any promise of reward." Nevertheless, to demonstrate his supreme goodness, "he (himself in need of nothing) willed to invite [humans] to a nearer communion with him." (Turretin, vol. 1. T8, Q3, II). Mark Beach comments on this, saying that the covenant is a concept "to which God accommodates himself, infinitely condescending to establish a relationship with humans, inclusive of promise of blessings and stipulate conditions." Beach, *Christ and the Covenant*, 89.

24 Turretin, *Inst.* 2:12. 2. IV; emphasis mine.

25 Turretin emphasizes that, unlike human covenants, the covenant of grace is unilateral: God fulfills both His part and ours, providing the blessings, duties, and conditions — all by upon "the mere grace of God and upon no disposition and merit of man." Turretin, *Inst.* 2:12. 1. III. Although this covenant involves two parties — God and humanity — and even requires "a mediator to reconcile the discordant parties", Turretin underscores that its fulfillment is unilateral: God himself undertakes to accomplish both sides of the agreement. This is what distinguishes the covenant of grace from all human covenants. As Turretin explains: "God performs here not only his own part, but also ours … Hence not only God's blessings fall under the promise, but also man's duty; not only the end, but also the means and conditions leading us to it." Turretin, *Inst.* 2:12. 1. XI. In this way, all the obligations of the covenant — including those that belong to us — are carried out by God himself.

26 Turretin, *Inst.* 1:3. 27. XX.

27 Turretin, *Inst.* 2:12. 2. VI.

28 Turretin, *Inst.* 2:12. 2. XI.

29 Turretin, *Inst.* 1:3. 27. III.

30 Turretin, *Inst.* 1:3. 31. III.

31 Turretin, *Inst.* 1:3. 31. III.

32 Turretin, *Inst.* 1:3. 29. XXX; 1:3. 31. III.

33 Cleveland, *Thomism in John Owen*, 77.

34 Aquinas, *Summ.* I–II. Q51, a. 1; Q63, a. 3.

35 Aquinas, *Summ.* I–II. Q63, a. 3.

36 Aquinas, *Summ.* I–II, Q112, a. 1.

37 Lawrence Feingold clarifies this distinction by pointing to *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 62, a. 1, where Aquinas distinguishes between two kinds of beatitude: one proportionate to human nature, and another that transcends it. While the former is possible in principle, Aquinas insists that man is actually ordered to the latter in the current economy of salvation: "Reason, on the other hand, directs us to the common and natural end of acquired wisdom whose act is contemplation … but since the supernatural is given, the natural is ordered to the supernatural." Lawrence Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God According to St. Thomas Aquinas and His Interpreters*, 2nd ed, Faith & Reason (Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University, 2010), 232, 236–239.

38 Aquinas, *Summ.* I-II. Q110, a. 1.

39 Aquinas distinguishes between habitual grace and the infused habits that are derived from it. Habitual grace is a supernatural quality infused into the very essence of the soul, serving as the formal principle that elevates human nature toward participation in the divine nature. It is "a certain participation in the divine nature," configuring the soul to God in a permanent and stable way. *Summ.* I–II. Q112, a. 1; Q110, a. 1. From this ontological root flow, the infused virtues — such as faith, hope, and charity — which reside not in the essence of the soul but in its powers, particularly the intellect and the will. Aquinas explains that "the essence of the soul is the subject of grace," while "the powers of the soul are the subjects of the virtues."

These infused habits are not accidental additions but stable dispositions that enable the soul to perform meritorious and supernatural acts, corresponding to its elevated participation in God. Charity, for example, is the form of all the virtues and presupposes the presence of habitual grace as its ontological ground. Thus, while habitual grace pertains to the being of the soul, infused habits pertain to its operation, maintaining a metaphysical hierarchy that reflects Aquinas's theology of participation and the integral coordination of nature and grace. Aquinas, *Summ*. I–II. Q63, a. 1; Q110, a. 4; Q23, a. 8

40 Aquinas, *Summ*. I–II. Q109, a.9. Garrigou-Lagrange comments that in justification, habitual grace renews the soul, removes sin, and makes the believer a partaker of the divine nature. *Grace*, 112.

41 Aquinas, *Summ*. I–II. Q109, a. 8. Bernard Lonergan asserts that Aquinas has a pessimistic view of the natural state of human beings, so that, without God's intervention, human beings will always "do what is wrong." Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St Thomas Aquinas*, ed. J. Patout Burns (Darton, Longman and Todd; Herder and Herder, 1941), 41.

42 Garrigou-Lagrange, *Grace*, 22; Aquinas, *Summ*. I–II. Q110, a.2. Feingold explains that grace is thus not a remedy for a defect, but the supernatural elevation of a nature that remains intact. This harmony between nature and grace underlies Aquinas's affirmation that the beatific end is not contrary to nature, but surpasses its proportion and must be received as a gift. Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God According to St. Thomas Aquinas and His Interpreters*, 239–240.

43 Aquinas, *Summ*. I. Q43, a. 3.

44 Emery, *The Trinitarian Theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 372–373.

45 Emery, *The Trinitarian Theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 253. Through this transformation, the soul is not only made pleasing to God but also disposed for the final vision of God (*visio beatifica*), what is only possible because of the fullness of grace. As Garrigou-Lagrange explains, "The end of sanctifying grace is also something real and physical, that is, the beatific vision. Therefore sanctifying grace itself, as a participation in the divine nature, is something real and physical, not something merely moral as an imitation of the divine ways," *Grace*, 131.

46 Emery, *The Trinitarian Theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 253.

47 Maarten Wisse, "Habitus Fidei: An Essay on the History of a Concept," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 56 (2), 175–76.

48 J. V. Fesko, "Aquinas's Doctrine of Justification and Infused Habits in Reformed Soteriology," 253.

49 J. V. Fesko, "Aquinas's Doctrine of Justification and Infused Habits in Reformed Soteriology," 263.

50 Turretin, *Inst*. 1:5. 9. V.

51 Turretin, *Inst*. 1:5. 1. V; cf. Aquinas, *Summ*. I-II, Q109, a. 2; I. Q95, a. 1.

52 Turretin, *Inst*. 1:5. 9. VI. Humanity — created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26), morally good and upright (Eccl. 7:29) — consisted essentially in original righteousness. John Owen, in a similar way, says that "the image of God in man consists naturally of a body and soul composed of innate faculties and supernaturally of an infused habit of grace to make him upright." McCulloch, "Sanctified by the Spirit," 126.

53 Turretin, *Inst*. 1:5. 9. V.

54 While Turretin rejects this aspect of Thomistic theology, he has no difficulty appropriating Aristotelian-scholastic categories in his account of the soul. He distinguishes between the soul's substantial essence, its formal faculties (intellect and will), and the accidental gifts that perfect these faculties. As Leslie explains, "Turretin is typical amongst Reformed scholastics in defining the imago both in terms of the soul's natural essence and formal powers — whether its intellectual and volitional faculties, or its spiritual and intrinsically corruptible, immortal essence — and its concreated, accidental gifts, chiefly, its original righteousness. The Reformed scholastics saw no difficulty in following the Aristotelian paradigm of distinguishing the soul's essence, powers, and the various qualities and habits which were accidental to the soul's natural state. Echoing traditional scholasticism, then, they could in a restricted sense call these accidental qualities 'gifts' or 'graces' added to nature rather than flowing from it, provided they were held to have been naturally concreated with that essence," Andrew M. Leslie, "The Light of Grace: John Owen on the Authority of Scripture and Christian Faith" (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 165.

55 Turretin, *Inst*. 1:5. 10. XVI.

56 Turretin, *Inst*. 2:15. 4. XXIII. McCulloch, in his analysis of habitual grace in Owen, says "Sin caused the gracious habit to be lost, but the natural constitution remained, though it was corrupted by sin. Thus, Owen spoke of a relic of the image remaining after the fall, likely referring to the natural faculties of the soul which remain. However, his emphasis in discussing the image of God was on the gracious habit which was lost. As Leslie notes, this is likely due to Owen's overall emphasis on the restoration of the image in Christ." McCulloch, "Sanctified by the Spirit," 127

57 Turretin, *Inst*. 2:15. 4. XIII. For a similar distinction see, Michael Allen, *Sanctification*, ed. Scott R. Swain and Michael Allen, New Studies in Dogmatics (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017)

58 Turretin, *Inst*. 2:15. 4. XIII.

59 Turretin, *Inst*. 2:15. 4. XIII.

60 Turretin, *Inst*. 2:15. 4. XIII.

61 Turretin, *Inst*. 2:15. 4. XIII; emphasis mine. XIII. John Owen proposes something similar, see McCulloch, "Sanctified by the Spirit," 123, 130. As Cleveland rightly observes in the case of Owen, this view proved instrumental in countering both Arminian and Socinian objections, for it upheld the priority of divine grace while preserving the moral integrity of the believer's cooperation in sanctification. Cleveland, *Thomism in John Owen*, 82.

62 Turretin elaborates on this, saying that sanctification as "a change and renovation of the nature itself (corrupted by original sin) by which depraved qualities and habits are cast out and good ones infused so that the man desists from evil acts and strives for good." Turretin, *Inst*. 2:17. 1. IV. John Owen's theology provides a helpful Reformed parallel to Turretin's account. Owen likewise speaks of sanctification as: "An immediate work of the Spirit of God on the souls of believers, purifying and cleansing of their natures from the pollution and uncleanness of sin, renewing in them the image of God, and thereby enabling them, from a spiritual and habitual principle of grace, to yield obedience unto God, according unto the tenor and terms of the new covenant, by virtue of the life and death of Jesus Christ." Owen, *Works*, 3:386. Owen's language of "habitual principle" underscores the same point: sanctification is not the result of human effort alone, but of a permanent supernatural disposition infused by God. As McCulloch notes, Owen emphasizes that sanctification "is a work whereby the Spirit progressively makes a man habitually holy in the whole frame of his soul, renewing the image of God in him." McCulloch, "Sanctified by the Spirit," 132.

63 Aquinas, *Summ*. Q110, a. 1; cf. Emery, *The Trinitarian Theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 253.

64 Turretin, *Inst*. 2:15. 4. XIII.

65 Cleveland, *Thomism in John Owen*, 116–17.

66 Aquinas, *Summ*. I-II. Q113, a. 2. Cleveland summarizes, Aquinas position arguing that for him, "justification only occurs through the infusion of a habit of grace, a divine quality, into the soul … it is by this infused quality that man obtains peace with God." Cleveland, *Thomism in John Owen*, 119.

67 Cleveland, *Thomism in John Owen*, 118–119.

68 Owen directly critics Aquinas in this topic: "It is, therefore, to no purpose to handle the mysteries of the gospel as if Hilcot and Bricot, *Thomas* and Gabriel, with all the Sententiarists, Summists, and Quodlibetarians of the old Roman peripatetical school, were to be raked out of their graves to be our guides. Especially will they be of no use unto us in this doctrine of justification. For whereas they pertinaciously adhered unto the philosophy of Aristotle, who knew nothing of any righteousness but what is a habit inherent in ourselves, and the acts of it, they wrested the whole doctrine of justification unto a compliance wherewithal." Owen, *Works,* 5:12.

69 Cleveland, *Thomism in John Owen*, 116–17.

70 McCulloch, "Sanctified by the Spirit," 123.

71 McCulloch, "Sanctified by the Spirit," 130. The Westminster Larger Catechism in the Question 77 reflects this precision: "Although sanctification be inseparably joined with justification, yet they differ, in that God in justification *imputeth the righteousness of Christ*; in sanctification his Spirit *infuseth grace*, and *enableth* to the exercise thereof; in the former sin is pardoned; in the other, it is subdued; the one doth equally free all believers from the revenging wrath of God, and that perfectly in this life, that they never fall into condemnation; the other is neither equal in all, nor in this life perfect in any, but growing up to perfection." Westminster Assembly, The Westminster Confession: The Confession of Faith, The Larger and Shorter Catechisms, The Directory for the Public Worship of God, with Associated Historical Documents (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2018), 241.

72 Cleveland, *Thomism in John Owen*, 118.

73 Turretin, *Inst*. 2:16. 2. VI.

74 Turretin, *Inst*. 2:16. 7. IV-V.

75 Turretin, *Inst*. 2:17. 1. IX.

76 Turretin, *Inst*. 2:17. 1. XV.

77 Dominic Legge, *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford University Press, 2017), 132.

78 Legge, *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas*, 134. As Aquinas put it: "two kinds of fullness are understood to exist in Christ: one is of the divinity according to which Christ is the full God, another is of grace according to which he is called full of grace and truth (John 1:14), and the Apostle speaks about this fullness in Colossians 1:18; but of the first in Colossians 2:9. However, this second is derived from the first and the grace of the head is completed through it." Aquinas, *On Truth*. Q29, a. 5.

79 Aquinas, Summ. III. Q7, a. 1.

80 According to Aquinas, "The union of the human nature with the Divine Person … is the grace of union." *Summa*. III. Q7, a. 1; see also *Comm. John*. C3, L6, no. 544; Legge, *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas*, 134. For this reason, the grace of union is not acquired or merited without any prior merits, but it makes Christ the natural Son of God, not by participation, but by nature. Aquinas, *On Truth*. Q29, a. 2; See also *Comm. John*. C3, L6, no. 544; *Summ*. III. Q23, a. 4.
Aquinas frames the relationship between the grace of union and habitual grace in terms of the order of the Trinitarian missions. The mission of the Son is prior, in the order of nature, to the invisible mission of the Holy Spirit, just as in God the Spirit proceeds from the Son and love from wisdom. *Summ*. III. Q7, a. 13; Consequently, the grace of union is presupposed by habitual grace: "The presence of God in Christ is by the union of human nature with the Divine Person. Hence, the habitual grace of Christ is understood to follow this union, as light follows the sun." *Summ*. III. Q7, a. 13. See also Aquinas, *On Truth*. Q29, a. 3.

81 Aquinas explicitly affirms the necessity of habitual grace in Christ because his human soul still requires a created habit disposing of it to know and love God. The hypostatic union alone, he insists, is not sufficient for beatitude because "even God himself would be blessed if he did not know and love himself; for he would not take delight in himself, which is required for beatitude." Aquinas, *On Truth*. Q29, a. 1.

82 Aquinas, *On Truth*. Q29, a. 1; See also *Comm. John*. C17. L4, no. 2231. As Legge clarifies, like any rational creature, the soul of Christ requires habitual grace, needed to be "elevated as a human … according to the way in which such a nature can participate in the divine life." For this, "Christ's humanity is drawn into the personal mode of existing of the divine Word while remaining fully and properly human." Legge, *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas*, 134 – 135

83 As Legge describes, this grace is "a really and formally distinct gift that is proportioned to his humanity, elevating it and divinizing it by participation." Legge, *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas*, 135

84 Legge, *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas*, 132.

85 Aquinas explains that the orthodoxy of Chalcedon requires that Christ have habitual grace as man so as not to mix or conflate the divine and the human nature. *Summ*. III. Q7, a. 1; Emery, The Trinitarian Theology, 253.

86 Aquinas, *Summ*. III. Q7, a.3.

87 Aquinas, *Summ*. III. Q9, a. 2. Commenting on this, Legge asserts this should not be understood as a function of the hypostatic union itself, but rather of the fullness of created grace infused into his soul as its formal principle. For a deeper treatise on the beatific vision in Christ's humanity, see Legge, *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas*, 173 – 178.

88 Aquinas, *Summ*. III, Q9, a.2.

89 Legge, *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas*, 173, 175.

90 Aquinas, *Comm. John*. C1. L10, no. 202.

91 Legge, *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aqui*nas, 134. Further, Legge explains, "Just as the Word is eternally the Word who breathes forth Love, so the Word in Christ's humanity breathes forth Love to that humanity, namely, the Holy Spirit himself with habitual grace and the gift of charity." 152.

92 Aquinas, *Summ*. III. Q34, a. 1. Legge argues that this grace in Christ is different from that of the rest of humanity not only because Christ possesses from the very first moment of his Incarnation the full plenitude of the Holy Spirit, receiving all created gift of grace uniquely and habitually, but also because he offers two additional reasons that are key to understanding Christ's salvific mission as the head of the Church. First, this plenitude gives him a kind of dominion over the gifts, allowing him to use them freely at all times, unlike the prophets or saints who receive them only at specific moments. Second, his grace is so perfect that it becomes the source from which all others receive both grace and the Holy Spirit. Legge, *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas*, 162 – 163.

93 Aquinas, *Comm. Matt*. C12, a.1, no. 1000.

94 Aquinas, *On Truth*, Q29, a. 4. Aquinas teaches that Christ's humanity, as the instrument leading humanity to the beatific vision, possesses that vision perfectly and eminently: "It was necessary that the vision of God should belong to Christ in an eminent way, for the cause must be more perfect than its effect." *Summ*. III. Q9, a.2.

95 Aquinas, Comm. John. C1. L10, no. 201–202; *On Truth*. Q29, a. 4.

96 Legge, *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas*, 219.

97 Legge, *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas*, 221.

98 Legge, *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas*, 221; see Aquinas, *Comm. John*. C4. L1, no. 561. Aquinas says: "The grace of Christ, which is called capital grace [. . .] is sufficient not merely for the salvation of some men, but for all the people of the entire world." See also *Comm. John*. C3. L6, no. 544.

99 Aquinas. *Summ*. III. Q49, a. 3.

100 Legge, *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas*, 224. Aquinas holds that the knowledge and love imparted by the Holy Spirit draw believers into "participation in the very inner life of the Trinity," such that creation and salvation follow, and are consummated according to the pattern of the eternal processions of the Son and the Spirit. Legge, *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas*, 228–229.

101 Legge, *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas*, 227; cf. Aquinas, *Comm. John*. C16. L3, no. 2102

102 Legge, *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas*, 222; It is important to clarify that this participation is not identical to Christ's own but consists only in a "portion of his fullness; and this is according to the measure which God grants to each. Grace has been given to each of us according to the degree to which Christ gives it (Eph 4:7)." Aquinas, *Comm. John*. C1. L10, no. 202.

103 Legge, *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas*, 222; cf. Aquinas, *Summ*. III. Q49, a. 3.

104 Legge, *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas*, 226.

105 Turretin, *Inst*. 2:13. 8. I.

106 By "dignity" or "ontological elevation," I do not mean a change in the essence or properties of Christ's human nature, but rather the unique honor and excellence that arise from its assumption into the person of the Son. The hypostatic union confers upon Christ's humanity a singular status and relational dignity — belonging personally to the divine Son — without altering its created nature or essence.

107 Turretin, *Inst*. 2:13. 8. II.

108 Turretin, *Inst*. 2:13. 8. I.

109 Turretin, *Inst*. 2:13. 12. II. Although Turretin is not explicit regarding how habitual grace was present in Christ from the moment of his conception, this passage seems to suggest that the habitual grace from the Spirit was granted from the very first instant of Christ's conception, as a result of his miraculous generation by the Holy Spirit. As he states: "From this miraculous conception of Christ by the Holy Ghost arises the absolute holiness of Christ and his exemption from all sin, both imputed and inherent." *Inst*. 2:13. 11. XV.

110 Turretin, *Inst*. 2:13. 12. III.

111 Turretin, *Inst*. 2:13. 12. IV. Following Isaiah 11:2, he identifies the principal gifts as wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, and the fear of the Lord, and critiques the scholastic addition of "piety" from the Vulgate as unnecessary. This fullness was not merely symbolic, but "a true and real communication" of the Spirit, whose presence in Christ is continuous and functional to His office as Mediator of the covenant.

112 Turretin, *Inst*. 2:13. 12. II.

113 Turretin, *Inst*. 2:13. 11. XV.

114 As Turretin writes, "Although the soul of Christ even from the beginning rejoiced in happiness . . . still he had not as yet its fulness . . . he should at length obtain it after his resurrection." Turretin, *Inst*. 2:13. 12. VIII.

115 Turretin argues that Christ has two kinds of knowledge: infused, received "by the grace of the Holy Spirit sanctifying his gifts (Isa 11:1–2)," and acquired, namely, "the actual knowledge which Christ gained both by ratiocination . . . and by his own experience" (cf. Heb. 4:15; 5:8). Turretin, *Inst*. 2:13. 13. VIII.

116 Turretin, *Inst*. 2:13. 13. VII.

"The Promise of Her Victorious Seed": Andrew Fuller's Exposition of Genesis 3

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Ideas have consequences. While this is true in virtually every realm, it is especially true in the sphere of biblical interpretation. To understand the story of the Bible, one has to start where every good story starts: in the beginning. The Book of Genesis sets the trajectory for the overall metanarrative of Scripture. How one interprets the beginning of the story, then, has massive ramifications for his understanding of God, Christ, sin, and redemption. More specifically, the dramatic scenes that unfold in Genesis 3 have more far-reaching implications for one's theology than perhaps any other single chapter in Scripture.

The world in which the Baptist pastor-theologian Andrew Fuller (1754–1815) inhabited during the latter end of the long-eighteenth century was one of dramatic change. From revolutions in America and France to revolutions in industry and science, the world was advancing rapidly. Such was the case in the world of biblical interpretation as well, with the rise of historical criticism.

Nearly two millennia of largely unchallenged exegesis concerning mankind's origins as described in Genesis 1 – 3 came under scrutiny, leading many to dismiss the literal interpretation of the Bible's first chapters as the fanciful machinations of the uneducated.[1] Inevitably, this dismissal led to questions about the deity of Christ and whether or not humans were sinners in need of atonement.

In the midst of these dramatic times, Fuller preached a series of sermons through Genesis at Kettering Baptist Church, which were later adapted and published as a commentary. While his apologetic and polemical works have received much attention, his exegetical works have received relatively little.[2] However, if one's exegesis of Genesis 3 is as consequential as has been claimed, then exploring Fuller's interpretation of this crucial chapter is essential for understanding the theological system of the man Charles Spurgeon referred to as "the greatest theologian of the century."[3] Thus, this article will explore the historical background of Fuller's discourses, analyze his exposition of Genesis 3, keeping in mind his hermeneutical presuppositions, and summarize his theology of the fall, Christ, and the atonement.

Historical Background of Fuller's Genesis Expositions[4]

Fuller is remembered primarily for his definitive response to High-Calvinism in his work The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation (1785), as well as the role he played in the founding of the Baptist Missionary Society. However, from October 7, 1783, until his death on May 7, 1815, Fuller's main responsibility consisted in pastoring the Baptist Church at Kettering. As a recently discovered document in the special archives of what is now Fuller Baptist Church reveals, Fuller committed himself to consecutive expository preaching from at least 1795 until his ill-health prevented him from his pulpit ministry in early 1815. John Satchell, a deacon at Kettering Baptist, recorded in a brief document entitled "Recollections on the Ministry of Mr. F" that Fuller preached through Isaiah, Joel, Amos, Hosea, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, and Job from 1795 – 1802.[5] Beginning on October 10, 1802, Fuller began preaching through Genesis, and he concluded his series of discourses nearly two years later on August 12, 1804.[6] Fuller would go on to edit these 58 discourses and publish them in 1806 as Expository

Discourses on the Book of Genesis, Interspersed with Practical Reflections.[7] As he reflected in his dedication to his church family on October 29, 1805,

> You will consider these discourses as the result of having once gone over that part of the Scriptures to which they relate. Were we to go over it again and again, such is the fulness of God's word that we should still find interesting and important matter which had never occurred in reading it before; and this should encourage us not to rest in any exposition, but to be constantly perusing the Scriptures themselves, and digging at the precious ore.

The first edition of *EDBG* was printed as two octavo volumes by Fuller's friend and fellow-Baptist pastor, John Webster Morris (1763–1836),[8] and sold for ten shillings.[9] *EDBG* was met with a warm reception by most, though several reviewers offered more critical comments, especially regarding Fuller's lack of formal education.[10] Nevertheless, even Morris, whose biography of Fuller is more critical than that of Fuller's friend, John Ryland Jr. (1753–1825), noted, "… but of all Mr. Fuller's writings, none have a higher claim to general regard, for their utility and practical importance, than his volumes on the Book of Genesis."[11] Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834–92) himself described Fuller's work in his *Commenting and Commentaries* (1876) as, "Weighty, judicious, and full of Gospel truth. One of the very best series of discourses extant upon Genesis, as Bush also thought."[12] Thirteen editions of *EDBG* have been published thus far, testifying to its enduring usefulness to those seeking a greater understanding of the text, while avoiding more technical issues.[13] While he does deal with some technical, grammatical, and theological issues throughout the work, Fuller spends the bulk of his energy seeking to establish and apply the plain meaning of the text, which is expected of a commentary that began as a sermon series. Nevertheless, understanding something of Fuller's hermeneutical method is imperative for unpacking his exegesis of the text.

Fuller's Presuppositions and Hermeneutical Method

The Age of Enlightenment was one in which, at the very least, people began to conceive of life without God (or at least a conscious awareness of him). While by no means mainstream in Great Britain, biblical criticism's

influence was on the rise during the latter half of the long-eighteenth century. More specifically, Deism's dismissal of the supernatural, and thus, the inspiration and trustworthiness of Scripture, proved a greater hermeneutical problem in England than biblical criticism, which was ruling the day on the Continent.[14] Though Fuller ministered in a largely pre-critical era of the late-eighteenth/early-nineteenth centuries, the culture as a whole, and biblical commentators in particular, were beginning to entertain ideas about the historicity and meaning of the text in a way unique to interpretive history.[15]

Unsurprisingly, Fuller stood in line with his Reformation and Puritan forbearers regarding the Bible's inspiration and infallibility, referring to Scripture in his personal confession of faith as "a perfect rule of faith and practice." He further adds, "When I acknowledge it as a perfect rule of faith and practice, I mean to disclaim all other rules, as binding on my conscience; and as well to acknowledge, that if I err, either in faith or practice, from this rule, it will be my crime; for I have ever considered all deviations from divine rules to be criminal."[16] His insistence that the Bible was divinely inspired and authoritative, and that all of its parts served in some shape or form to point to Christ, placed him squarely within the tradition of late orthodoxy.[17] As Yoo notes,

> … even during a time when the dominant trends in hermeneutics were shifting toward modern critical approaches, Fuller's Genesis commentary represents a faithful continuation of the pre-critical Reformed exegetical heritage, adapted to the challenges and needs of his era. It embodies a rich expression of Reformed hermeneutics — deeply biblical, pastorally focused, and theologically robust. His work affirms foundational doctrines of the Reformed tradition such as the fall, original sin, and justification by faith, and, grounded in these doctrines, interprets the text itself from a Christ-centered perspective within a redemptive-historical framework.[18]

As such, Fuller interpreted Genesis according to the grammatical-historical method. His use of typology, especially apparent in the Joseph narrative, reveals a more Christotelic than Christocentric view of the canon, avoiding the overreach of allegory, while affirming Christ as the end of the narrative's figures and symbols, or as Wellum puts it, "The entire plan of God moves to its conclusion in Christ."[19] The reviewer

of Fuller's discourses in *The Evangelical Magazine* noted his adherence to typology as a hermeneutical principle: "He generally confines himself to the literal meaning; and is afraid of venturing into the maze of Allegory farther than he has the sacred *thread* for a cue. Yet he does not reject the doctrine of types." The reviewer goes on to point out Fuller's handling of both Melchizedek and Joseph as examples.[20] As Fuller himself put it in a sermon on 2 Corinthians 4:5,

> We preach 'Christ Jesus the Lord.' This is the grand theme of the Christian ministry. But many have so little of the Christian minister about them, that their sermons have scarcely any thing to do with Christ. They are mere moral harangues. And these, forsooth, would fain be thought exclusively the friends of morality and good works! But they know not what good works are, nor do they go the way to promote them. 'This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.'… Preach Christ, or you had better be any thing than a preacher. The necessity laid on Paul was not barely to preach, but to preach Christ. 'Woe unto me if I preach not the gospel!'… Some are employed in depreciating Christ. But do you honour him. Some who talk much about him, yet do not preach him, and by their habitual deportment prove themselves enemies to his cross.… If you preach Christ, you need not fear for want of matter. His person and work are rich in fulness. Every Divine attribute is seen in him. All the types prefigure him. The prophecies point to him. Every truth bears relation to him. The law itself must be so explained and enforced as to lead to him.…[21]

It is true that Fuller did not receive a formal education beyond grammar school.[22] He nevertheless labored diligently to study the Scriptures, even attempting to learn the original languages. He did so with the help of his friend John Ryland Jr. Several of Fuller's extant documents reveal his ongoing attempts to learn the Hebrew alphabet, grammar, and vocabulary. In fact, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary archives contain Fuller's unpublished manuscript entitled *Thoughts on the Power of Men to Do the Will of God* (1777), which served as an early edition of his *Gospel Worthy*. On the back of several pages (given the lack of readily available paper), Fuller later recorded notes on Hebrew grammar, syntax, and pronunciation. It appears that he even attempts his own translation of Genesis 1:1–6 on the back of

page three. He dates the attempted translation to July 10, 1803, during the time in which he preached through Genesis at Kettering Baptist Church.[23] While this by no means proves that Fuller was proficient with the biblical languages, it does reveal a determination to handle the Scriptures with care.

Regardless of which text he preached, Fuller's regular method was to move from interpretation to doctrinal reflection, and finally, to application. Yoo refers to this as Fuller's "tripartite method" of exposition.[24] In particular, his doctrinal reflections evidence a strong link with the Reformed tradition, which attempted to work out the implications of exegesis for the sake of piety via systematic theology.[25] As a pastor, Fuller was concerned for the spiritual wellbeing of his congregation, whom he deeply loved.[26] Indeed, he knew that to rightly divide the Word of truth, he himself needed to be "spiritually minded."[27] He longed to see Christ formed in them, which he knew would inevitably come from a deeper acquaintance with Scripture for the sake of communion with and obedience to God. Thus, his Genesis commentary evidences a pastoral tone and an emphasis on the implications of the text's meaning for life and godliness. Understanding Fuller's presuppositions, hermeneutical method, and pastoral motivation is key, then to fully appreciate his exposition of Genesis 3.

Fuller's Exposition of Genesis 3

Following the dedication of his commentary to his church family, Fuller proceeds with his exposition of the text. He begins by interpreting Genesis 1:1–4 in a discourse entitled, "On the Book in General and the First Day's Creation." In doing so, Fuller makes two points that are important for understanding his exposition of Genesis 3. First, Fuller assumes Mosaic authorship.[28] Second, he grounds the creation of the world, and of mankind in particular, in the existence of the triune God.[29]

In his second discourse, "On the Five Last Day's Creation," Fuller continues explaining the text with an emphasis on a literal, twenty-four-hour day view of creation, culminating in the creation of man and woman. Regarding the creation of Adam and Eve in the image of God, Fuller states, "The image of God is partly natural, and partly moral; and man was made after both. The former consisted in reason, by which he was fitted for

dominion over the creatures; the latter in righteousness and true holiness, by which he was fitted for communion with his Creator."[30] This is a crucial point both for his exposition of Genesis, as well as for his contributions to the Modern Question debate of the eighteenth century.[31]

In his third discourse, "Creation Reviewed," Fuller expounds Genesis 2 and rounds out this discussion of the creation of man and woman, while also making a Sabbatarian argument concerning the seventh day of creation (consistent with most Particular Baptists),[32] connecting it with a postmillennial view of the end of the world.[33] Most importantly for the sake of the current study, Fuller comments at length about God's prohibition concerning eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He concludes,

> There is every reason to believe that if man had obeyed his Creator's will, he would of his own boundless goodness have crowned him with everlasting bliss. It is his delight to impart his own infinite blessedness as the reward of righteousness; if Adam, therefore, had abode in the truth, he and all his posterity would have enjoyed what was symbolically promised him by the tree of life. Nor is there any reason to suppose but that it would have been the same for substance as that which believers now enjoy through a Mediator, for the Scriptures speak of that which the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, that is, through the corruption of human nature, as being accomplished by Christ.[34]

Consistent with the Reformed tradition, Fuller argued that Adam and Eve were created in innocence, enjoying unimpeded communion with God. If they trusted in their Creator and his faithful provision for them, adhering to the covenant of works,[35] they would have continued enjoying their relationship with God until they were transferred into the eternal state of blessedness. Understanding the state of mankind both before and after the fall, then, is of upmost importance for man's knowledge of himself and his Creator. As John Calvin (1509 – 1564) stated, "… we cannot have a clear and complete knowledge of God unless it is accompanied by a corresponding knowledge of ourselves. This knowledge of ourselves is twofold: namely, to know what we were like when we were first created and what our condition became after the fall of Adam."[36]

With an overview of Fuller's exposition of Genesis 1 – 2 complete, we can now begin exploring his interpretation of chapter three. Whereas Fuller only dedicated three discourses to his exposition of the first two chapters, he spends three discourses covering the third chapter alone. What follows, then, is both a summary and an analysis of Fuller's exegesis of Genesis 3, using Fuller's discourses as the section breaks.

"Discourse 4: The Fall of Man (Gen 3:1 – 7)"

After a very brief summary of man's happy state in the Garden of Eden, Fuller launches into a description of "the introduction of moral evil into our world, the source of all our misery."[37] In doing so, he begins by identifying the serpent as the instrument of Satan to bring about the downfall of the man and woman. He references Revelation 12:9, where John refers to him as "the old serpent, the devil," which is an example of Fuller's adherence to the *analogia fidei* in seeking to establish the meaning of the text, referencing other texts to bring further clarity.[38] Perhaps reflecting the skepticism of his day and time, Fuller considers whether or not the serpent spoke audibly in his temptation of Eve. Regardless, as Fuller explains, Satan clearly seeks to influence peoples' minds, as he attempted to do with Jesus in the wilderness (Matt 4:1 – 11). The point is not so much how Satan speaks but that, "it is certain from the whole tenor of Scripture that evil spirits have, by the divine permission, access to human minds; not so indeed as to be able to impel us to sin without our consent, but it may be in some such manner as men influence each other's minds to evil. Such seems to be the proper idea of a tempter."[39] Though the believer may be conscience of the choices before him, he may not be aware of the influences at work. For this reason, as Fuller states, we are encouraged to pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" (Matt 6:13). Fuller draws a similar conclusion in a letter on the same subject:

> It is allowed that the devil has no power over our minds without Divine permission; yea, further, that he has no such power over us as to draw us into *sin* without our own consent. I will not say that he cannot suggest sinful thoughts without our consent; but certainly he cannot, without our consent, draw us into sin. If we yield not, we may be said to be *tempted*, as Christ was; but *sin* does not consist in being *tempted*, but in *falling in* with the temptation.[40]

From both the temptation of Adam and Eve in the Garden and Jesus' temptation in the wilderness, the reader is taught to be watchful through prayer, remembering God's clearly revealed Word in light of the tempter's skims. In fact, Eve's initial response to the serpent is commendable, since she clearly repeats the instructions of her Creator in light of the serpent deliberately misconstruing his words. As Fuller notes, Satan attempts to twist God's Word so as to encourage doubt in the woman's mind. However, rather than trusting in the goodness of the Creator, she is led to believe that God is withholding from her, that his intentions are not pure. "It seems also to contain an insinuation," Fuller observes, "that if man must not eat of 'every tree,' he might as well have eaten of none. And thus, discontent continues to overlook the good, and pores upon the one thing wanting. 'All this avails me nothing, so long as Mordecai is at the gate.'"[41] Though there is no clear connection with the passage, Fuller uses Esther 5:17 as an illustration, in which Haman's discontentment demonstrates the same kind of effect that Satan seeks to produce in Eve — no tree in the garden is worth eating from if she cannot eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Clearly, Fuller's pastoral intention is to help his reader see the beguiling nature of the serpent and his evil desire to tempt the woman into believing that God is withholding his best from her. "If we would shun evil," Fuller warns, "we must shun the appearance of it and all the avenues which lead to it. To parley with temptation is to play with fire.[42] In all this Eve sinned not, nor charged God foolishly."[43]

Though Eve shunned his first attack, the serpent does not stop his assault. As Fuller explains, the serpent answers Eve's certain response with a bold response of his own. He leads her in a train of thought that suggests she knows more — indeed, she is more — than what God has thus far stated. Fuller then provides a universal principle that appears to have contemporary relevance with his own day and time. "This artifice of Satan is often seen in his ministers. Nothing is more common than for the most false and pernicious doctrines to be advanced with a boldness that stuns the minds of the simple and induces a doubt: 'Surely I must be in the wrong, and they in the right, or they could not be so confident.'"[44] The serpent does not say that either God or Eve is wrong. Rather, he boldly asserts that God knows what will actually happen when Eve eats the fruit ("You will not surely die"),[45] and he does so in a way that suggests that Eve should know this. In other words,

the serpent flatters Eve. "And those doctrines which flatter our pride or provoke a vain curiosity to pry into things unseen," Fuller warns, "proceed from the same quarter. By aspiring to be a god, man became too much like a devil, and where human reason takes upon itself to set aside revelation, the effects will continue to be much the same."[46] In a sense, Fuller encapsulates the deistic worldview of his day, in which God's special revelation was rejected in favor of human reason. As he summarized in his introduction to *The Gospel Its Own Witness* (1799),

> The controversies between believers and unbelievers are confined to a narrower ground than those of professed believers with one another. Scripture testimony, any further than as it bears the character of truth, and approves itself to the conscience, or is produced for the purpose of explaining the nature of genuine Christianity, is here out of the question. *Reason* is the common ground on which they must meet to decide their contests. On this ground Christian writers have successfully closed with their antagonists; so much so that, of late ages, notwithstanding all their boast of reason, not one in ten of them can be kept to the fair and honourable use of this weapon. On the contrary, they are driven to substitute dark insinuation, low wit, profane ridicule, and gross abuse. Such were the weapons of Shaftesbury, Tindal, Morgan, Bolingbroke, Voltaire, Hume and Gibbon; and such are the weapons of the author of *The Age of Reason*.[47]

Whether in eighteenth-century England or the Garden of Eden, the appeal to the power of human reason over the clear revelation of God leads to pride, and thus, to infidelity.

With Eve taking the bait, the poison, as Fuller illustrates, begins to seep in. Desiring to be wise, she takes the fruit and eats it. However, Eve does not stop there. She goes on and gives the fruit to her husband, who likewise eats of the tree of which God strictly forbade them. At first, everything seemed to be in good order. However, "The connection between sin and misery is certain, but not always immediate; its immediate effect is deception and stupefaction, which commonly induce the party to draw others into the same condition."[48] While Fuller acknowledges that Eve sinned first, citing 1 Timothy 2:14, he is quick to point out that Adam "sinned with his eyes open," so to speak. Rather than leading his wife in obedience, like Abraham after him (Fuller cites Gen 16:2), he "hearkened to her voice," and was led

into disobedience.[49] Fuller goes so far as to say that "it was the duty of [Eve's] husband to have disowned her forever" rather than join her in her infidelity.[50] Fuller appears to echo Jesus' own words in Matthew 10:37–38 concerning the need to love Christ above even one's nearest relations.

Finally, Fuller draws his discourse to a close by giving attention to the fallout of Adam and Eve's disobedience. "Conscious innocence has forsaken them. Conscious guilt, remorse, and shame possess them," Fuller explains.[51] Indeed, their eyes are now open, but as Fuller quotes the poet John Milton (1608–1674), their eyes are open to "sights of woe."[52] The man and the woman now feel shame, of which their nakedness is an outward sign. Importantly, Fuller notes that they have been "stripped of their original righteousness," in addition to "their honour, security, and happiness."[53] Being image bearers of their Creator, Fuller affirms that the man and the woman were created with an original righteousness, a complete innocence, that, by God's design and grace, gave them unfettered access to him.[54] However, with the introduction of sin, they realize there are physically naked, and perhaps subconsciously, realize that they are spiritually naked, exposed to the eyes of him to whom they must give account (Heb 4:13). Thus, they attempt to cover their nakedness and shame by making a covering from leaves, but as Fuller quotes Henry Ainsworth (1571–1622), "this was to cover, not to cure."[55] This, as Fuller explains, is the attempt of every sinner — to shift the blame and cover their shame — apart from the gracious intervention of God. Thus, as Fuller concludes with a reference to Luke 18:9, sinners are bent on "trusting in themselves that they are righteous, and despising others."[56]

In exegeting the text thus far, Fuller has established a theological foundation that is clearly espoused by the Protestant, and more specifically, the Reformed tradition. He has articulated the *imago dei*, explaining that humans were created in the likeness of his Creator with original righteousness.[57] And in line with the Augustinian tradition, Fuller infers that people had both the ability to sin and not to sin in the Garden of Eden (*posse peccare et posse non peccare*).[58] Thus, man was fit for communion with his Maker, in so far as he adhered to the covenant of works through faith. However, Fuller also articulates the doctrine of the fall, in which Adam and Eve willingly chose to rebel against the command of their Creator in order to become wise through

eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. As the Second London Baptist Confession puts it,

> Although God created man upright and perfect, and gave him a righteous law, which had been unto life had he kept it, and threatened death upon the breach thereof, yet he did not long abide in this honour; Satan using the subtlety of the serpent to subdue Eve, then by her seducing Adam, who, without any compulsion, did willfully transgress the law of their creation, and the command given unto them, in eating the forbidden fruit, which God was pleased, according to his wise and holy counsel to permit, having purposed to order it to his own glory.[59]

Fuller will continue to develop this doctrine in his subsequent discourses. For now, however, it is important to note Fuller's adherence to Reformed orthodoxy, both to accurately assess his exposition, as well as to place his theological conclusions in the context of his more controversial polemical works, which will become apparent in the following discourses.

"Discourse 5: The Trial of the Transgressors (Gen 3:8–14)"

After recalling the "original transgression of our first parents,"[60] Fuller proceeds to describe God's "walking in the garden in the cool of the day." Here, he meditates on how God would *walk* and *speak* with his creatures in a physical manner. But whereas we may not comprehend how God—an infinite spirit—could accomplish this, "he was not at a loss how to hold communion with them that love him."[61] Fuller may have the Son's incarnation in view here, for in explaining the imagery of the owner of a garden walking through his garden in the evening, he references Song of Solomon 6:11, stating, "how the vine flourished, and the pomegranate budded." Typical of the Particular Baptists and the Reformed tradition, Fuller interpreted the Song of Solomon as primarily a description of Christ's love for his Church; that is, a Divine allegory.[62] Here, then, in the first garden, the Divine lover meets with his beloved. However, the feelings of love are not reciprocated, due to the man's act of infidelity.[63]

God approaches his creatures in kindness and familiarity, but they do not respond in kind. "Not only does conscious guilt make them afraid," Fuller observes, "but contrariety of heart to a holy God renders them

averse to drawing near to him."[64] Their failure to observe God's prohibition led not only to guilt and shame, but also to opposition to God himself. Referencing Isaiah 26:10, Fuller highlights how the wicked continue in their unrighteousness even when they are shown kindness. As a result, they will not "behold the majesty of the Lord." Instead of responding to his call, Adam and Eve hide themselves from the gaze of the Lord. "Great is the cowardice which attaches to guilt," Fuller reflects.[65] In the moment, Adam and Eve's attempt to hide themselves seemed logical. But as the reader pauses to reflect, it appears absurd that they should try to shield themselves from the one to whom Fuller refers to as "the omniscient God."[66] In his systematic theology (which his death prevented him from completing), Fuller distinguishes between the "natural" and the "moral" perfections of God, "the former respect his greatness, the latter his goodness; or, more particularly, the one refers to his infinite understanding, his almighty power, his eternity, immensity, omnipresence, immutability, &c.; the other, to his purity, justice, faithfulness, goodness, or, in one word, to his holiness."[67] While his moral perfections refer to those attributes which pertain to his interaction with and salvation of men, his natural perfections refer to those attributes which are manifested in creation and his providential rule of the universe, pointing to what is essential to his nature. Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) spoke of God's perfections in a similar manner in his famous *Religious Affections* (1746), which greatly influenced Fuller. He states,

> … divines make a distinction between the natural and moral perfections of God: by the moral perfections of God, they mean those attributes which God exercises as a moral agent, or whereby the heart and will of God are good, right, and infinitely becoming, and lovely; such as his righteousness, truth, faithfulness, and goodness; or, in one word, his holiness. By God's natural attributes or perfections, they mean those attributes, wherein, according to our way of conceiving of God, consists, not the holiness or moral goodness of God, but his greatness; such as his power, his knowledge whereby he knows all things, and his being eternal, from everlasting to everlasting, his omnipresence, and his awful and terrible majesty.[68]

While not discounting God's natural perfections, Fuller emphasizes the revelation of his moral perfections because, "The former are glorious as

connected with the latter, but the latter are glorious in themselves. Power and knowledge, and every other attribute belonging to the greatness of God, could they be separated from righteousness and goodness, would render him an object of dread, and not of love; but righteousness and goodness, whether connected with greatness or not, are lovely."[69] This view accords with Fuller's exposition of the present passage. Before their sinful rebellion, Adam and Eve saw God's omniscience through the lens of his goodness and love. However, the guilt and shame that resulted from their sin led to a dread of God's knowledge. Thus, "we see here to what a stupid and besotted state of mind sin had already reduced them."[70]

The insinuation is that the man and the woman do not respond to God as was their habit whenever they heard God walking in the garden. Thus, the Lord calls to them, and to Adam in particular, "Where art thou?"[71] As Fuller notes, the language seems to be that of "injured friendship."[72] He then alludes to either Jeremiah 2:6 or Hosea 13:5, where the Lord "interrogates" his people for their failure to respond in love and obedience to him. Such language should lead the reader to self-reflection: "Where art *thou*?"[73] With pastoral intention, Fuller asks, "Sinner, where art thou? What is thy condition? In what way art thou walking, and whither will it lead thee?"[74]

Adam is led to answer his Maker, who, as Fuller notes, is able to summon anyone to his bar for judgment, citing Psalm 50:4. Rather than responding with the language of repentance for his sin, however, Adam only "speaks of its effects."[75] Here, Fuller draws a correlation with Cain's response to God, when he pronounces judgment for his brother's murder. Cain's concern was with the fallout of his sin, not the fact that he had offended "the kindest and best of all beings."[76] His main concern is pastoral; however, he makes an important theological statement when he says, "Oh reader! We must now be clothed with a better righteousness than our own, or how shall we stand before him?"[77] Fuller uses the language of imputation to convey man's need before a holy God; that is, sinful man must receive an alien righteousness if he is to receive eternal life. Imputation was a contentious subject between Fuller and the elder Abraham Booth (1734–1806), who questioned Fuller's orthodoxy following his second edition of *The Gospel Worthy* (1801). In short, Booth accused Fuller of abandoning penal substitution for the moral governmental view, stemming from the writings of Hugo Grotius (1583–1645), but revived by the New Divinity men such as such as

Jonathan Edwards Jr. (1745–1801), Samuel Hopkins (1721–1803), and Stephen West (1735–1818).[78] While it is clear that Fuller was influenced by these men, their influence on his theology is overstated. As Chun observes,

> E. F. Clipsham has chronicled changes that took place over three stages in Fuller's work: his earliest views, which all occur prior to 1787; his intermediate period, which stretched from 1787 to 1799; and finally his mature era, which covered the years 1806 until his death. It was during this intermediate period, perhaps even slightly before, that Fuller was carefully reading Edwards's *Justification by Faith Alone.* In fact, it was during this period that Fuller first published *Socinianism* (1793) and preached his sermon on *The Christian Doctrine of Rewards* (1799), which contains an excerpt from Edwards's sermon on Justification. This means that Booth's concern over Fuller being heavily influenced by New Divinity's governmentalism from 1787 to 1799 needs to be reevaluated. If Fuller's exposure to Edwards sermon on justification dates back to 1785, then his use of figurative language in the doctrines of imputation and justification, which Abraham Booth fiercely opposed, need not be attributed to the influence of New England theologians. Instead it could be traced back to the master architect himself: Edwards.[79]

It is evident that Fuller employs governmental language to correct perceived errors in High-Calvinistic descriptions of the atonement. In relation to imputation more specifically, he was concerned that their common parlance went too far. Fuller attempted to address these concerns in defining his terms in his letter on imputation to Booth. In defining imputation, he states,

> Finally: *Imputation* ought not to be confounded with *transfer.* In its proper sense, we have seen, there is no transfer pertaining to it. In its figurative sense, as applied to justification, it is righteousness itself that is imputed; but its *effects* only are transferred. So also in respect of sin. Sin itself is the object of imputation; but neither this nor guilt are, strictly speaking, transferred: for neither of them are transferable objects. As all that is transferred in the imputation of righteousness is its beneficial effects; so all that is transferred in the imputation of sin is its penal effects.[80]

As Clary summarizes, "For Fuller, though he may have used governmental language it did not *ipso facto* require him to deny penal substitution, imputation, or particular redemption."[81] While more will be said shortly, it is important to note, as his exposition of Genesis 3:10 attests, that, even with the use of moral governmental language, Fuller still held to a well-attested, Reformed view of penal substitution.[82]

While Adam avoided the true reason for hiding, God was not content to let the matter go. Adam's admittance that he was naked, or rather, felt naked, began to reveal the heart of the matter, leading God to ask him if he had eaten from the tree from which he and Eve had been forbidden. Rather than admit his guilt and humble himself before his Creator, however, Adam continues with basic, if not evasive, answers. "But oh," Fuller remarks, "the hardening nature of sin!"[83] Sin, as it were, blinds the eyes and hardens the heart of the creature toward his Creator. As Fuller put it in his confession of faith, "I believe the conduct of man, in breaking the law of God, was most unreasonable and wicked in itself, as well as fatal in its consequences to the transgressor; and that sin is of such a nature, that it deserves all the wrath and misery with which it is threatened, in this world, and in that which is to come."[84] Thus, rather than owning his decision to eat the fruit, Adam shifts the blame to Eve. Citing Proverbs 19:3, Fuller observes, "Such a confession was infinitely worse than none. Yet such is the spirit of fallen man to this day. It was not me … it was my wife, or my husband, or my acquaintance, that persuaded me; or it was my situation in life, in which thou did place me!"[85] All such equivocations, however, will not stop God from bringing the sinner to justice.

God then calls the woman to give an answer, and like her husband, she shifts the blame, accusing the serpent of beguiling her, rather than admit her guilt: "the devil tempted me to it!"[86] "Such is the excuse," Fuller notes, "which multitudes make to this day when they can find no better."[87] Importantly, Fuller notes, "The workings of conviction in the minds of men are called the 'strivings of the Spirit,' and afford a hope of mercy. Though they are no certain sign of grace received, (as there was nothing good at present in our first parents) yet they are the workings of a merciful God, and prove that he has not given over the sinner to hopeless ruin."[88] The phrase "strivings of the Spirit" is likely an allusion to Genesis 6:3, in which God states that his spirit "shall not always strive with man." As Fuller conveys it, these strivings

are a sign of God's Spirit working to produce conviction in the sinner; thus, they reveal God's desire to show mercy. Fuller's theological mentor, Jonathan Edwards, developed the same theme in a sermon on Hosea 5:15. Fuller likely owned the volume containing this sermon.[89] The question is, how does God hold sinful man accountable for not responding to the Spirit when he cannot respond? Fuller addressed this issue in his "Answers to Queries" concerning the love of God toward his creatures:

> Supernatural and effectual grace is indeed necessary to the *actual production* of good in men; but is never represented as necessary to justify the goodness of God in *expecting* or *requiring it*. All that is necessary to this end is, that he furnish them with rational powers, objective light, and outward means. In proof of this, let all those scriptures be considered in which God *complains* of men for not repenting, believing, obeying, &c …. From the whole, I conclude that there are two kinds of influence by which God works on the minds of men: First, That which is common, and which is effected by the ordinary use of motives presented to the mind for consideration. Secondly, That which is special and supernatural. The one is exercised by him as the moral Governor of the world; the other as the God of grace, through Jesus Christ. The one contains nothing mysterious, any more than the influence of our words and actions on each other; the other is such a mystery that we know nothing of it but by its effects. The former *ought* to be effectual; the latter *is* so.[90]

Thus, we see Fuller's distinction between natural and moral ability that he developed most famously in *The Gospel Worthy*. Man is still accountable for resisting the Spirit, even if he is spiritually unable to respond in faith. He is still God's creature, and he possess the natural, rational powers to respond to his Maker. But as Fuller states, the effectual working of the Spirit is needed to produce true repentance in the heart.[91]

Lastly, God speaks to the serpent; however, he does not question him as he did Adam and Eve. Instead, God moves immediately to pronounce a curse for his wickedness. Why? "Because no mercy was designed to be shewn him. He is treated as an avowed and sworn enemy. There was no doubt *wherefore* he had done it, and therefore no *reason* is asked of his conduct."[92] It is not as though God was angry with the serpent itself. Rather, "as under that form Satan had tempted the woman, so that shall be the form under which he

shall receive his doom."[93] Interestingly, Fuller mentions the fact that some think that the fallen angels still had hope of restoration before this moment. Fuller does not seek to provide a final answer; he only notes that if there had been such a hope, "the curse could only have added a greater degree of misery."[94]

Fuller ends his discourse before addressing God's pronouncement of the curses. In doing so, however, he has both established the theological groundwork for understanding sin's significance, as well as prepared the reader to better appreciate God's plan to rescue his fallen creatures. In his final discourse on Genesis 3, Fuller's exegesis provides a glimpse into his theological conclusions that shape his view of redemption.

"Discourse 6: The Curse of Satan and a Blessing to Man — Effects of the Fall (Gen 3:15–24)"

In the final discourse of this study, we discover Fuller's interpretation of a pivotal biblical passage to the metanarrative of Scripture. He begins by noting how God never reveals the true identity of the serpent. Rather than placing the blame for the debacle on Satan, then, God intimates that, "By this we may learn that it is of no account, as to the criminality of sin, whence it comes, or by whom or what we are tempted to it. If we choose it, it is ours, and we must be accountable for it."[95] Fuller makes a similar point in his "Answers to Queries" regarding God's permission of evil: "With respect to moral evil, God permits it, and it was his eternal purpose so to do. If it be right for God to permit sin, it could not be wrong for him to determine to do so, unless it be wrong to determine to do what is right. The decree of God to permit sin does not in the least excuse the sinner, or warrant him to ascribe it to God, instead of himself."[96] Thus, the man and the woman are held accountable for *their* choice to disobey God's command. Nevertheless, God speaks a word of hope — a promise — doing so as he pronounces the curse on the serpent. God does so, as Fuller argues, because Adam and Eve are not in a state of mind to receive a more direct promise, since their hearts have been hardened by sin. Thus, God speaks the promise through the curse of the serpent. "The situation of Adam and Eve at this time was like that of sinners under the preaching of the gospel," Fuller remarks.[97] By this, he seems to mean that the proclamation of the gospel is a message of hope that flows from the pronouncement of coming judgment. The heart of

the sinner may only hear the pronouncement of judgment because of their insensible heart, but the message of hope is there. Additionally, Adam and Eve may hear good news about a coming salvation through their offspring, but not necessarily their salvation. Yet, Fuller makes four points to counter this misapprehension.

First, "The ruin of Satan's cause was to be accomplished by one in human nature."[98] The coming destruction of Satan's cause and kingdom would be one with an "inferior" nature to his own, especially before his fall from glory. "It is possible that the rejoicings of eternal wisdom over man were known in heaven and first excited his envy," Fuller observes, "and that his attempt to ruin the human race was an act of revenge." The thought of a son of man bringing about his downfall would have been humiliating in and of itself.

Second, "It was to be accomplished by the seed of the woman."[99] The very same woman whom Satan used to bring about the downfall of the human race, God would work through to bring about the descendant who would crush his head. Not only would Satan be humiliated by a human, but he would be further embarrassed by God overcoming his schemes to work his plan of salvation, carried out through the Messiah, "the Son of God."[100] Third, "The victory should be obtained, not only by the Messiah himself, but by all his adherents."[101] While the "seed of the woman" refers primarily to the Messiah himself, Fuller contrasts this statement with "the seed of the serpent." Thus, everyone who trusts in the Messiah joins in his victory over the serpent. In this connection, Fuller cites Revelation 12:17, which states, "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." In his commentary on Revelation, Fuller links the wrath of the dragon against the seed of the woman with the persecution of Protestants at the hands of the Catholics after the Reformation. The same venom, however, can be seen in the way Protestants have persecuted their own, leading to the flight of many believers to North America in the seventeenth century. "Should a flood of persecution yet be in reserve for the church of Christ," as Fuller concludes his discourse on Revelation 12,

> [I]t may be the last effort of an expiring foe; and from that the *earth* will preserve her by swallowing it up; it may be in some such way as the invasion

> of Philistines preserved David, or as political struggles have often been favourable to Christians, by furnishing those who wished to persecute them with other employment. The dragon, provoked by his want of success against the woman, may vent his malice on the remnant of her seed that are within his reach: but his time is short. His agents 'the beast and the false prophet,' will soon be taken; and the Angel, with a great chain in his hand, shall next lay hold of *him*, and cast him into the bottomless pit.[102]

On top of all the humiliation he has already suffered, then, the serpent will be conquered by the multitude of the redeemed, when "every individual believer shall be made to come near, and as it were, set his feet upon the neck of his enemy."[103]

Fourth and finally, "though it should be a long war, and the cause of the serpent would often be successful, yet in the end it should be utterly ruined." Fuller distinguishes between the blow to the Messiah's heel versus the blow to the serpent's head, the latter being fatal. "For this purpose is he manifested in human nature," Fuller notes, "that he may destroy the works of the devil, and he will never desist till he have utterly crushed his power."[104] In a sermon on Psalm 40:6–8, Fuller similarly summarizes the metanarrative of Scripture:

> It is suggested that, whenever Messiah should come, the great body of Scripture prophecy should be accomplished in him: 'In the volume of the book it is written of me.' That the prophetic writings abound in predictions of the Messiah, no Jew will deny: the only question is, Are they fulfilled in Jesus? You know (I speak to them who read the Bible) that 'the seed of the woman was to bruise the head of the serpent.' You know that God promised Abraham, saying, In *thy seed* shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. You know that Jacob, when blessing the tribe of Judah, predicted the coming of *Shiloh*, unto whom the gathering of the people should be. You know that Moses spoke of a *Prophet* whom the Lord your God should raise up from the midst of you, like unto him, to whom you were to hearken, on pain of incurring the Divine displeasure. You know that the Messiah is prophetically described in the Psalms, and the prophets, under a great variety of forms; particularly as the *Anointed* of the Lord — the King — the Lord of David, to whom Jehovah spoke — the 'child born,' whose name should be called 'the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace'—

> the 'Rod out of the stem of Jesse'—'God's servant, whom he upholds; his *elect*, in whom his soul delighteth'—'him whom *man despiseth*, and whom the nation abhorreth'—'a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief'—'the Lord our righteousness'—'Messiah the Prince'—'the Branch'—'the Messenger of the covenant,' &c. Thus it was that in the volume of the book it was written of him. Whoever proves to be the Messiah, your fathers rejoiced in the faith of him.[105]

Just as God would speak hope in the midst of the judgment poured out on God's people through Babylon, so God speaks hope to all who believe in the Messiah despite the judgment that has come into the world through the entrance of sin. "There are two great armies in the world," Fuller observes, "Michael and his angels, warring against the dragon and his angels, and according to the side we take, such will be our end."[106]

Having explained what has historically been referred to as the *protoevangelium,* Fuller pivots to describe the curses pronounced upon the woman, the man, and their offspring. Citing Romans 5:18, Fuller states, "Paul teaches us that, by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation, and such a condemnation as stands opposed to justification of life."[107] Here we see that Fuller affirms both total depravity and Adam's federal headship.[108] He summarizes the problem of man's sin in a sermon on Ephesians 2:13, stating in connection with Romans 5:18,

> Had there been no provision of mercy through the promised Seed, there could have been no more communion between God and man, any more than between God and the fallen angels. Men might have dragged out a guilty and miserable existence in the world, but they must have lived and died under the curse. Whatever had been bestowed upon them, it would have been in wrath, in like manner as riches are given some men to their hurt. Whatever had been their troubles, they would have had no God to repair to under them; and, whatever their prospects, the hope of a blessed hereafter would have made no part of them.[109]

Thus, when Adam and Eve fell, the whole human race fell with them. Left to themselves, mankind will continue in his stubborn rebellion against God, unless God intervenes to save him.

Until the final judgment, however, humanity lives under the curse. As for the woman, her pain in childbirth will be greatly multiplied.[110] Additionally, while she was subordinate to the man in the garden, she will now be treated like a slave in many contexts. As Fuller explains, "This is especially the case where sin reigns uncontrolled, as in heathen and Mahometan countries. Christianity, however, so far as it operates, counteracts it, restoring woman to her original state, that of a friend and companion."[111]

The man's lot will be filled with pain as well. Rather than enjoying the fruit of the trees in the garden, he will now work for food from the cursed ground, laboring for bread in sorrow by the sweat of his brow. From the same dust that he was created, Adam will work to eke out an existence, and to the dust he will return when his life comes to an end. Referencing Hebrews 9:27, Fuller records, "A veil is at present drawn over a future world, but we elsewhere learn that at what time 'the flesh returns to dust, the spirit returns to God who gave it,' and that the same sentence which appointed man 'once to die,' added, 'but after this the judgment.'"[112]

One day, the Lord will reverse the curse (Psalm 67:6). Until then, as Fuller notes, God is restraining the evil of men through the toil of their labors in the fallen world. In so far as men believe in Christ, however, these labors are sanctified for their blessing according to God's mercy. Paraphrasing 2 Corinthians 4:17, Fuller explains, "To them they are light afflictions, and last but for a moment, and while they do last, 'work for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' To them, in short, death itself is introductory to everlasting life."[113] In fact, as Fuller observes, in naming the woman Eve ("life" or "living"), it is possible that Adam is expressing "his faith in the promise of her victorious Seed," and thus, "we may consider this as the first evidence in favour of his being renewed in the spirit of his mind."[114]

Before Adam and Eve are driven from the garden, God reveals his grace to them once more. In place of the leafed loincloths the man and the woman fashioned for themselves, God himself provides animals skins to cover their nakedness. In doing so, as Fuller reasons, God established the practice of sacrifice in order to show man his moral degeneracy, as well as the means by which man must be saved. "Is it not natural to conclude," Fuller asks, "that God only can hide our moral nakedness, and that the way in which he does it is by covering us with the righteousness of our atoning sacrifice?"[115] Here again we find language suggesting that Fuller still held to penal substitution.

As Paul Brewster argues, "Though his opponents would loudly claim that Fuller had denied the substitutionary nature of the atonement, the truth is that he simply added governmental language to his repertoire of speaking and writing about the cross. He in no way abandoned his commitment to the substitutionary nature of Christ's death."[116]

Finally, God forces the man and the woman from the garden and from the tree which symbolized life. "He has broken my covenant," says God, "let neither him nor his posterity henceforward expect to regain it by any obedience of theirs."[117] Here, then, Fuller states that the covenant of works has ended, giving way to the covenant of grace. Fuller speaks to this covenant in a sermon on Romans 8:18–23, stating,

> The apostle, having established the great doctrine of justification by faith, dwells here on things connected with it; some of which are designed to guard it against abuse, and others to show its great importance …. Having thus entered on the privileges of believers, the sacred writer is borne away, as by a mighty tide, with the greatness of his theme. 'Heirs of God!' what an inheritance! Such is the tenor of the covenant of grace: 'I will be their God, and they shall be my people.'—'Joint-heirs with Christ!' what a title! We possess the inheritance not in our own right, but in that of Christ; who, being 'heir of all things,' looketh down on his conflicting servants, and saith, 'To him that overcometh will I grant to sit down with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.' It is true, we must suffer awhile; but if it be 'with him,' we shall be glorified together.[118]

Further highlighting this transition of covenants, Fuller notes God's placement of the cherubim and the flaming sword to prevent anyone from accessing the garden, stating, "Let this suffice to impress us with that important truth: 'by the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified,' and to direct us to a tree of life which has no flaming sword to prevent our access!"[119] "Yet even in this," Fuller concludes, "as in the other threatenings, we may perceive a mixture of mercy. Man had rendered his days evil, and God determines they shall be but few. It is well for us that a life of sin and sorrow is not immortal."[120]

Conclusion: Fuller's Theology of the Fall, Christ, and the Atonement

Having analyzed Fuller's exposition of Genesis 3, we are now prepared to draw conclusions concerning his theology of the fall, Christ, and the atonement. While he does not develop any full-blown doctrinal summaries, his exegesis provides clarity regarding his thought trajectory, giving the reader direction for Fuller's theological deductions. Given that Fuller produced his commentary within the last ten years of his life, we can safely assume, in line with E. F. Clipsham's observations, that his exposition reveals his mature thoughts.

First, Fuller's theology of the fall is consistent with that of the Reformed tradition and his Puritan forbearers. Satan, disguised in the form of the serpent, deceived Eve, leading her to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Instead of leading his wife in obedience, Adam joined her in disobedience. As a result, both the man and woman felt ashamed and hid themselves from the presence of God as he walked through the garden. After questioning them, God pronounced curses upon the serpent, the woman, and the man. The curse resulted in both temporal and eternal death for the man and the woman as well as their posterity, because Adam serves as mankind's federal head. As Fuller put it in his statement of faith, "I believe the first sin of Adam was not merely personal, but that he stood as our representative; so that, when he fell, we fell in him, and became liable to condemnation and death; and what is more, are all born into the world with a vile propensity to sin against God."[121] Thus, all men are totally depraved; yet, they are still accountable to God. While they are morally unable to respond apart from the grace of God, they still maintain the natural ability, since the image of God was marred, but not destroyed.[122]

Second, Fuller's exposition provides a limited but clear Christology that is both consistent with the Great Tradition and in sharp contrast to the Socinianism of his day.[123] Jesus is the Messiah, the God-Man, the offspring of the woman, who would crush the head of the serpent through his death, resurrection, and the final judgment. "From the whole," Fuller noted, "we see that Christ is the foundation and substance of all true religion since the fall of man, and, therefore, that the only way of salvation is by faith in him."[124] Referring to him as "the Son of God,"[125] Fuller identifies the Messiah as the

second person of the Trinity, equal in divinity with both the Father and the Holy Spirit. As he states in his *Letters on Systematic Divinity*,

> The Son of God was *manifested* to destroy the works of the devil; he must therefore have been the Son of God antecedently to his being manifested in the flesh. I have heard it asserted that 'Eternal generation is eternal nonsense.' But whence does this appear? Does it follow that, because a son among men is inferior and posterior to his father, therefore it must be so with the Son of God? If so, why should his saying that God was his own Father be considered as making himself *equal* with God? Of the only begotten Son it is not said he was, or will be, but he *is* in the bosom of the Father; denoting the eternity and immutability of his character. There never was a point in duration in which God was without his Son: he *rejoiced always before him*.[126]

As Nettles, Haykin, and Song summarize Fuller's Christological response to Socinianism,

> Christian theology, Fuller insisted, cannot survive apart from Christ. Christ-centered trinitarianism constitutes the biblical revelation of God. Christian faith involves a mental congruity with the great facts about the person and work of Christ. Neither forgiveness nor righteousness come into human experience apart from Christ's work. Knowledge of God is a chimera if it is not grounded in Christ as the Son of God, eternally generated out of the essence of the Father and bound in the union of reciprocal knowledge, love, and communion by the eternal procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son.[127]

Third and finally, Fuller's theology of the atonement, as conveyed in his Genesis commentary, is clearly that of penal substitution. The covenant established between God and man in the garden was broken, leaving mankind in the precarious position of estrangement from his maker. The greatest concern for fallen man, then, is that he should be "clothed in a better righteousness" than his own, for he will not be able to stand before a holy God on the day of judgment left to himself.[128] As Fuller describes the situation, there can be no relaxation of the law or God's holy standard. In his mercy, God would send a Savior, the offspring of the woman, to redeem fallen man. Though his heel would be bruised, he would bruise the

head of the serpent, dealing him a mortal blow. The God-Man would do for sinful humanity what it could not do for itself. In covering the nakedness of Adam and Eve with the skin of a sacrificial animal, God foreshadowed the coming sacrifice of the Messiah, who would atone for the sins of Adam's fallen race through his own substitutionary death.[129] As Fuller asks, "Is it not natural to conclude that God only can hide our moral nakedness, and that the way in which he does it is by covering us with the righteousness of our atoning sacrifice?"[130]

In the end, Fuller's Genesis commentary served as a symbol of his love for his congregation in Kettering, with whom he spent so much time "digging at the precious ore."[131] It served as a tool for those seeking to understand the meaning of Scripture and apply it to their lives, making it especially useful for pastors committed to exposition, as Spurgeon thought. And it provides a window into the mature thoughts of a man whose "Fullerism" left an indelible mark, not only on English Baptists, but on the Evangelical movement as a whole.[132]

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1 Though not a biblical scholar per se, Thomas Paine (1737–1809) criticized the biblical account of creation in his work *The Age of Reason* (1794), listed in Fuller's library as "Paine, Thomas. *The Age of Reason; being an Investigation of True and Fabulous Theology,* Parts 1 and 2 (London, 1795). 'Paines Age of Reason 2 Parts.'" See Michael D. McMullen and Timothy D. Whelan, eds., *The Diary of Andrew Fuller, 1780–1801,* in vol. 1, *The Complete Works of Andrew Fuller*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 229. Fuller provided a substantial response to Paine's work with *The Gospel Its Own Witness* (1799).

2 This is true for Baptist exegesis as a whole. See Michael A. G. Haykin, "Baptists Reflecting on Adam & Eve in the 'Long' Eighteenth Century," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 15, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 92.

3 Gilbert Laws, *Andrew Fuller: Pastor, Theologian, Rope holder* (London: Carey Press, 1942), 127.

4 Given that I have written extensively on the historical background of Fuller's expositions in previous writings, I have elected to provide a brief summary here, but with the inclusion of important new findings.

5 Satchell provides the following chronological list: "1796 — Finished Isaiah on July 3, 1796, Aug. 7 Joel, Aug. 28, Amos, Dec. 4 Hosea; 1797 — Apr. 23 Micah, June 18 Nahum, July 16 Habakkuk, Aug. 13 Zephaniah, Sep. 3 Jeremiah; 1799 — Feb. 24 Lamentations, Apr. 28 Ezekiel, July 19 Daniel; 1800 — Feb. 23 Haggai, Mar. 16 Zechariah, Aug. 3 Malachi; 1800 — Oct. 5 Job until Aug. 15, 1802, Oct. 10, 1802 Genesis until Aug. 12, 1804; 1804 — Aug. 19 Matthew until Jan. 26, 1806; 1806 — Feb. 2 until Sep. 6, 1807, Sep. 13 John; 1809 — Apr. 23 Revelation; 1810 — June 17 Acts; 1812 — Mar. 2 Romans; 1814 — Nov. 2 1 Corinthians; 1815 – Feb. 12 Proceeded in the Exposition as far as 4:5." Satchell then proceeds to list Fuller's travel schedule for the BMS during the same time period. See John Satchell, "Recollections Concerning Mr. F.," Special Collections, Fuller Baptist Church, Kettering, UK, 1–3.

6 During a recent visit to Fuller Baptist Church, I came across this work by John Satchell, in which he provides a chronological list of Fuller's expositions from 1795–1815. My thanks to the staff at Fuller Baptist Church for kindly hosting myself, David Busch, and Tyler Sanders (both of Gateway Seminary) during our visit in the summer of 2025. Special thanks to David Milner for arranging our visit, his glad assistance with our archival research, and his ongoing efforts to preserve these important records.

7 Andrew Fuller, *Expository Discourses on the Book of Genesis, Interspersed with Practical Reflections* (London: J. Burditt, 1806). Referred to as *EDBG* from here on. All quotations from primary sources are produced exactly.

8 Morris declared bankruptcy in 1809 due to risks he had taken with his printing business. During this era, bankruptcy often led to church discipline in Baptist churches. While Morris would eventually resign his pastorate, Fuller's attempts to confront Morris about his sin were met with rejection, and their friendship (as well as his friendships with his other close Baptist pastor colleagues) was never healed. For more background on the episode, see C. Ryan Griffith, *The Life of Andrew Fuller: A Critical Edition of John Ryland's Biography*, in *The Complete Works of Andrew Fuller,* Vol. 17, ed. Michael Haykin (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022), 50–55.

9 "Quarterly List of New Publications," *The Edinburgh Review, or Critical Journal* 8, no. 6 (April–July 1806): 233. For a more extensive review, see "Review of *Expository Discourses on the Book of Genesis, Interspersed with Practical Reflections*," by Andrew Fuller, in *The Eclectic Review,* vol. 2, part 2 (July–December 1806), 2:896–900.

10 "His discourses are not critical, (for he was mostly a self-taught man,) but they are shrewd, instructive, and touching. He seizes the principle points of the passage, and often illustrates them very happily." William Orme, *Bibliotheca Biblica: A Select List of Books on Sacred Literature; with Notices Biographical, Critical, and Bibliographical* (Edinburgh: Adam Black, 1829), 198. For a similar sentiment, see also "Review of New Publications," *The Christian Observer* vol. 5 (1806): 569–72.

11 J. W. Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* (London: J. W. Morris, 1816), 206.

12 C. H. Spurgeon, *Commenting and Commentaries: Two Lectures Addressed to the Students of The Pastor's College, Metropolitan Tabernacle, Together with a Catalogue of Biblical Commentaries and Expositions* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1876), 50. Spurgeon is referring to George Bush (1796–1859), who served as a Hebrew Professor at New York University. He plagiarized Fuller on several counts.

13 Jeongmo Yoo lists all thirteen editions of *EDBG* in his unpublished manuscript that will serve as the introduction for a forthcoming critical edition in *The Complete Works of Andrew Fuller* (De Gruyter Brill). See Jeongmo Yoo, "Fuller as a Biblical Exegete" (unpublished manuscript for the forthcoming critical edition Fuller's exposition of Genesis in *The Complete Works of Andrew Fuller,* 2025), 6–7.

14 Anthony C. Thiselton and Gerald Sheppard, "Biblical Interpretation in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," in *Dictionary of Major Biblical Interpreters*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 52. See also See Henning Graf Reventlow, *History of Biblical Interpretation: From the Enlightenment to the Twentieth Century,* ed. Susan Ackerman and Thom Thatcher, trans. Leo G. Perdue, vol. 4, Society of Biblical Literature Resources for Biblical Study (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010), 71–72.

15 "In the days before empirical philosophy, Deism, and historical criticism," Hans Frei notes about literal interpretation, "the realistic feature had naturally been identified with the literal sense which in turn was automatically identical with reference to historical truth. But once these thought currents had had their effect, and the 'literal sense' of the stories came to be governed with a heavy hand by, and logically subordinated to, probable and language-neutral historical veracity, the reverse would have had to be the case: in order to recognize the realistic narrative feature as a significant element in its own right (viz. as a story's making literal rather than allegorical or mythical or some other nonliteral sense regardless of whether the literal sense is also a reliable factual report) one would have had to distinguish sharply between literal sense and historical reference. And then one would have had to allow the literal sense to stand as the meaning, even if one believed that the story does not refer historically." Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974), 11.

16 Michael A. G. Haykin, *The Armies of the Lamb: The Spirituality of Andrew Fuller,* Classics of Reformed Spirituality (Dundas, Ontario, Canada: Joshua Press, 2001), 273.

17 See Muller's explanation of the implications of naturalism for Christology in Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, Volume 2: The Cognitive Foundation of Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 2:140.

18 Yoo, "Fuller as a Biblical Exegete," 141.

19 Stephen J. Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate: The Doctrine of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 149.

20 See "Review of Religious Publications: Literary Notices," in *The Evangelical Magazine* 14 (January 1806): 273.

21 Andrew Fuller, "Sermons and Sketches: Sermon LXIX: Preaching Christ (2 Cor. 4:5)," in *The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* (1845; repr., Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1988), 1:503. Ellipses are original.

22 For a helpful overview of education for English Baptists during Fuller's lifetime, see Michael A. G. Haykin, "'With light, beauty, and power': Educating English Baptists in the Long Eighteenth Century," in *Challenge and Change: English Baptist Life in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Stephn Copson and Peter J. Morden (Didcot, UK: The Baptist Historical Society, 2017), 177–203.

23 Andrew Fuller, *Thoughts on the Power of Men to Do the Will of God,* 1777, Archives and Special Collections, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY.

24 Yoo, "Fuller as a Biblical Exegete," 11.

25 Noting similarities between Fuller's method and that of John Owen (1616–1683) and Matthew Henry (1662–1714), Yoo notes, "The Puritans developed an expository method that moved consistently from the text to doctrine and then to application, establishing a model that shaped subsequent generations of preachers and commentators. Because this approach maintained a careful balance between scriptural meaning, theological depth, and practical relevance, it endured as a foundational structure for biblical exposition in both preaching and writing." Yoo, "Fuller as a Biblical Exegete," 14.

26 "Considering my time of life, and the numerous avocations on my hands, I may not be able to publish anything more of the kind; and if not, permit me to request that this family book may be preserved as a memorial of our mutual affection, and of the pleasures we have enjoyed together in exploring the treasures of the lively oracles." Fuller, *EDBG,* iv.

27 Fuller, *EDBG,* v.

28 Fuller, *EDBG,* 1.

29 Fuller, *EDBG,* 3.

30 Fuller, *EDBG,* 13.

31 Consistent with Calvin, Fuller does not make a sharp distinction between image and likeness. Combined with his Reformed understanding of total depravity — that while God's image is not destroyed, it is nevertheless distorted and corrupted — Fuller will argue that man is still naturally able to choose Christ, even though he is morally unable. For a helpful overview on the subject, see David Mark Rathel, *Andrew Fuller and the Search for a Faith Worthy of All Acceptation,* T&T Studies in English Theology (New York: T&T Clark, 2024).

32 As Sam Waldron summarizes, "Like the sabbath and unlike any other religious observance, the Lord's Day is a memorial of both creation and redemption. Even as the sabbath memorialized the first creation and the exodus of Israel from Egypt, so also the Lord's Day memorializes a new creation and a greater redemption." Sam Waldron, "Of Religious Worship and the Sabbath Day," in *A New Exposition of the London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*, ed. Rob Ventura (Scotland, UK: Mentor, 2022), 390–91.

33 For Fuller's postmillennialism, which was consistent with many leaders both during and following the Evangelical Awakening, see Crawford Gribben, ed., *Revelation: Expository Discourses on the Apocalypse,* vol. 9, *The Complete Works of Andrew Fuller*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022), 7–34.

34 Fuller, *EDBG,* 23–24. Though hypothetical, an important question swirling about during the Modern Question debate revolved around whether Adam and Eve had both the natural and moral ability to trust in Christ had he been revealed to them in the gospel before the fall. How one answered this question normally had significant implications for how he answered the Modern Question. For an excellent overview of this debate, see David Mark Rathel, "John Gill and the charge of hyper-Calvinism: assessing contemporary arguments in defense of Gill in light of Gill's doctrine of eternal justification," *The Journal of Andrew Fuller Studies* 1 (September 2020): 11–29, as well as Geoffrey F. Nuttall, "Northamptonshire and 'The Modern Question': A Turning-Point in Eighteenth–Century Dissent," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 16, no. 1 (April 1965), 101–123.

35 "I believe, from the same authority, that God created man in the image of his own glorious moral character, a proper subject of his moral government, with dispositions exactly suited to the law he was under, and capacity equal to obey it to the uttermost against all temptations to the contrary. I believe, if Adam, or any holy being, had had the making of a law for himself, he would have made just such an one as God's law is; for it would be the greatest of hardships to a holy being, not to be allowed to love God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and all his mind." Haykin, *The Armies of the Lamb,* 274.

36 John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, 2 vols., The Library of Christian Classics (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 1:183.

37 Fuller, *EDBG,* 26.

38 Yoo, "Fuller as a Biblical Exegete," 11.

39 Regarding the failure of believers to repent of sin, Fuller notes, "Again, *It gives Satan a great advantage over us*. It tempts the tempter to apply to us with renewed force. While sin lies unlamented upon the conscience, we are like a besieged city, enfeebled by famine, sickly, and without a heart to resist; and this must needs invite the besieger to renew his onsets. It is by resisting the devil that he flies from us; and so, *vice versa*, by dropping resistance he is encouraged to approach towards us. This in fact is the case with us; while sin remains unlamented there are generally more temptations ply the mind than at other times. When Samson slept and lost his strength, the Philistines were soon upon him. And now put these all together: our strength gone, the Holy Spirit departed, and temptation coming upon us with redoubled force: alas! where are we? Well did the psalmist exclaim, 'Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, — and in whose spirit there is no guile.'" Fuller, "Miscellaneous Tracts, Essays, Letters, &c.: On Spiritual Declension and the Means of Revival," in *The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* (1845; Reprint, Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1988), 3:625 – 26.

40 See Andrew Fuller, "Strictures on Sentiments of the Rev. Robert Robinson: Letter VI: On the Influence of Satan Upon the Human Mind," in *The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* (1845; Reprint, Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1988), 3:610. In the beginning of his letter, Fuller notes that one of the tenants of Socinianism is the belief that Satan is an allegorical figure, the rhetorical representation of evil. Thus, the demonic cannot influence the minds of man. For a helpful overview of Socinianism and Fuller's response to leading figures within the movement, see Tom Nettles, Michael Haykin, and Baiyu Andrew Song, eds., *Apologetic Works 3: Socinianism*, in *The Complete Works of Andrew Fuller*. Vol. 7, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), 1 – 46.

41 Fuller, *EDBG,* 27.

42 Fuller, *EDBG,* 28. Fuller similarly notes in a sermon on Ephesians 3:14 – 16, "The degree of our spiritual strength may be determined by *the manner in which we resist temptations* — All men are tempted, but all do not resist temptation; this is peculiar to the Christian character. Mere worldly men go with the stream; they walk according to the course of this world, and are hurried along with the impetuous torrent. But if we be Christians, we are not of the world, and are in the habit of resisting temptations. Yet if our resistance be feeble and indeterminate — if we hesitate where we ought to be decided — if we look back on Sodom, like Lot's wife, with a lingering desire after those sinful pleasures which we profess to have given up, and regret the loss of sensual gratifications — are we not carnal, and walk as men? He who is strengthened with might in the inner man will not pause when temptations meet him, nor parley with the tempter; but will readily answer, 'Thus it is written.' It will be sufficient for him to know that God has forbidden this or that. Like a dutiful child, the will of his Father is the guide of his conduct, and that alone will furnish sufficient motives for obedience. 'Thus it is written.'" Fuller, "Sermons and Sketches: Sermon XLIII: Paul's Prayer for the Ephesians (Eph. 3:14 – 16), in *The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* (1845; Reprint, Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1988), 1:430."

43 Fuller reworks Job 1:22 for the present context.

44 Fuller, *EDBG*, 29.

45 See Fuller's connection between Satan's lie and William Vidler's (1758 – 1816) teachings in Chris Chun, ed., *Apologetic Works 6: On Universalism and Particular Redemption*, in *The Complete Works of Andrew Fuller*. Vol. 10, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2025), 70. William Vidler was a one-time Particular Baptist pastor turned Universalist and Unitarian. Imbibing the deistic mindset of the eighteenth century, Vidler and others maintained an air of sophistication that deceitfully called into question the veracity of God's Word.

46 Fuller, *EDBG*, 30. Socinianism was another false teaching to which Fuller responded. For Fuller's comments concerning human reason and Socinianism, see Nettles, Haykin, and Song, *Apologetic Works 3: Socinianism*, in *CWAF,* 246.

47 Andrew Fuller, "The Gospel Its Own Witness," in *The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* (1845; Reprint, Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1988), 2:5.

48 Fuller, *EDBG*, 30 – 31.

49 Fuller, *EDBG*, 31.

50 Fuller, *EDBG*, 31.

51 Fuller, *EDBG*, 31.

52 "As one great Furnace flamed, yet from those flames / No light, but rather darkness visible / Served only to discover sights of woe." John Milton, *Paradise Lost,* ed. John Leonard, Penguin Classics (London, UK: Penguin Books, 2000), 1.62 – 64.4.

53 Fuller, *EDBG*, 32.

54 In his work on Antinomianism, Fuller states, "If we had retained our original righteousness, justice itself would have justified us; but having sinned, the question, How shall man be justified with God? is too difficult for created wisdom to solve. Whatever delight the Creator takes in honouring and rewarding righteousness, there is none left in this apostate world for him to honour or reward. 'All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.' If any child of Adam, therefore, be now accepted and rewarded as righteous, it must be entirely on different ground from that of his own righteousness. What ground this could be, God only knew." See Andrew Fuller, "Antinomianism Contrasted with the Religion Taught and Exemplified in the Holy Scriptures," in *The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* (1845; Reprint, Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1988), 2:757–58.

55 Fuller, *EDBG,* 32. Henry Ainsworth, *Annotations Upon the Five Bookes of Moses, and the Booke of Psalmes* (London: John Haviland, 1622), "Genesis III:7." Henry Ainsworth (1571–1622) was a Hebrew scholar and a leader of the English separatist church in Amsterdam. Fuller cites Ainsworth throughout his commentary, revealing Fuller's ability to interact with biblical scholarship of a higher caliber than mere devotional commentary. See Michael E. Moody, "Ainsworth, Henry (1569–1622), separatist minister and religious controversialist," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography,* last modified September 23, 2004 (online edition).

56 Fuller, *EDBG*, 32.

57 This is consistent with the Second London Baptist Confession: "2. After God had made all other creatures, he created man, male and female, with reasonable and immortal souls, rendering them fit unto that life to God for which they were created; being made after the image of God, in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness; having the law of God written in their hearts, and power to fulfil it, and yet under a possibility of transgressing, being left to the liberty of their own will, which was subject to change. 3. Besides the law written in their hearts, they received a command not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, which whilst they kept, they were happy in their communion with God, and had dominion over the creatures." Earl M. Blackburn, "Of Creation," in *A New Exposition of the London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*, ed. Rob Ventura (Ross-shire, Scotland: Mentor, 2022), 97.

58 As Francis Turretin puts it, "Augustine explains this excellently: 'We must diligently and attentively examine if these good things differ, to be able not to sin (*posse non peccare*), and not to be able to sin (*non posse peccare*), to be able not to die, and not to be able to die, to be able not to leave the good, and not to be able to leave the good. For the first man was able not to sin, not to die, not to leave the good" (*Admonition and Grace* 12* [33] [FC 2:285; PL 44.936]). And afterwards: "Therefore the first liberty of will was to be able not to sin (*posse non peccare*), the last will be much greater, not to be able to sin (*non posse peccare*). The first immortality was the power of not dying, the last will be much greater, the incapability of dying. The first was the power of perseverance, the power to not desert the good, the last will be the happiness of perseverance, the want of power to desert the good' (ibid., pp. 285–86)." Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, ed. James T. Dennison Jr., trans. George Musgrave Giger, vol. 1 (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1992–1997), 8:1:9.

59 Brian Borgman and Jason Ching, "Of the Fall of Man, of Sin, and of the Punishment Thereof," in *A New Exposition of the London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*, ed. Rob Ventura (Ross-shire, Scotland: Mentor, 2022), 125.

60 Fuller, *EDBG*, 32.

61 Fuller, *EDBG*, 33.

62 See Fuller's extensive comments on the Song of Solomon in Andrew Fuller, "Strictures on Some of the Leading Sentiments of Mr. R. Robinson: Letter V: On the Canonicalness of Solomon's Song," in *The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* (1845; Reprint, Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1988), 3:605–10. More generally, Yoo states, "Allegory was the leading, almost exclusive, way of approaching the Song of Songs in both Christian and Jewish circles until Fuller's time. Jewish scholars interpreted the book as an allegory of the love between Yahweh and Israel, while Christian theologians argued that the book was messianic and praised the love between Christ and the church. Exactly when this view was first embraced by Christians is not known. All one can say is that evidence of it exists as early as Hippolytus (ca. AD 200), though only fragments of his commentary have survived. This kind of exegesis was then followed by Origen, who saw in the Bridegroom a representation of Christ, that is, the eternal Word and Wisdom of God, and in the Bride a representation of the church, that is, the people of God. Since Origen, this ecclesiological interpretation of the Song had become a dominant exegetical model. Many others throughout church history, including John Calvin (1509–1564), Henry Ainsworth (1571–1623), and Matthew Henry (1662–1714), approached the book allegorically and interpreted the relation between the main characters as the description of love between Christ and his bride, the church. Despite the popularity of the allegorical method, the interpretation of the details nevertheless became quite varied and fanciful.

That is, there was no difference in exegetical principles, but there were differences concerning the interpretations of the nuptial metaphor, the use of human love to symbolize the love between God and man." Jeongmo Yoo, "Allegory or Literal Historical Interpretation?: Andrew Fuller's Critique of Robert Robinson's View of the Canonicity of the Song of Songs," *Evangelical Quarterly* 90.3 (2019): 277–78.

63 Fuller adds an interesting note about "the cool of the day" as a reference to God's bringing his people to account in the evening for their sins committed in the day. In the evening, there is a greater opportunity for reflection; thus, God speaks to his people in the quietness and stillness of the night.

64 Fuller, *EDBG*, 34.

65 Fuller, *EDBG*, 34.

66 Fuller, *EDBG*, 35. In speaking of God the Son incarnate, Fuller notes, "Every creature is entirely dependent on the Creator, and is totally incompetent to answer the character of a saviour, especially with respect to that salvation which mankind need. That there may exist a proper foundation for trust, the character of a saviour must unite omnipresent and omnipotent power, to control every intelligent creature, and every particle of matter in the universe, and render every thing subservient to the great purposes of salvation. Omniscient understanding to know perfectly, and at all times, their hearts, their dangers, and their wants. Infinite wisdom, to select unerringly, from an infinite number of supposable schemes, for the accomplishment of the great object, that which is best, both with respect to the end, and the infinitude of antecedent means. Absolute immutability, to prosecute invariably the same designs; and infinite love, to rise above millions of provocations, and embrace perpetually the same good." Andrew Fuller, "The Deity of Christ," in *The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* (1845; Reprint, Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1988), 3:697.

67 Andrew Fuller, "Letters on Systematic Divinity: Letter VIII: The Perfections of God," in *The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* (1845; Reprint, Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1988), 1:705.

68 Jonathan Edwards, *Religious Affections*, ed. John E. Smith and Harry S. Stout, rev. ed., vol. 2, The Works of Jonathan Edwards (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 255.

69 Fuller, "Letters on Systematic Divinity," in *Works,* 1:705.

70 Fuller, *EDBG*, 35.

71 Fuller, *EDBG*, 35.

72 Fuller, *EDBG*, 35.

73 Fuller, *EDBG*, 35.

74 Fuller, *EDBG*, 35.

75 Fuller, *EDBG*, 36.

76 Fuller, *EDBG*, 36.

77 Fuller, *EDBG*, 36.

78 For a brief summary of the theological controversy, see Chun, *Apologetic Works 6: On Universalism and Particular Redemption*, in *CWAF,* 44–47; Peter J. Morden, "Further Controversy," in *The Life and Thought of Andrew Fuller (1754–1815),* Studies in Evangelical History and Thought (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2015), 124–149; Ian Hugh Clary, "'The center of Christianity — the doctrine of the cross': Andrew Fuller as a Reformed Theologian," *Evangelical Quarterly* 90.3, (2019): 195–212.

79 Chun, *Apologetic Works 6: On Universalism and Particular Redemption*, in *CWAF,* 58–59.

80 Chun, *Apologetic Works 6: On Universalism and Particular Redemption*, in *CWAF,* 133–34.

81 Clary, "'The center of Christianity — the doctrine of the cross': Andrew Fuller as a Reformed Theologian," 211.

82 "As it turns out, he held a view of the atonement that earlier Reformed theologians held, in line with Dordt, while maintaining the penal emphasis of even Grotius himself. So if the charge of Grotianism is to stand, it must do so under the conditions either of how it was at times misused in the seventeenth century (as a wrongful accusation against someone like Baxter), or how modern scholars have understood Grotius's own thought on the atonement as not necessarily containing all of the theological baggage that some have accused it of carrying." Clary, "'The center of Christianity — the doctrine of the cross': Andrew Fuller as a Reformed Theologian," 211.

83 Fuller, *EDBG*, 37.

84 Haykin, *The Armies of the Lamb*, 274–75.

85 Fuller, *EDBG*, 37–38.

86 Being the "tempter" of her husband, as Fuller observes, "and being also of the weaker sex, it might have been expected that she would not have gone on the provoke the vengeance of her Creator." Fuller, *EDBG*, 38. Taken in its broader context, Fuller is not speaking of women in pejorative manner. See especially his comments in Fuller, *EDBG*, 24–25.

87 Fuller, *EDBG*, 38.

88 Fuller, *EDBG*, 39.

89 See McMullen and Whelan, *The Diary of Andrew Fuller, 1780–1801, CWAF*, 221.

90 I have refrained from reproducing the entire passage for the sake of space. However, Fuller refers to a number of Scripture passages in making his point, including Gen. 6:3; Deut. 29:4; Neh. 9:30; Isa. 5:4; Matt. 11:20–34, 21:33–38; Acts 7:51. See Andrew Fuller, "Answers to Queries: The Love of God, and Its Extension to the Non-Elect," in *The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* (1845; Reprint, Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1988), 3:771.

91 For a brief overview of Fuller's distinction between natural and moral inability and its connection with Jonathan Edwards, see Morden, *The Life and Thought of Andrew Fuller (1754–1815),* 47–68.

92 Fuller, *EDBG*, 39.

93 Fuller, *EDBG*, 39.

94 Fuller, *EDBG*, 39. While some have held that fallen angels may ultimately be redeemed, it is unclear who Fuller is referring to regarding the redemption of angels before the cursing of the serpent. For a brief overview of historic beliefs concerning angels, see Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 298–318.

95 Fuller, *EDBG*, 40–41.

96 Fuller, "Answers to Queries: The Fall of Adam," in *Works,* 3:766.

97 Fuller, *EDBG*, 41.

98 Fuller, *EDBG*, 42.

99 Fuller, *EDBG,* 43.

100 Fuller, *EDBG,* 42.

101 Fuller, *EDBG*, 43.

102 Gribben, *Revelation*, in *CWAF,* 145–46.

103 Fuller, *EDBG*, 43–44.

104 Fuller, *EDBG*, 44.

105 Fuller, "Sermons and Sketches: Sermon X: Jesus the True Messiah (Psa. 40:6–8)," in *Works*, 1:212.

106 Fuller, *EDBG*, 44–45.

107 Fuller, *EDBG*, 45. Fuller also signals to the reader to see his comments on Genesis 4:11–12.

108 For a detailed analysis of Fuller's federal theology, see Thomas Kennedy Ascol, "The Doctrine of Grace: A Critical Analysis of Federalism in the Theologies of John Gill and Andrew Fuller," (PhD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1989). More specifically, Ascol provides an interesting contrast between Gill and Fuller regarding "immediate" and "mediate" imputation in pp. 164–170. Fuller's view has been notoriously difficult to pin down here. The situation was made more difficult in his exchange with Abraham Booth. As Chun notes, "Despite Booth's criticism, Fuller maintains that neither he nor Calvin (according to Fuller's interpretation of Calvin), by embracing the 'as if' dimensions of imputation, are abandoning either the classical dimensions of forensic imputation or penal substitution. The debate between Booth and Fuller becomes even more difficult to adjudicate here, as they each use the terms 'proper,' 'real,' and 'figurative' in different ways and with differing nuances." Chun, *Apologetic Works 6: On Universalism and Particular Redemption*, in *CWAF,* 50.

109 Fuller, "Sermons and Sketches: Sermon XX: The Believer's Review of His State (Eph. 2:13)," in *Works*, 1:301.

110 Fuller notes that there may have been pain in childbirth before the fall, which is why the curse pertains to the multiplication of pain. See Fuller, *EDBG*, 45.

111 Fuller, *EDBG*, 45. Fuller includes a parenthetical note, calling the reader to see his comments on 2:18–25, where he paraphrases Matthew Henry's commentary. See Matthew Henry, *An exposition of all the books of the Old and New Testament: wherein the chapters are summ'd up in contents; the sacred text inserted at large, in paragraphs, or verses; and each paragraph, or verse, reduc'd to its proper heads; the sense given, and largely illustrated, with practical remarks and observations,* vol. 1, 3rd ed. (London: J. Clark and R. Hett, J. Knapton, J. and B. Sprint, J. Darby, D. Midwinter, A. Bettesworth, J. Osborn and T. Longman, R. Robinson, S. Palmer, J. Batley, R. Ford, T. Cox, A. Ward, E. Symon, W. Bell, T. Combes, and S. Chandler, 1725), 1:11, *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*.

112 Fuller, *EDBG,* 46–47. In a funeral sermon preached on February 28, 1790, concerning this text, Fuller summarized, "The truths here taught us are the most serious and interesting. None doubt the reality of death, and few that of judgment; but many live as if they credited neither. The sum of the text is, *Christ is our substitute, both in death and judgment;* and yet we die and must appear at judgment. To make this plain, observe, we are appointed to death and judgment in two ways: — First, By our subjection to corruption, or corporeal death, and to an appearance before God in judgment. In this view the appointment takes place upon mankind in general, good and bad, and that notwithstanding the death and mediation of Christ. Secondly, By the sentence of God as a Lawgiver. It was the sentence against man: 'In the day thou eatest,' &c. In this view death includes more than a *subjection to corruption;* it includes its sting: and judgment includes more than *appearing;* it includes our final condemnation. This last is the meaning of the text. It speaks not of what actually takes place, but of what *must have taken place* had not the mediation of Christ interposed. The text speaks of the penal sentence of the Lawgiver, and then of our deliverance from that sentence through Christ, our substitute; so that though in some sense it is still appointed for men to die, and to appear before God in judgment, yet not in the sense of the text. *Believers* will find death divested of its sting, and judgment of its terror, ver. 28." Fuller, "Sermons and Sketches: Sermon LX: Christ Our Substitute in Death and Judgment (Heb. 9:27–28)," in *Works,* 1:475.

113 Fuller, *EDBG*, 48.

114 Fuller, *EDBG,* 48–49. Fuller is referencing Ephesians 4:23.

115 Fuller, *EDBG*, 49.

116 Paul Brewster, *Andrew Fuller: Model Pastor and Theologian,* Studies in Baptist Life and Thought (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2010), 95.

117 Fuller, *EDBG*, 49–50. Fuller adds a note telling the reader to see his comments on Genesis 2:9 regarding the description of the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

118 Fuller, "Sermons and Sketches: Sermon XXVI: The Magnitude of the Heavenly Inheritance (Rom. 8:18–23)," in *Works,* 1:333–34. Fuller's view is thus consistent with that of the Second London Baptist Confession: "Moreover, man having brought himself under the curse of the law by his fall, it pleased the Lord to make a covenant of grace, wherein he freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in him, that they may be saved; and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto eternal life, his Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe." Mitch Lush, "Of God's Covenant," in *A New Exposition of the London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*, ed. Rob Ventura (Ross-shire, Scotland: Mentor, 2022), 135.

119 Fuller, *EDBG,* 50. Fuller cites Romans 3:20.

120 Fuller, *EDBG*, 50.

121 Haykin, *The Armies of the Lamb,* 275. By "liable to condemnation and death," Fuller seems to imply that more than mere corruption is imputed to Adam's posterity. Refer to note 108 for a brief discussion of "immediate" vs. "mediate" imputation of Adam's guilt.

122 "If sinners were naturally and absolutely unable to believe in Christ, they would be equally unable to disbelieve; for it requires the same powers to reject as to embrace. And, in this case, there would be no room for an inability of another kind: a dead body is equally unable to do evil as to do good; and a man naturally and absolutely blind could not be guilty of shutting his eyes against the light. 'It is indwelling sin,' as Dr. Owen says, 'that both disenableth men unto, and hinders them from believing, *and that alone*. Blindness of mind, stubbornness of the will, sensuality of the affections, all concur to keep poor perishing souls at a distance from Christ. Men are made blind by sin, and cannot see his excellency; obstinate, and will not lay hold of his righteousness; senseless, and take no notice of their eternal concernments.'" Fuller, "The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation," in *Works*, 2:357. For Fuller's use of Owen, see Carl R. Trueman, "John Owen and Andrew Fuller," *Eusebia* 9 (Spring 2008): 53–69.

123 "Take away Christ; nay, take away the deity and atonement of Christ; and the whole ceremonial of the Old Testament appears to us little more than a dead mass of uninteresting matter: prophecy loses all that is interesting and endearing; the gospel is annihilated, or ceases to be that good news to lost sinners which it professes to be; practical religion is divested of its most powerful motives, the evangelical dispensation of its peculiar glory, and heaven itself of its most transporting joys." Nettles, Haykin, and Song, *Apologetic Works 3: Socinianism*, in *CWAF*, 196.

124 Fuller, *EDBG*, 44.

125 Fuller, *EDBG*, 42.

126 Fuller, "Letters on Systematic Divinity," in *Works,* 1:710. In one of his "Answers to Queries," Fuller took up the subject of the obedience and suffering of Christ. In doing so, he reveals something of a sophisticated Christology. He states, "In the person of Christ the Divinity and humanity were so intimately united, that perhaps we ought not to conceive of the latter as having any such distinct subsistence as to be an agent by itself, or as being obliged to obey or do any thing of itself, or on its own account; Christ, as man, possessed no being *on his own account.* He was always in union with the Son of God; a public person, whose very existence was for the sake of others. Hence his coming under the law is represented, not only as a part of his humiliation, to which he was naturally unobliged, but as a thing *distinct from his assuming human nature*; which one should think it could not be, if it were necessarily included in it. He was 'made of a woman, made under the law;'—'made in the likeness of men, he took upon him the form of a servant;'—'being found in fashion as a man, he became obedient unto death.'" See Fuller, "Answers to Queries: Obedience and Suffering of Christ," in *Works*, 3:785–86.

127 Nettles, Haykin, and Song, *Apologetic Works 3: Socinianism*, in *CWAF*, 41.

128 Fuller, *EDBG*, 36.

129 Fuller does not give any hint about the extent of the atonement here. However, as Robert Oliver observes in his reflection on the controversy between Booth and Fuller, "Fuller was clearly stating a position long held by many Calvinists that 'the death of Christ was sufficient for all, but efficient for the elect.' He was concerned to safeguard an unfettered presentation of Christ to all, but at the same time to teach that the atoning sacrifice of Christ fulfilled the purpose of God in election." Robert W. Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists 1771–1892: From John Gill to C. H. Spurgeon* (Edinburgh, UK: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2006), 168.

130 Fuller, *EDBG*, 49. Michael Haykin notes that, "Although Fuller used the language of penal substitution with regard to the atonement to the end of his life, his preferred language about the cross grew to be that of the governmental theory. A version of this model was propounded by the Dutch jurist Hugo Grotius (1583–1645), and for this reason it is often denominated the Grotian version, though there are substantial questions about whether or not the model as it develops is fully in line with Grotius's thinking about the death of Christ. Moreover, as Oliver Crips has handily shown, the governmental view of the death of Christ that received a warm welcome in New England among the New Divinity, cannot be regarded as identical to that passed down as the Grotian view. Both adhere to a penal, non-substitutionary view of the atonement, but that of the doctrine of the New Divinity — and Fuller — is developed within a specifically Calvinistic mentalité." Michael A. G. Haykin, "Great Admirers of the Transatlantic Divinity: Some Chapters in the Story of Baptist Edwardsianism," in *After Jonathan Edwards: The Courses of New England Theology*, ed. Oliver D. Crisp and Douglas A. Sweeney (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 202–203.

131 Fuller, *EDBG*, iv.

132 "1785: Publication of Andrew Fuller's *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* marks the triumph of evangelicalism among England's Particular Baptists." Mark A. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys,* vol. 1, A History of Evangelicalism: People, Movements and Ideas in the English-Speaking World (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2003), 193.

The Triumph of Truth: John Fawcett's Defense Against Joseph Priestley's Christological Heterodoxy During the Long Eighteenth Century[1]

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The arrival of William of Orange (1650–1702) at Brixham in 1688 ushered in a dawn of hope for English Dissent as Baptists, Presbyterians, and Independents longed for the day that the tide of persecution would give way to a new age of religious freedom. Their battles were far from over, however, for the long eighteenth century in England was a complex battleground for "the faith once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). The "Age of Reason" gave rise to Rational Dissent resulting in a "doctrinal minefield" concerning the Trinity, the humanity and deity of Jesus Christ, and the doctrine of the atonement, especially during the final decades of the eighteenth century.[2] Stephen Wellum rightly identifies the critical importance of the Enlightenment era (c.1560–1780) as "the hinge that swung the medieval-Reformation era into the modern era" which displaced the Reformation worldview and gave way to the gradual secularization of

thought and institutions in Western Europe.[3] The stakes could not be higher as the church's consistent historic confession which affirmed that "Jesus is God the Son, the second person of the eternal Trinity, who at a specific point in history took to himself a human nature and was born as Jesus of Nazareth in order to accomplish our redemption" was under attack.[4]

Unitarianism, which grew out of the English Enlightenment, denied Trinitarian doctrine and the atoning work of Jesus on the cross.[5] This article will focus on the lives and writings of two prominent pastors from the north country of Yorkshire, the Unitarian Joseph Priestley (1733–1804) and the Particular Baptist John Fawcett (1740–1817). The analysis of their writings will demonstrate Fawcett provided an orthodox defense against Priestley's heterodox claims against the deity of Jesus and the doctrine of the atonement, that both are found in Scripture, and that these doctrines are foundational to true holiness in the lives of Christians.

Joseph Priestley's Unitarianism

Joseph Priestley was born March 13, 1733, at Fieldhead, Birstall, about six miles southwest of Leeds in Yorkshire.[6] The son of Jonas (1700–1799) and Mary (née Swift, d. 1740) Priestley, he was the oldest of six children (four sons and two daughters) and raised in a Presbyterian home. He was committed to the care of his maternal grandfather, Joseph Swift, a farmer at Shafton, a village about twenty miles southeast of Birstall, for most of his early life until his mother died in 1740. Priestley recalled that his parents were pious people who sought to raise him with religious instruction. His mother was a woman of "exemplary piety" and his father also "had a strong sense of religion, praying with his family morning and evening, and carefully teaching his children and servants the Assembly's catechism, which was all the system of which he had any knowledge."[7] He noted that he was "brought up with sentiments of piety, but without bigotry ... [and] as much confirmed as [he] well could be in the principles of Calvinism" yet never felt that he had experienced "a new birth produced by the immediate agency of the Spirit of God."[8] Though his memories of his mother were sparse, her godly conduct impressed the importance of virtuous living on young Priestley that would remain with him the rest of his life.

Upon her death he returned home where he was sent to a neighborhood school. The care of such a large family proved difficult for his father, so Joseph went to live with his uncle and aunt, John (d. 1745) and Sarah (d. 1764) Keighley in 1742. John, who died shortly after Priestley arrived, was a man of considerable property and distinguished for his zeal for religion. Priestley warmly remembered Sarah as a "truly pious and excellent woman, who knew no other use of wealth, or of talents of any kind, than to do good, and who never spared herself for this purpose."[9]

As a young man, Priestley had a weak constitution and did not think he would live a long life, which he attributed to his mind being given to serious matters. His early days were often filled with horror as he saw himself as one forsaken by God, much like the case of Francis Spira who imagined himself hopelessly lost as "repentance and salvation were denied."[10] These "conflicts of mind" led Priestley to think "habitually of God and a future state" and to have a deep reverence for divine things.[11]

Priestley's sharp intellectual abilities were evident at an early age. He was sent to several schools and picked up Latin, elements of Greek, and a working knowledge of Hebrew by the time he was sixteen. In 1752, Priestley attended the Daventry Academy and studied under Caleb Ashworth (1722–1775).[12] He spent the interval between leaving his grammar school and entering the academy, which he reckoned as some time over two years, learning geometry, algebra, and various branches of mathematics from the Rev. George Haggerstone (d. 1792), a dissenting minister in the neighborhood. He became so proficient that he was excused from all first-year studies and most of the second year when he attended Daventry, and he also obtained a scholarship from Coward's foundation, a trust set up by the London merchant William Coward (d.1738).[13]

Priestley sought membership in his Presbyterian congregation, but the elders of the church refused him because of his unorthodox opinion on original sin. Priestley did not think that the entire human race was liable to the wrath of God due to Adam's sin. He became acquainted with the Baxterian "middle way" from his time with Haggerstone and by the time he went to academy, Priestley was a committed Arminian but had not quite rejected the doctrine of the Trinity or atonement.

Priestley maintained that the chief concern of his studies, even after leaving the academy, was theological matters and his duties as a

Christian minister. He was directed to apply as a candidate for a Presbyterian congregation in Needham Market in Suffolk to succeed the retiring minister John Meadows (1676–1757). The congregation eventually learned of his unorthodox convictions, and he fell out of favor with many in the church. He was able to remain there and continued to develop his views on theological matters, namely the atonement. Priestley indicated that his views were much in line with the Arian perspective laid out in Martin Tomkin's (d. 1755) book *Jesus Christ the Mediator Between God and Men* (1732), however, true to Priestley's inquisitive nature he was "desirous of getting some more definite ideas on the subject."[14]

He set out to find all the biblical data on the atonement that he could and collected every text that appeared to have any relation to it from the Old Testament (OT) and the New Testament (NT). Once done, he organized them "under a great variety of heads" and came to the conclusion that the doctrine of atonement had "no countenance either from Scripture or reason."[15] He presented his treatise to Caleb Fleming (1698–1779) and Nathaniel Lardner (1684–1764) and was urged to publish it, which he did under the title of *The Scripture Doctrine of Remission. Which Showeth That the Death of Christ is No Proper Sacrifice nor Satisfaction for Sin: But That Pardon is Dispensed Solely on Account of Repentance, or a Personal Reformation of the Sinner* (1761). Priestley soon became fully persuaded not only of the falsity of the doctrine of atonement but "of the inspiration of the authors of the books of Scripture as writers, and of all idea of supernatural influence, except for the purpose of miracles."[16] Priestley considered himself an Arian by this time and thoroughly convinced of the absurdity of Trinitarian doctrine.

Upon his move to Mill Hill Chapel in Leeds in 1767, Priestley became convinced of Socinian doctrine after reading Lardner's *A Letter, Written in the Year 1730, Concerning the Question, Whether the Logos Supplied the Place of an Human Soul in the Person of Jesus Christ* (1730). Priestley soon published a harmony of the Gospels, several tracts for use in his congregation on the Lord's Supper and family prayer, and an improved essay on the atonement. Priestly also wrote several works in response to the growing Methodist presence in Leeds and republished the trial of Edward Elwall (1676–1744) which included additional writings concerning the unity of God, the deity of Christ, and the doctrine of the atonement under the name *The Triumph of Truth* in 1771. Henry Venn (1724–1797),

the Anglican vicar of the Huddersfield Parish Church in Yorkshire, took exception to Priestley's work on the Lord's Supper and Fawcett issued his first, and quite rare, polemic in response to Priestley's *Triumph of Truth*.

The Trial of Edward Elwall

Michael Watts identified Arianism and Socinianism as the two foremost anti-trinitarian doctrines during most of the long eighteenth century.[17] The former was the dominant heresy of the fourth century, named after Arius (d.325), an elder in the church at Alexandria in Egypt. Arius taught that Jesus was a created being and not co-equal with the Father. His teaching was ultimately condemned at the Council of Nicaea in 325. Socinians were named after the sixteenth century Italian theologian, Fausto Sozzini (1539–1604) or Socinus, who was affiliated with a group of anti-trinitarian Anabaptists at Rakow in Poland in 1580.[18] Much like the Arians, Socinians also denied that Jesus was co-equal with the Father but went further by denying his pre-existence altogether. Arian views did not have a wide adherence until the first half of the eighteenth century, but Socinianism had a small following as early as the 1640s.[19] The Unitarians were a steady presence and seemed to gain more traction near the end of the century. Some Nonconformists would often transition from their Calvinistic or Arminian systems to Arianism, Socinianism, and Unitarianism, most notably the Presbyterians transitioning to the latter.[20] It is noteworthy that the Toleration Act of 1688 afforded tolerance to Dissenters in England, but Unitarians (and other anti-trinitarian sects) were excluded from protection and under the Blasphemy Act of 1698 could face up to three years imprisonment for propagating their beliefs.

One such case is the trial of Edward Elwall (1676–1744), born in Ettingshall, a hamlet roughly fifteen miles northwest of Birmingham, who was a Unitarian affiliated with the Quakers. Elwall was Presbyterian for a time but showed the fluidity of his commitments when he and his wife were baptized by immersion by a Baptist pastor when he spent time in Bristol. He eventually began to question the doctrine of the Trinity and became a Unitarian. He was a merchant and grocer with a solid reputation and respected for his honest business dealings.

In 1724, Elwall was living in Wolverhampton, Staffordshire, a town roughly two miles from his birthplace. He wrote *A True Testimony for God and for his*

Sacred Law: Being a Plain, Honest, Defence of the First Commandment of God Against All the Trinitarians Under Heaven which caused a great disturbance among the Anglican clergy who would not rest until they brought a large indictment against him. In 1726, Elwall was brought before Judge Denton in the Stafford Assizes on charges of blasphemy and heresy.

When asked by the judge whether he was guilty, Elwall denied the charge as he believed no evil had been done in writing a book. He simply asked if he could be permitted to defend his view which he perceived was the plain truth of God as given in Scripture. Denton was disturbed when he learned Elwall had not been given a copy of his indictment and was prepared to defer the trial upon proper bail so Elwall could review the charges. Elwall, however, declined Denton's kind gesture and maintained he had "an innocent breast … and injured no man."[21] He reiterated his request for liberty to plead his case and the judge consented.

Elwall began his defense by calling attention to the first commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods but Me," keying in on the word "me" as a simple and straightforward declaration of the singleness of God.[22] He clarified that this spoke of God as a single person, not as three distinct persons. He developed his argument further by appealing to Moses, the patriarchs, and the prophets, keying in on the passage from Deuteronomy 4:35, "Unto thee it was shewed, that thou mightiest know, that the Lord he is God; there is none else besides him. Out of heaven he made thee to hear his voice, that he might instruct thee."[23] In this text, Elwall pointed to the singular pronouns, "he, him, and his" as a demonstration of the single person identification of God. Additionally, Elwall argued that not one of the patriarchs or prophets ever considered God as anything but one single person, drawing on passages from Genesis 14:22 where Abraham said to the king of Sodom, "I have lift up mine hand unto the Lord, the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth."[24] From the prophets, Elwall chose Malachi 2:10, "Have we not all one father? Hath not one God created us?" to defend the "pure, uncorrupted Unitarian doctrine of one God."[25] He presented God's own words to Abraham as another proof, "I am almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect" (Gen 17:1). He drew upon two additional texts from the prophet Isaiah, "to whom will ye liken me, or shall I be equal, saith the holy One" (parenthetically quipping "and not the holy three"), and, "There is no God, I know not any: I am the Lord, there is none else. There is no God

besides me" (Isa 45:5).[26] The references to "me" and "One," Elwall continued, "did utterly exclude any other person's being God, but that One single 'me.'"[27]

Elwall insisted that the "monstrous doctrine" of the Trinity "was not then born, nor of two thousand years after, till the Apostacy and Popery began to put up its filthy head."[28] In other words, Trinitarian theology, besides being an odorous and vile doctrine, was not ancient and established, but rather a relatively new invention of apostates and false teachers like the popes who set out to deceive the true flock of God with man-made inventions and doctrine. Elwall rehearsed how he continued to plead many other OT texts, but recognizing the need to give the full testimony of Scripture, he moved to the NT.

He first quoted from Mark 12:29–30, when a certain ruler asked Jesus about the greatest commandment. Elwall explained, "our Lord Jesus Christ ... told him the same words that Moses had said. 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one Lord,' not three, 'and though shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, etc.'" thereby demonstrating Jesus only recognized the Father as God in the first commandment.[29] To this the scribe agreed, Elwall declared, as he answered, "Thou hast answered right, for there is but one God, and there is no other but he" (Mark 12:32). He proceeded next with the words of Christ from John 17:3, "This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent," which he understood to say that God and Jesus are not one and the same.

At this juncture in the trial, Elwall turned his face directly to the priests, his prosecutors, who were standing on the right side of the judge, and proclaimed that "since the lips of the blessed Jesus, which always spoke the truth, says, his father is the only true God; who is he, and who are they that dare set up another, in contradiction to my blessed Lord, who says, his father is the only true God?"[30] At this, he stopped to see if anyone would answer, and no objections came. Elwall attributed this silence to the power of God which came over them and shut their mouths so that not one of them spoke a word. Elwall then directed his attention to the people situated on his left, and warned them "in the fear of God, not to take their religious sentiments from men, but from God; not from the Pope, but from Christ; not from Prelates nor Priests, but from the Prophets and the Apostles."[31]

Elwall completed his account of the trial with a final appeal to Christ and Scripture. He reminded his audience of Jesus' words, "Call no man Father here upon earth; for one is your Father, even God. And call no man Master, for one is your Master, even Christ" (Matt 23:9). And lastly, he cited Paul, "there is no other God but one; for though there be that are called gods (as there be gods many, and lords many) both in heaven and earth; but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things" (1 Cor 8:4–6). All told, Elwall recounted that he had been given the space of nearly an hour and a half in which he expounded fully from the both the OT and the NT that his doctrine was not in error and supported by God's own Word.

After pleading his cause, Elwall perceived there was a consensus in the courtroom of his innocence and that the priests had brought the charges against him purely out of envy. Elwall recorded that he "began to set before them the odious nature of that hell-born principle of persecution, and that it was hatch'd in Hell; that it never came from Jesus Christ."[32] He proceeded to lament the cruel and barbaric nature of the priests' conduct, stating that persecution was never the action of true Christians. Nevertheless, he maintained that he put his house in order, and was confident that if he were fined or imprisoned, he would be certain that God's living presence would be with him.[33] At this, he reported that Rupert Humpatch, one of the justices of the peace and neighbor of Elwall's for three years, spoke up for Elwall's character as an honest man.

Judge Denton, impressed with Elwall's conduct and character, pressed him for a few additional details. He concluded Elwall had studied this doctrine deeply but wondered if he sought the advice from one of the clergy or bishops of the Church of England. Elwall confirmed he had exchanged ten letters with the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Wake (1657–1737) but received no satisfaction into his inquiries. The archbishop only referred to acts of Parliament and declarations of state in his responses whereas Elwall appealed to Scripture throughout their correspondence. Ultimately, Elwall declared that he would not regard popes, councils, or priests concerning things of a spiritual nature but rather he would only obey God, his prophets, Christ, and his apostles. The judge responded, "Well, if his Grace of Canterbury was not able to give you satisfaction, Mr. Elwall, I believe I shall not."[34] Elwall was released and returned to his home. Priestley later

read the record of Elwall's trial and published abroad that truth indeed had triumphed that day.

The Corruption of Christianity

In 1782, Priestley sought to lay out the clear doctrines of Scripture he believed had been obscured over the previous seventeen centuries. The work was dedicated to his friend Theophilus Lindsey (1723–1808), pastor of the first Unitarian church in Britain. Priestley understood the relationship of divine unity to the natural placability of the divine being.[35] Since Priestley rejected Christ's divinity, he naturally objected to the doctrine of the atonement, saying "I conceive this doctrine to be a gross misrepresentation of the character and moral government of God, and to affect many other articles in the scheme of Christianity, greatly disfiguring and depraving it."[36] He assessed the doctrine as a modern invention which had "no countenance whatever in reason, or the Scriptures; and therefore that the whole doctrine of atonement, with every modification of it, has been a departure from the primitive and genuine doctrine of Christianity."[37]

Priestley's main objection to the atonement was Scripture's silence on what was perceived to be such a major doctrine. He acknowledged that Scripture is clear on the malignant nature of sin, but it did not go further to say God cannot pardon sin without satisfaction being made to his justice, laws, and government. Priestley argued atonement is not necessary because all Scripture ever prescribes is "repentance and a good life" which are, "of themselves, sufficient to recommend us to the divine favour."[38] Priestley continued, "all the declarations of divine mercy are made without reserve or limitation to the truly penitent, through all the books of Scripture, without the most distant hint of any regard being had to the sufferings or merit of any being whatever."[39] Priestley contended that Scripture only calls for individual repentance and if the doctrine of the atonement were expected in God's Word, the whole of the OT would be a "most unaccountable book, and the religion it exhibits is defective in the most essential article" for David, Job, and the prophets only ever referenced their own piety and repentance in their penitent addresses to God.[40] Furthermore, if the atonement was such a central tenet to Christianity, Priestley maintained that the Jews would have expected a suffering Messiah, not a conquering one as they did, and Jesus would have certainly pointed out their failure. Instead, Priestley asserted,

Jesus spoke only of repentance, good works, and the mercy of God. He never instructed the people to look to the sufferings or merit of someone else as the basis of their hope. Even when Jesus spoke of his death, he never explicitly told his hearers he must die to secure the pardon for their sins.[41]

If the OT said nothing about the atonement and Jesus was silent on the matter, then the preaching of the apostles was the last hope for any warrant in Scripture. Priestley asserted no such instance was recorded and referenced Peter's sermons in Acts 2 and 10 as examples. Peter called for the Jews to repent in Acts 2 but said nothing of Jesus' atoning work on the cross. In Acts 10, Peter preached the death and resurrection of Jesus to Cornelius but was again silent on the concept of man being accepted on the merits of Christ or any other. Quite the contrary, Priestley complained, as Peter told Cornelius that God shows no partiality "but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him" (Acts 10:34). Likewise, Paul spoke many times of Jesus' death in Acts 13, 17, 26, and 28, but not one word concerning atonement. At best, Priestley claimed the apostles only spoke of atonement in hints and inferences, and for a doctrine of such importance, that was too flimsy a foundation to stand on.[42]

Finally, Priestley considered the claims of the atonement as the satisfaction of God's justice. His response was that justice "can be nothing more than a modification of goodness, or benevolence, which is his sole governing principle, the object and end of which is the supreme happiness of his creatures and subjects."[43] The atonement may raise the understanding of God's justice, if it be allowed, but in proportion lowers the veracity of God's mercy. Priestley argued that the doctrine lost its effectiveness because the severity of God ought to work upon men, but since God's wrath has been applied to another, the offenders would never feel the weight of it. This would also hold true for all future transgressors since they too would not feel the weight of this burden, leaving Priestley to wonder how this would serve as any real restraint or admonition to virtuous living.[44]

Priestley concluded the early fathers did not teach the atonement and deemed other things, like martyrdom, baptism or the eucharist, as more important.[45] Some, like Origen (c.185–c.254) and Tertullian (c.155–c.220), even claimed there were salvific properties in them. He quoted Origen's call for believers to lay down their lives since Christ laid down his for them. This was not for the benefit of Christ, but for themselves

and others who may be edified by their martyrdom. Origin continued, "and perhaps as we are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ ... so some may be redeemed by the blood of the martyrs."[46] Priestley's point was that Origen's atonement language could mean Christ's death and the death of others could be sufficient for salvation. This was a clear departure from the doctrine of atonement of his day, so this language could be dismissed as figurative only and not an authoritative source from history. Likewise, atonement must not have been necessary as Tertullian believed baptism washed away the guilt of sin and the church of Rome eventually considered the eucharist to be "as proper a sacrifice as the death of Christ itself, and as having the same original independent value."[47]

As he traced the development of the doctrine, Priestley's criticism of its lack of rational integrity only increased. He complained that when atonement language was discussed, there was never any clear consensus to whom the price (using ransom language) of Christ's sacrifice was paid and how such payment was rendered to the guilty parties. The earliest ransom view of the atonement made the devil the recipient of payment, a thought altogether repugnant to Priestley. Later articulations made the Father the recipient which was equally unsatisfactory.

The next significant work on the atonement Priestley recognized was Anselm's (1033–1109) satisfaction view posited in *Cur Deus Homo* in the eleventh century. Theophilus, Anselm's contemporary in the Greek tradition, made no significant developments on the atonement nor did Peter Lombard (d. 1160). After Anselm, perhaps Bernard (1090–1153) was the most innovative who spoke more of imputed sin and imputed righteousness than any who had gone before him.[48] Priestley reckoned the doctrine of the atonement really took shape during the Reformation. The Lutherans made explicit reference to it in the Augsburg Confession (1530), and the Waldenses of Piedmont included their position (satisfaction) in their confession of faith presented to the king of France in 1544. The Synod of Dort in 1618 clarified Christ's death was an infinite satisfaction for offenses of an infinite magnitude. Man could not escape judgment unless God's infinite justice was satisfied, and that satisfaction is impossible for men and only by God's only begotten Son.

Even with these rudimentary explanations, Priestley remained frustrated with how the idea of atonement could appropriate the benefit of Christ's

sufferings to individuals. Priestley objected that there must be some method, otherwise, all mankind would have an equal claim to it. He continued, "and since it would favour the doctrine of human merit too much, to suppose that the merit of Christ's suffering was always applied to persons of a certain character and conduct, advantage was taken of an expression of the apostle Paul, that we are saved by faith alone."[49] Priestley's disdain for sola fide was evident as he claimed that the Reformers merely defined faith's effects in vague and figurative language, "which conveys no determinate ideas, and leaves the mind in great uncertainty, whether it be possessed of it or not."[50] The Synod of Dort's definition of faith, much to Priestley's chagrin, was "an instrument by which we lay hold of the righteousness of Christ" and rested on the belief that this was imparted by God and outside man's ability to acquire on his own. For Priestley, this cut against the grain of Scripture's plain language of man's need for repentance and good works to find acceptance with God.

Even with this development of the doctrine, Priestley pointed out there was still diversity among the Reformers concerning some very essential points. Calvin, he pointed out, believed Christ really descended to hell, not for the purpose of preaching to those in prison as the "primitive Fathers understood it ... but that he might there suffer the proper torments of the damned and bear the wrath of God that had been merited by the sins of men."[51] Calvin, however, did not believe God was really angry with Christ but rather made him suffer the effects of his anger so the "stain (that is the guilt) as well as the punishment of sin, was laid upon him, so that it ceased to be imputed to men."[52]

It becomes quite clear that Priestley's problem with the doctrine of the atonement was directly tied to his Christology. He could not reckon how the sufferings of Christ could be deemed infinite for Christ was not divine. Priestley objected:

> A more difficult question, and to which it is impossible that any satisfactory answer should be given, is, how the sufferings of Christ can be deemed infinite, so as to make atonement for sins of infinite magnitude, when the divine nature of Christ, to which alone infinity belongs, is impassible, and his human nature could bear no more than that of any other man? It must be exceedingly difficult to conceive how any supposed union of the two natures can be of any avail in

> this case, unless, in consequence of that union, the divine nature had borne some share of the sufferings, which the scheme requires to be infinite, and this idea is justly disclaimed as impious.[53]

Clarity and correction to such aberrant doctrine was achieved by men such as Faustus Socinus, who Priestley believed recovered the original doctrine of the proper humanity of Christ. He saw clearly "the absurdity of what was advanced by the reformers concerning satisfaction being made to the justice of God by the death of Christ" and argued that Christ, being only a man, could not in any proper sense atone for the sins of other men.[54] Socinus allowed that Jesus was able in some sense to save men from the punishment of God because of his great power in heaven and earth. He concluded that this method of rescuing men from the punishment for sin is very different from that which implies the satisfaction for sin, noting "nothing can be more repugnant to each other than the freedom of pardon and satisfaction ... since it plainly does very much derogate from the power and authority, or the goodness and mercy of God."[55]

Priestley observed that in England the doctrine of the atonement "seems to have got as firm possession of the minds of men, as that of the divinity of Christ."[56] In his mind, entrenched doctrines like these were like a great building, which does not fall all at once but will often leave some apartments which some think still livable. Errors like these did not happen overnight nor would they be destroyed quickly. He was convinced, however, that his estimation of the size of the error was correct for it had no evidence in Scripture, no historical basis, nor did it appeal to reason. It would therefore be dependent on God's providence to open men's minds by degrees and lead them to the light of truth. Since there could be no clear basis found in Scripture, Priestley believed that it was "time to lay less stress on the interpretation of particular texts, and to allow more weight to general considerations, derived from the whole tenor of Scripture, and the dictates of reason."[57] He continued, "time may clear up obscurities in particular texts, by discovering various readings, by the clearer knowledge of ancient customs and opinions, etc. But arguments drawn from such considerations as those of the moral government of God, the nature of things, and the general plan of revelation, will not be put off to a future time" for they were within their present reach.[58] Priestley's reasons lie in the simple,

plain reading of Scripture which states that "God is merciful to the penitent, and that nothing is requisite to make men, in all situations, the objects of his favour, but such moral conduct as he has made them capable of."[59]

John Fawcett's Defense of Truth

There were several prominent Nonconformist theologians who engaged Socinian heresy on British soil, the Congregationalist John Owen (1616–1683) and Particular Baptist pastors John Gill (1697–1771) and Andrew Fuller (1754–1815).[60] Another Particular Baptist pastor, John Fawcett, is worthy to be included in this list of able defenders of the faith. It is noteworthy that Fuller enjoyed a warm friendship with Fawcett and even consulted him, along with Abraham Booth (1734–1806), in his preparations for his significant treatise against Socinianism.[61]

Fawcett, like Priestley, was raised in a devout Christian home. He was born at Lidget Green near Bradford in Yorkshire on January 6, 1740. His father, Stephen Fawcett (c.1701–1751), died when he was twelve years old and Fawcett was apprenticed to a man in Bradford for six years. He would work twelve to fourteen hours a day but made a habit to forego sleep so that he might spend the night in prayer and reading Scripture. During this time Fawcett read through the Bible multiple times by the age of fourteen. His greatest treasure was a small pocket Bible that he would sneak readings from during what little downtime he might have during the day. A considerable part of his pocket money would be used to purchase candles, and he would wait until the family was asleep so he could engage in his "delightful employment" of reading God's Word late into the night.[62]

He was reared in the Anglican tradition but would travel to congregations of different stripes just so he could hear the gospel truth he loved so much, often visiting Methodist and Baptist meetings. In his journal, Fawcett traced his conversion and new spiritual life to a sermon preached by the itinerant evangelist George Whitefield (1714–1770) in 1755. Fawcett continued to study the Bible rigorously and became convinced of believer's baptism. In 1758, he presented himself to the Baptist church in Bradford for membership. Within two years Fawcett sensed a call to ministry and was installed as pastor of the Baptist cause in Wainsgate in 1764. Fawcett's reputation quickly grew, and he was called to succeed Gill

at Carter's Lane, which he respectfully declined so he could remain with his people he loved so dearly. Opportunity came once again for Fawcett to be the principal at Bristol Academy, the first Baptist college, in 1792 but he once again politely declined so he could remain with his flock.

Fawcett's demeanor was very kind, and he was not known as a confrontational figure. He avoided controversy as much as he was able, however, Priestley's publication of *Triumph of Truth* (1782) troubled Fawcett tremendously. He recognized the danger such heresy could cause not only for his congregation but for the church at large. This resulted in one of his earliest publications, *The Christian's Humble Plea* (1772). Fawcett's irenic nature was so well known that his son and biographer, John Fawcett Jr. (1768–1837) noted this was most likely written under the pseudonym Christophilus so Fawcett could avoid any further conflict. His peaceful personality was not to be confused with a lack of boldness as Fawcett staunchly defended the full deity of Jesus in response to Priestley's publication.

The Christian's Humble Plea

Fawcett and Priestley could certainly agree that there is only one living and true God. The error, Fawcett pointed out, is when men fail to honor Jesus as equal with God the Father. The fact that he should be "declared Omniscient, the Searcher of Hearts, the Almighty, the Immutable, and Eternal, and yet be but a mere creature, is most amazing."[63] Fawcett chose to write his rebuttal of Priestley in verse, in the spirit of Alexander Pope's (1688–1744) *An Essay on Man*, for the singular purpose that such style "strikes the reader more strongly at first, and is more easily retained by him afterwards."[64] Fawcett's great concern was ultimately for the glory of Christ and for the church to be strengthened against such heresy. For Fawcett, this was no small issue as he put the matter plainly, "'What think ye of Christ?' is a question of the last importance, since we are assured, that those who do not rightly 'believe in him, are condemned, and the wrath of God abideth on them,' John 3:18, 36."[65]

His treatise began with declaring the majesty of Jesus' divinity and the mystery of his love to man. The angels who sing his praises and "wrap up and hide their faces in their wing" possess a stature higher than mankind, yet it is man who is so arrogant and ungrateful that he is "too wise to pay due honor"

to the sovereign Lord Jesus.[66] Man's reason, prized so highly by Priestley, is given to him by his maker, but man in his depraved nature has employed it in "impious war with heaven" and attempts "to dethrone the Father's equal and eternal Son."[67] Priestley believed the account of Elwall's trial and defense of Unitarian doctrine was a "triumph of truth" but Fawcett declared this "triumph," a clear allusion to Priestley's work, was a "most vile and pernicious pamphlet."[68] When man elevates his reason above God's revelation and truth, it is rebellion against his maker. Even though the deity of Christ was Fawcett's primary focus, his defense was clearly trinitarian as he appealed to the "sacred Spirit" to enlighten his mind, direct his quill, "raise his low thoughts, with sacred ardour fill his languid pow'rs" as he rehearsed Christ's glorious attributes and deeds.[69]

Fawcett's broadside next employed Colossians 2:9, "In him the fulness of the Godhead dwells" to demonstrate the Unitarian fallacy of refusing to acknowledge Christ's deity. Elwall claimed to provide an overabundance of Scripture to show Jesus Christ is not divine, yet no mention of this crucial text was offered. Even in an abbreviated summary of events from Elwall's trial one would think this passage (and many others that affirm Christ's deity such as John 1:1, Heb 1:3, etc.) would be given some treatment. Elwall repeatedly insisted there is only one God, a point Fawcett heartily agreed with, but Fawcett continued, "He [Christ] and the Father are in essence one, Christ is th' eternal partner of his throne," a direct reference to John 10:30, "I and my Father are one." Fawcett provided additional commentary on the Trinitarian bent of this passage in the footnotes, "not one person, for that would be a contradiction; but ἕν ἐσμεν, one thing, one nature, or essence."[70] Clearly, two persons are in view here (the Father and the Son), yet Jesus affirms they are "one." Scripture, Fawcett argued, knows no division of their sacred essence. Priestley made the fatal error of elevating Elwall's (and his own) reason as the final arbiter of meaning when they should have "let reason's dim and feeble beam, own revelation as the judge supreme; nor dare t' oppose, because her scanty line could never reach to sound the deep Divine."[71]

Next, Fawcett explained Jesus' divinity is observable in his attributes. He considered Jesus' omniscience, "Hell's deep designs before him naked lie, and nothing's hid from his all-seeing eye" and remarked on Peter's confession in John 21:17, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I

love you." Since Father, Son, and Spirit have one nature, what is said of God the Father in the OT is equally true for the Son and Spirit. Hence, when Fawcett wrote, "The blackest darkness and the blazing light are equal to his all-pervading sight" referencing Psalm 139:11–12, he attributed this to the omniscience of Jesus.[72]

Before leaving the omniscience of Jesus, Fawcett reinforced the full humanity of Jesus as well:

> No being but the great Jehovah can
> Spy ev'ry thought and search the heart of man …
> Yet when we hear the great Redeemer say,
> "He knows not when shall be the judgement-day;"
> And tell us, "that his heavenly Father is
> Greater than he," the sense is plainly this;
> That he's as truly man, as God supreme,
> For manhood's every pow'r was found in him.
> God in our nature deign'd on earth to dwell;
> And hence his name is call'd Emmanuel.
> Yet th' human nature can't omniscient be,
> Nor claim with God a just equality;
> But since of both these nature he partakes,
> The claims of each at diff'rent times he speaks.[73]

It is interesting to note how Fawcett recognized the significance of two passages that have historically caused Christological controversies, namely Matthew 24:36, "But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only" and John 14:28, "You heard me say to you, 'I am going away, and I will come to you.' If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I." These passages have been used by opponents of orthodoxy to prove that Jesus does not know all things, therefore, he cannot be God and since the Father is greater than the Son, he must be a lower being and not divine. Here Fawcett argued the force of these passages is that Jesus' divinity does not need to be set aside or dismissed but can clearly be addressing his humanity. He compared Hebrews 9:27, "just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgement" with

John 11:26, "and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die." Fawcett argued that Socinus, and those who deny Christ's deity, try to make one passage mean the body and the other the soul, yet deny such proofs of Christ's full humanity which died and full deity which is eternal.[74]

Fawcett continued with "yet brighter proofs of Jesus' pow'r" as he contemplated his omnipresence as seen in John 3:13, "no one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man." Fawcett wrote of Jesus' immutability, "The tide of creatures ever ebbs and flows; but, dearest Lord, no change thy being knows," drawing on Hebrews 13:8 which declares "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."[75] Note also Fawcett's rebuttal of Arian, Unitarian, and Socinian doctrine as he speaks of Christ's eternal being and reign, "When states and kingdoms shall be known no more: thy throne eternal ages shall remain, and thou for ever and for ever reign," a reference to Hebrews 1:8 which says, "But of the Son he says, 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever."[76]

Fawcett refuted the perplexing notion that Jesus is never referred to as divine in Scripture in a lengthy footnote as he considered the names given to Christ. He pointed to "the great God" from Titus 2:13 with this explanation:

> Titus ii.13 "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ." That Jesus Christ is called the Great God in this place, as well as our Saviour, I should think, must be plain to everyone who carefully reads the passage with an unbiased mind, in connexion with the three preceeding verses. The article is prefixed before the words, Great God, without any repetition of it before the next clause; from whence it should seem the construction must be this: The appearance of Jesus Christ, who is the Great God and our Saviour. To this we may add, that no instance can be given where the word επιφανεια is ever applied to any but our Lord Jesus Christ. The Father is never said to Appear; nay, is expressly affirmed to be Invincible.[77]

Again, Fawcett pointed out that Jesus is worthy to be worshipped since he is God, citing the worship of the Lamb in Revelation 5:8–9. Elwall and Priestley affirmed Jesus spoke only truth but failed to reckon the passage in Matthew 4:10 where Jesus rebuked Satan for attempting to solicit worship from the sovereign Lord himself, saying, "You shall worship the Lord your

God and him only shall you serve." The host of heaven falls at the feet of Jesus, and they are not rebuked for worshipping him, and Hebrews 1:6 declares "Let all God's angels worship him," a quote from Deuteronomy 32:43 applied to Jesus. Fawcett argued that the worship of Jesus is upheld in Scripture as a characteristic of a Christian in 1 Corinthians 1:2, Acts 9:14 and 9:21, and if Jesus is not divine and equal with the Father, then all "saints and seraphs, heav'n and earth must be promoters each of vile idolatry."[78]

The Cross of Christ

Although Fawcett did not directly respond in print to Priestley's *History of Corruptions*, he was clearly aware of Priestley's writings and recognized the importance of the cross to orthodox Christianity. Originally penned for the Yorkshire and Lancashire Association in 1793, of which Fawcett was a founding member in 1787, *The Cross of Christ* was the association letter for that year.[79] When the ministers from the participating churches of the association met, they would discuss various matters of debate and controversy in their respective churches. They would then pray and discuss which matters of utmost importance (most always doctrinal) would be worthy of attention for the edification and strengthening of their people. Fawcett determined that this was the doctrine of the atonement as life's greatest question is that of the Philippian jailer in Acts 16, "what must I do to be saved?" The only answer, Fawcett declared, is found in the cross of Christ, "The death of the divine Savior in our room and stead is what distinguishes the religion of Jesus from all others."[80]

Priestley argued Scripture was silent on the atonement, but Fawcett held quite the opposite opinion as his letter is thoroughly saturated with Scripture references and language.[81] The simple and plain message of the cross is "the fulfillment of divine purposes and predictions — the salvation of sinners — the conquest of all enemies — the foundation of hope — the ground of triumph — the display of the divine perfections — and the grand incentive to holiness."[82] Scripture clearly presents the lost condition of man and his subsequent separation from God, and the message of the cross is the greatest demonstration of God's love to lost sinners and the hope of reconciliation found only in his Son Jesus Christ.

Fawcett began with the fulfillment of divine purposes and predictions that draw on the OT sacrificial system. "The thoughts and counsels of the God

of all grace were," Fawcett explained, "from everlasting, employed on the grand design, which was accomplished by the Redeemer's death."[83] He drew upon Revelation 5:6 which presents Jesus as a "Lamb standing, as though it had been slain." Scripture plainly depicts mankind as fallen in sin, inheriting the guilt of Adam their federal head. The sacrificial system points to the holiness of God which demands that atonement must be made for sin. The earliest mention of this is Genesis 3:21 when an animal was slain to cover the sins of Adam after the fall and his subsequent casting out of the garden of Eden signifying the death of sin and separation from God man would face from that time forward. Fawcett noted how John the Baptist identified Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29, 36). Peter spoke of Jesus' atoning death in plain language, "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect" (1 Pet 1:18–19).

Fawcett insisted that Christ fulfilled all the types and prophecies from Moses to Malachi and that if this were not true, they would be at best "pompous and unmeaning institutions."[84] All the blood of innocent animals, all the flesh consumed, all the peculiarities of the sacrificial system were repeated for centuries for nothing if they did not find their meaning in Christ and his cross. Here Fawcett is clearly drawing upon Hebrews 9:22, "Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins." The writer of Hebrews continues that Christ, the true high priest, has entered heaven "with blood not his own" to "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb 9:25–26). This sacrifice of the Son of God was offered one time "to bear the sins of many" (Heb 9:28).

Fawcett continued with a robust survey of passages to demonstrate his absolute confidence in Scripture's attestation of Christ's fulfillment of OT predictions and prophecies. The priesthood of Melchizedek and of Aaron and his sons prefigured the everlasting priesthood of Jesus (Ps 110:4; Heb 6:20, 7:17). The account of Isaac the son of Abraham being bound and laid on the altar can only be fully understood and explained by the cross of Christ. Isaiah prophesied of the suffering servant who was led like a lamb to the slaughter, cut off from the land of the living for the transgression

of his people, and all this done by the will of the Father to crush him (Isa 53:7–10). Jesus himself instructed Nicodemus, the great teacher of the Law in his day, that just as the brazen serpent was lifted up in the wilderness (Num 21:8–9) so too would he be lifted up and that whoever believes in him may have eternal life (John 3:14). Just as the rock was smitten and gave life-giving water to the Israelites in the wilderness (Exod 17:1–7), Jesus offers living water to all who come to him (John 4). Finally, Fawcett rehearsed the example of Joshua (meaning "YHWH saves") who led his people to the promised land as prefiguring Jesus who leads his people to eternal life with him.

Fawcett supplied more evidence from Scripture to prove that all of God's Word, from Moses to the prophets, concerned Jesus Christ (Luke 24:27). Jesus was the promised seed of the woman who would crush the head of the serpent (Gen 3:15) and by whom all the nations of the earth would be blessed (Gen 12:3). Christ, the Lion of the tribe of Judah and Root of David (Rev 5:5), is the scepter that would not depart and lawgiver until Shiloh comes (Gen 49:10 KJV). The crucifixion is observed and prophesied in Psalm 22, whose opening lines Jesus quoted from the cross. Jesus was the anointed one prophesied by Daniel who would be cut off (Dan 9:26). Paul also affirmed that the OT pointed to Christ when he wrote to the Colossian church that the dietary requirements and feasts were a "shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ" (Col 2:17).

Fawcett was convinced that the death of Christ "is the life of the gospel" and that "all the lines of evangelical truth meet in this one point."[85] Fawcett argued that all doctrines (election, regeneration, effectual calling, justification, adoption, sanctification, and perseverance in faith and holiness) are connected and related to the atonement of Christ.[86] The atonement, in fact, is the foundation without which the whole structure would fall to the ground. Priestley refused to acknowledge the deity of Christ so he could not conceive how a mere man could pay an infinite price for the redemption of mankind. True to Fawcett's estimation, Priestley's house was built on sand for it did not have the fully human and fully divine Christ, and him crucified, as its foundation.

Fawcett's letter addressed Priestley's other contentions with the atonement concerning Christ's deity, the application of his atoning sacrifice, and the effect on a man's morals and life thereafter. Fawcett returned to passages that

plainly declare Jesus' humanity (Phil 2:5–8) and divinity (Col 2:9). Priestley complained there was no reasonable explanation how the sacrifice of one would justify another man's guilt, but more illogical is Priestley's insistence that man can essentially clean himself up by good works and repentance when Scripture declares he is in a "lost and ruined condition."[87] Scripture nowhere declares that man can save himself (Isa 64:6; Ecc 7:20; Rom 3:23) and insists he must appeal to the grace and mercy of God for salvation. Jesus came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10), by bearing their sins in his own body on the tree (1 Pet 2:24), was wounded for their transgressions, and bruised for their iniquities. In his suffering, the just for the unjust, man might have healing by his stripes and life by his death.[88] Fawcett could not make sense of the atonement without a divine savior, for salvation could not accomplished "barely by the heavenly doctrine which he taught, and the bright example which he set before us; but by the death which he died for our sins." [89] He continued:

> If the Redeemer's death were not a proper atonement for sin, why was it necessary that God should be manifest in the flesh? Why was it necessary that he who redeems us, should be Immanuel, God with us, God in our nature? An angel from heaven might have taught us the will of our Maker, and given us a good example. Nay, a man like ourselves might have done both. The deity of Christ, and his atonement for sin, must stand or fall together. Hence those who deny the one, do also consistently enough, deny the other. It is the dignity of the Redeemer's person that gives efficacy and validity to his sacrifice.[90]

Even if Christ's deity were allowed and he was presented as a sacrifice, Priestley questioned how this could be applied to another man. Fawcett pointed to Scripture once more to show that Christ's atoning sacrifice was applied by faith. The apostle Paul explained that all mankind has fallen short of the glory of God and are justified by his grace as a gift, which is "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith" (Rom 3:23–25). In this manner, God displays the "utmost reverence to his divine law," declares his "infinite abhorrence of sin," strikes the "deepest terror on every persevering sinner," and "lays a solid foundation for the highest hope in every penitent transgressor."[91] In other words, it is the triune God's redemptive

work in salvation that is received by faith through grace (Eph 2:8–9) and cannot be attained by man's good works and reason.

Fawcett demonstrated that the cross is the "grand incentive to holiness" in contrast to Priestley's insistence that such a doctrine cannot be felt by guilty sinners nor have any meaningful effect on their conduct. It is the love of Christ that constrains sinners and produces such gratitude which will be "more operative than the most cogent philosophical reasonings," a clear jab at Priestley's enlightenment principles.[92] Fawcett pointed to 1 John 4:19, "we love because he first loved us" that shows how God is the first mover in the salvation of men. It is the love of God the Father that sent God the Son to the cross to offer himself as the only true and perfect sacrifice which appeased his infinite and righteous wrath on sin.

Fawcett concluded Priestley's Unitarian views were outside the historic confession of the church and that he, and all who held them, were preaching another gospel contrary to Scripture. Ultimately, Priestley's system promoted love for self and reliance upon one's own repentance and good works for salvation. Scripture, Fawcett argued, reveals a much different picture as an enlightened sinner who reasons his way to Priestley's conclusions will one day realize he has denied the Son of God and be eternally cast away from his presence.

Conclusion

This essay began with the false security that can ensnare Christians when promises of religious tolerance and freedom from persecution give way to complacency in the church. Jesus offered no guarantee from opposition when he told his disciples, "In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). For the Nonconformists, it was proper to look for the dawn of brighter days with the Act of Toleration yet still recognize the need to be alert when deadly heresy, such as Priestley's Unitarianism, threatened. It is also noteworthy that Priestley represented a shift in "Rational Dissenting ideals," from a more passive approach to an open avowal, the "frank, open, even outspoken statement and defense of one's opinions."[93] Such energetic opposition to orthodoxy needed to be met head on and faithful men like Fawcett answered the call.

Fawcett rightly argued that the church must get the doctrine of the person and work of Jesus right. Wellum's conclusion agrees, "Jesus Christ our Lord is the main subject of Scripture, as God's entire redemptive purposes center in him" and "all theological doctrines either prepare for Christology or are inferred from it."[94] Haykin showed the costly effects of unchecked heresy in the conclusion of his article on Fuller and Priestley as he noted the apparent defection of the extremely gifted Particular Baptist pastor Robert Robinson (1735–1790). Robinson became increasingly critical of Calvinism and Trinitarian doctrine near the end of his life and preached his final two sermons at Priestley's request in Socinian meeting-houses in Birmingham.[95] Priestley preached Robinson's funeral and was all too happy to declare Robinson had become "one of the most zealous unitarians" before his death.[96]

Priestley was right to assess the intrinsic connection between Christology and the atonement although he sadly came to the wrong conclusions. His accusations that Scripture was silent on the deity of Christ and the doctrine of the atonement were unsoundly argued and his misreading of church history wrongly asserted the early fathers knew nothing of the atonement. It is true the early church did not have the developed doctrine of the atonement of Priestley's time, but this does not mean they had no position on it. One has but to glance at the Nicene Creed's statement about Jesus "who, for us and our salvation, came down from heaven" and "for our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate" for atonement language in the early church.[97] Furthermore, Priestley's insistence on only one view of the atonement in order for it to be valid fails to appreciate the nuance that each position (ransom, satisfaction, Christus Victor, penal substitution, etc.) offers and in no way demonstrates this doctrine was unsubstantiated in Scripture or church history.

Fawcett ably demonstrated Scripture's revelation of Jesus Christ as God the Son incarnate and provided a biblical defense of the necessity of the atonement along with its application to sinful humanity by God's grace through faith. The battle for truth by these two Yorkshiremen demonstrates the importance of orthodoxy during the long eighteenth century and for the church moving forward. May Fawcett's exhortation continue to serve the church as she awaits the coming of the Lord Jesus:

> Would we be excited to ingenuous sorrow for sin? While we look to him whom we have pierced we mourn after a godly sort. Nothing is so likely to break the stony heart, and to melt the ice within us to evangelical repentance, as a view of a suffering Saviour, wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities … [M]ay his love be ever warmly impressed on our hearts! May we live by that faith in the Son of God, who loved us and gave himself for us, which is an ever active principle of cheerful and grateful obedience![98]

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1 I would like to thank Stephen J. Wellum and Michael A. G. Haykin for their guidance on this project and whose insights were invaluable for the direction of this paper.

2 Alan P. F. Sell, *Christ and Controversy: The Person of Christ in Nonconformist Thought and Ecclesial Experience, 1600–2000* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 22–23. Sell helpfully points out the frequent occurrence of ministers and/or congregations changing their doctrine and denominational affiliations, adding to the complexity of labeling them and the controversies they engaged in. See also David L. Wykes, "Rational Dissent, Unitarianism, and the Closure of the Northampton Academy in 1798." *Journal of Religious History* 41, no. 1 (December 31, 2017), 4–6.

3 Stephen J. Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate: The Doctrine of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 46–47.

4 Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate,* 39.

5 Russell E. Richey, "From Puritanism to Unitarianism in England: A Study in Candour." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 41, no. 3 (December 31, 1973), 371.

6 Joseph Priestley, *The Memoirs of Dr. Joseph Priestley, to the Year 1795* (Northumberland: John Binns, 1806), 2.

7 Priestley, *Memoirs*, 5–6.

8 Priestley, *Memoirs*, 6–7.

9 Priestley, *Memoirs*, 3–4.

10 Priestley, *Memoirs*, 7–8.

11 Priestley, *Memoirs*, 8.

12 Priestley, *Memoirs*, 4–5.

13 Priestley, *Memoirs*, 9–10.

14 Priestley, *Memoirs*, 30–31.

15 Priestley, *Memoirs*, 31.

16 Priestley, *Memoirs*, 35.

17 Michael R. Watts, *The Dissenters* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 1:370.

18 Watts, *The Dissenters*, 1:371.

19 Watts, *The Dissenters*, 1:371–72.

20 Sell, *Christ and Controversy*, 3–6.

21 Edward Elwall, *The Triumph of Truth; Being an Account of the Trial of Mr. E. Elwall, for Heresy and Blasphemy, at Stafford Assizes, Before Judge Denton* (Leeds: 1771), 5.

22 Elwall, *The Triumph of Truth*, 5. Scripture citations will retain the use of the King James Version and spelling conventions as recorded by Elwall.

23 Elwall, *The Triumph of Truth*, 5–6.

24 Elwall, *The Triumph of Truth*, 6.

25 Elwall, *The Triumph of Truth*, 6.

26 Elwall, *The Triumph of Truth*, 6.

27 Elwall, *The Triumph of Truth*, 6.

28 Elwall, *The Triumph of Truth*, 6.

29 Elwall, *The Triumph of Truth*, 6–7.

30 Elwall, *The Triumph of Truth*, 7.

31 Elwall, *The Triumph of Truth*, 7.

32 Elwall, *The Triumph of Truth*, 8.

33 Elwall, *The Triumph of Truth*, 8.

34 Elwall, *The Triumph of Truth*, 9.

35 Joseph Priestley, *An History of the Corruptions of Christianity (2 vols.)* (Birmingham: Piercy & Jones, 1782), 151.

36 Priestley, *An History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, 152–153.

37 Priestley, *An History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, 153–154.

38 Priestley, *An History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, 155.

39 Priestley, *An History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, 156.

40 Priestley, *An History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, 157–58.

41 Priestley, *An History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, 160.

42 Priestley, *An History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, 164–165.

43 Priestley, *An History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, 168.

44 Priestley, *An History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, 170–171.

45 Priestley reviewed the early fathers from Clement up to the Reformation and concluded the atonement was not found in any of their writings. Even Augustine, who made major contributions on the doctrines of original sin, grace, and predestination was "certainly ignorant of the principle of the doctrine of the atonement." He spoke only of Christ taking the punishment due to man but not his guilt, and by denying the removal of guilt, did not bear the sins of others "so as to make himself answerable for them" (234). See 213–258 for his extended treatment of church history up to the Reformation.

46 Priestley, *An History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, 230.

47 Priestley, *An History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, 231.

48 Priestley, *An History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, 254–55.

49 Priestley, *An History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, 264.

50 Priestley, *An History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, 264–65.

51 Priestley, *An History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, 270.

52 Priestley, *An History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, 270. A special note of appreciation to Stephen Wellum for pointing out the weaknesses of Priestley's argument, most notably here where Priestley misrepresents Calvin's view. For Calvin's own words, see John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol. I. The Library of Christian Classics, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (1960; repr., Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 512–20. It is clear Calvin understood this as part of Christ's redemptive work in the atonement, "the Creed sets forth what Christ suffered in the sight of men, and then appositely speaks of that invisible and incomprehensible judgement which he underwent in the sight of God in order that we might know not only that Christ's body was given as the price of our redemption" (516); see also Matthew Y. Emerson's helpful discussion on Calvin's interpretation of the *descensus* creedal affirmation, "'He Descended to the Dead': The Burial of Christ and the Eschatological Character of the Atonement," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 19:1 (2015), 115–31.

53 Priestley, *An History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, 270–71.

54 Priestley, *An History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, 272–73.

55 Priestley, *An History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, 273–74.

56 Priestley, *An History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, 274–75.

57 Priestley, *An History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, 279.

58 Priestley, *An History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, 278–79.

59 Priestley, *An History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, 279. For a modern discussion on Unitarian challenges to Trinitarian doctrine, see Dale Tuggy, "When and How in the History of Theology Did the Triune God Replace the Father as the Only True God?" *TheoLogica* 4, no. 2 (December 31, 2020), 1–25, and William Hasker, "The Trinity and the New Testament: A Counter-Challenge to Dale Tuggy," *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 13, no. 1 (December 31, 2021), 179–99. Tuggy, like Priestley before him, challenges the notion that Trinitarian doctrine has been the historic position of the catholic church, even claiming Tertullian, long regarded as the first apologist to employ "trinitas," was in fact "unitarian in his theology, not trinitarian" (4).

60 There were certainly many others who engaged Socinian and Unitarian doctrine such as the General Baptist Dan Taylor (1738–1816) who was a fellow Yorkshireman and friend of John Fawcett. Owen's first publication against Socinianism was Θεομαχία Αὐτεξουσιαστικὴ or *A Display of Arminianisme* (1643). See Lee Gatiss' article "Socianism and John Owen" in the Southern Baptist Theological Journal of Theology SBJT 20/4 (Winter 2016) which also discusses Owen's additional works such as *Vindiciae Evangelicae*; or *The Mystery of the Gospel Vindicated and Socinianism Examined Specifically to Refuting These Errors*. For Gill, *The Doctrine of the Trinity Stated and* Vindicated (1731); For Fuller, see *The Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Examined and Compared, as to Their Moral Tendency* (Market Harborough, Leicestershire: W. Harrod, 1793). See also *The Complete Works of Andrew Fuller, Volume 7: Apologetic Works 3, Socinianism* edited by Tom Nettles, Michael Haykin, and Baiyu Andrew Song (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021).

61 Michael A. G. Haykin, "A Socinian and Calvinist Compared: Joseph Priestley and Andrew Fuller on the Propriety of Prayer to Christ," *Nederlands Archief Voor Kerkgeschiedenis* 73, no. 2 (December 31, 1993), 187.

62 John Fawcett Jr., *An Account of the Life, Ministry, and Writings of the Late John Fawcett, D.D.* (London: Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy/Halifax: P.K. Holden, 1818), 10.

63 John Fawcett, *The Christian's Humble Plea* (London: M. Lewis, 1772), v–vi.

64 Fawcett, *The Christian's Humble Plea*, vii.

65 Fawcett, *The Christian's Humble Plea*, viii.

66 Fawcett, *The Christian's Humble Plea*, 2.

67 Fawcett, *The Christian's Humble Plea*, 2.

68 Fawcett, *The Christian's Humble Plea*, 2.

69 Fawcett, *The Christian's Humble Plea*, 3.

70 Fawcett, *The Christian's Humble Plea*, 3.

71 Fawcett, *The Christian's Humble Plea*, 4.

72 Fawcett, *The Christian's Humble Plea*, 4.

73 Fawcett, *The Christian's Humble Plea*, 5.

74 Fawcett, *The Christian's Humble Plea*, 6.

75 Fawcett, *The Christian's Humble Plea*, 7.

76 Fawcett, *The Christian's Humble Plea*, 7.

77 Fawcett, *The Christian's Humble Plea*, 8.

78 Fawcett, *The Christian's Humble Plea*, 9.

79 Ian Sellers, *Our Heritage: The Baptists of Yorkshire, Lancashire, and Cheshire 1647–1987* (Leeds: The Yorkshire Baptist Association, 1987), 18–19.

80 John Fawcett, *The Cross of Christ, Considered in a Letter, Addressed to Christians of All Denominations* (Brearley Hall: Fawcett, 1793), 3.

81 The letter has surprisingly few direct Scripture references for modern readers. This was an associational letter, and Fawcett would have expected his fellow ministers and their respective members to recognize the passages referenced throughout the work. The Scripture references have been added for clarity, and when cited, use the English Standard Version (Crossway, 2001).

82 Fawcett, *The Cross of Christ*, 4.

83 Fawcett, *The Cross of Christ*, 4.

84 Fawcett, *The Cross of Christ*, 4–5.

85 Fawcett, *The Cross of Christ*, 6–7.

86 Fawcett, *The Cross of Christ*, 7.

87 Fawcett, *The Cross of Christ*, 7.

88 Fawcett, *The Cross of Christ*, 7.

89 Fawcett, *The Cross of Christ*, 7.

90 Fawcett, *The Cross of Christ*, 7–8.

91 Fawcett, *The Cross of Christ*, 11.

92 Fawcett, *The Cross of Christ*, 13.

93 Richey, "From Puritanism to Unitarianism in England," 382.

94 Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate*, 466.

95 Haykin, "A Socinian and Calvinist Compared," 196–197.

96 Haykin, "A Socinian and Calvinist Compared," 197.

97 William G. Witt and Joel Scandrett, *Mapping Atonement: The Doctrine of Reconciliation in Christian History and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2022), 15.

98 Fawcett, *The Cross of Christ*, 13–14.

Jesus Christ, the *Imago Dei* Eternally and Incarnationally

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Introduction

The testimony of the Bible reveals an important connection between anthropology and Christology. The Old Testament (OT) opens with the account of creation, culminating in the creation of humanity created in God's own image (Gen 1:27). A great deal of ink has been spilled by individuals seeking to discern what constitutes this image through the centuries. Beyond two additional references within the book of Genesis, little is revealed within the OT about this reality that humanity is unique among God's creation because of being created in God's image and likeness. There is no explicit reference to Jesus' relationship to the *imago Dei* found in the OT. The New Testament (NT) affirms the creation of humanity in God's image while adding a wrinkle to the mystery. Jesus is clearly identified as *the* image of God (2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15). Richard Middleton observes that in the NT, "only two texts speak of human *creation* in God's image (1 Corinthians 11:7 and James 3:9). The rest either exalt Christ as the paradigm (uncreated) image of God, or address the salvific renewal of the image in the church."[1] In addition, Marc Cortez points out: "The image of God has long been one of the primary ways in which theologians have connected Christology to

anthropology, viewing Jesus as the ultimate expression of this fundamental anthropological truth."[2] Essential to this connection between anthropology and Christology is the *imago Dei*.

Cortez's comments affirm the important connection between anthropology and Christology highlighting the *imago Dei* as central to that connection. Still, questions remain regarding similarities and distinctions between the image as it relates to Christ and as it relates to humanity. For example, is Christ the image of God because of the incarnation or is "image" something that has been identified with the second person of the Trinity eternally? Further, is the term "image" as it relates to the second person of the Trinity a description or a proper name? Additionally, if the Son is identified as "eternal image" then what is the relationship between the eternal image and the incarnational image? These are important questions when considering Christology, anthropology, and the *imago Dei*.

Several church fathers pick up on the NT truth that Jesus is the image of God and recognize the importance of addressing the above stated questions and other nascent questions. Irenaeus considered Jesus the perfect image of the Father. Though not explicitly stating that Jesus is the true and full image of God, he implies it writing, "the Father was shown forth through the Word Himself who had been made visible and palpable … for the Father is the invisible of the Son, but the Son the visible of the Father."[3] It becomes clear from Irenaeus's writings that he affirms the Son images the Father in the incarnation. He also establishes his belief that the second person of the Trinity is the eternal image of God. In Book II, writing in opposition to the Gnostics, Irenaeus uses the terms "Logos" and "Word" in reference to the Son, calling him "the eternal Word of God," reflecting a connection to the Gospel of John.[4] He returns in Book IV to this language stating, "the Word and Wisdom, the Son and the Spirit, were always present, by whom and in whom he freely and spontaneously made all things — to whom he said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness' [Gen 1:26]."[5] It appears from these excerpts that Irenaeus understands the Son as the eternal image of the Father. Athanasius is more explicit in calling the Son the eternal image of the Father. Writing against the Arians, he takes a negative approach by showing that "if He be not Son, neither is He Image,"[6] implying positively that he is both Son and Image. Athanasius proceeds to make a case for the eternality of the Son and Image concluding, "since

He is not a creature, but the proper offspring of the Essence of that God who is worshipped, and His Son by nature … the Father is seen in Him."[7] Athanasius understands the Son as the eternal offspring of the Father and the express image of the Father's essence eternally. These, and other church fathers, begin to unpack the foundational importance of the second person of the Trinity as the image of God for revelation and redemption.[8] Through the centuries many have built upon or reacted against the insights provided by these giants of the faith revealing the ongoing need to mine the depths of the important connection between anthropology and Christology as revealed in the *imago Dei*.

This article will continue the pursuit of a biblically and historically grounded response to the relationship between these theological categories in light of the *imago Dei*, focusing on emphasizing that Jesus Christ is the eternal image of God who functions both as the ontological self-expression of the Father within the Trinity and as the archetype and destiny of humanity revealing the essential nature of embracing the Son as eternal image for both revelation and redemption.

To accomplish this thesis, I will begin by exploring several NT references that connect Christ and image of God language in hopes of establishing the Bible's presentation of the relationship of Jesus and the *imago Dei*. Next, I will look to the incarnation in which the second person of the Trinity assumed humanity created in the image of God and how the two images, eternal and incarnational, exist in the same person, as well as investigating the implications of this union. I will then proceed to explore the question of whether the image related to the second person of the Trinity should be understood as a description or a proper name by examining representative scholars from each camp and evaluating their position in relation to the biblical testimony. Finally, I will bring together the preceding sections, drawing conclusions from the material covered that specifically relate to revelation and redemption.

New Testament References to Christ, the Image of God

It is appropriate to begin this study of the second person of the Trinity, the living Word (John 1:1), by looking at the testimony of the written Word (2 Tim 4:15; Heb 4:12), specifically the NT, to understand the relationship of

the image of God and the Son. In this vein Stephen Wellum aptly observes: "God has revealed the identity of Jesus only in Scripture and through its structured storyline."[9] He notes additionally: "We must have the Bible's self-presentation of Jesus to know the real Jesus."[10] This conviction assumes that the written Word, the Bible, is the infallible, inerrant, authoritative revelation of God to humanity by which he is known. If this is true, and the author believes it is, then there is no better place to begin the search for clarity regarding the Son and the *imago Dei* than with the Scriptures.

Colossians 1:15

Paul writing to the believers at Colosse says of Jesus, "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation" (Col 1:15, ESV). The brevity of this verse should not be grounds for dismissing the significance of what it contains. The verse is the fountainhead of a passage that F. F. Bruce calls "one of the great Christological passages of the NT."[11] Douglas Moo adds that this passage is "one of the christological high points of the New Testament."[12] As such, this verse will serve as the entry point for a biblical understanding of the Son and the image.

Verse 15 begins with the relative pronoun ὅς, "he", which begs the question, to whom is Paul referring? Given the shift of focus in the second half of 1:14 to "his beloved Son," one can safely conclude that the pronouns from this point through the end of 1:20 are referencing the Son, the second person of the Trinity. James Dunn notes that the switch from God to Christ "made it possible to attach the lengthy hymnic description of Christ."[13] It is appropriate, therefore, to insert "the Son" for "he" and conclude that the Son is the image. This "he," the Son, is the image, εἰκὼν. *Eikōn* has a range of meanings. The one that is fitting here is Arndt's second meaning of *eikōn* — "that which has the same form as something else, living image."[14] This meaning is suitable here and in 2 Corinthians 4:4 which will be examined later. Kenneth Wuest further develops the depth of this word, "*eikōn* (εἰκων) implies an archetype of which it is a copy. The *eikōn* (εἰκων) might be the result of direct imitation like the head of a sovereign on a coin, or it might be due to natural causes like the parental features in the child, but in any case, it was derived from its prototype." Wuest connects this understanding to the relationship of the Father and the Son: "The Lord Jesus is therefore the image of God in the sense that as the Son to the Father He is derived by eternal generation

in a birth that never took place because it always was." He concludes, "the Son is the exact reproduction of the Father, a derived image."[15] According to Wellum, here and later in 2 Corinthians 4:4, "the stress is on the Son as the perfect revelation of God."[16] And yet, according to Hughes, since this is an image of the invisible God "there can be no such thing as a pictorial copy."[17] Paul is looking into the mystery of the trinitarian being of God to reveal that the Son "authentically reveals the divine nature and gives effect to the divine will."[18] This includes the work of redemption accomplished through his incarnation as well as actualizing the divine will through creation (1:16), redemption (1:20), providential care and sustaining of creation (1:18), all of which are visible effects of the invisible nature of the eternally begotten Son who is the image of the invisible God.[19]

By using the term *eikōn*, Paul emphasizes that Jesus is both the representation and manifestation of God. Melick points out that in the Greek culture which Paul wrote, there were two nuances of meaning of *eikōn*. Representation was the first of these nuances. This connects back to the definition provided by Wuest that relates to "an image on a coin or a reflection in a mirror," representing or symbolizing what the object pictured or reflected.[20] The second nuance was that of manifestation in which "the symbol brought with it the actual presence of the object."[21] Melick believes that by manifesting God himself, the Son brings God "into the sphere of human understanding," through these effects.[22] Because the Son shares the same substance with the Father, he makes the invisible God visible. Regarding these two nuances, Melick observes that in Greek philosophy: "Both elements were always present, but one tended to dominate the other."[23] In the case of Colossians 1:15, Melick believes that manifestation is the dominant element. David Garland shares Melick's appreciation for the influence of Greek philosophy and the dominance of the nuance of manifestation in this case. As such, "the image has a share in the reality that it reveals and may be said to be the reality. An image was not considered something distinct from the object it represented, like a facsimile or reproduction."[24] As it relates to the Son being the image of the invisible God, Garland continues, "Christ is an exact, as well as a visible, representation of God (Col. 1:19; 2:9), illuminating God's essence."[25] Illuminating God's essence includes, in the words of John Calvin, his "righteousness, goodness, wisdom, power, in short, his entire self."[26] R.

Kent Hughes simply pronounces, "Jesus is literally the *exegesis* of God."[27] Ultimately, *eikōn* in Colossians 1:15 emphasizes the reality that in the Son one witnesses more than a mere reflection of God, the Son is God in all his fullness.

It should be noted that since Colossians 1:15 speaks of the image of the invisible in a manner that dredges the depths of God's trinitarian being that, as Curtis Vaughn suggests, the phrase "image of God" as it relates to the Son, should not be limited at all. "Christ has always been, is, and always will be the image of God. His incarnation did not make him the image of God, but it did bring him, 'as being that Image, within our grasp.'"[28] In his pre-incarnate, incarnate, glorified, and post-ascension states Christ has been and will be the image of God. Jameison and his co-authors find support for the eternal image of the Son in the verb "is" contending: "Even before His incarnation He was the image of the invisible God, as the Word (Jn 1:1–3) by whom God created the worlds, and by whom God appeared to the patriarchs. Thus His *essential* character as *always* "the image of God," (1) before the incarnation, (2) in the days of His flesh, and (3) now in His glorified state, is, I think, contemplated here by the verb 'is.'"[29] There has never been a time, nor will there ever be time, when "the nature and being of God," have not been "perfectly revealed," in the Son.[30]

Another important highlight of the use of image in this passage is its connection back to the creation of humanity "in the image of God" in Genesis 1 and 2. Stephen Wellum notes: "While the first humans were created in the image of God, however, they were not the original *imago Dei*."[31] F. F. Bruce points out, it is clear from Genesis 1:26–27 that humanity, male and female, is created in God's own image. It is also clear from Genesis 3 that because of sin the divine image has been "defaced". Still, humanity is "the image and glory of God" (1 Cor 11:7). What becomes clear from this passage and the others to be discussed is that the image of God in humanity has always been "a copy or reflection of the archetypal image — that is to say, of God's beloved Son."[32] N. T. Wright draws out the connection to the eternal image: "Humanity was made as the climax of the first creation (Gen. 1:26–27): the true humanity of Jesus is the climax of the history of creation, and at the same time the starting-point of the new creation. From all eternity Jesus had, in his very nature, been the 'image of God,' reflecting perfectly the character and life of the Father."[33] The eternal Son, eternally the image, is the

archetype and humanity is the ectype. Though attention is taken back to creation using the word image here, Douglas Moo reminds the reader, "the focus is on Christ's revelation of God. He *is* the 'image' in accordance with which human beings are formed."[34]

Craig Keener points out an additional OT connection taking place as it relates to Christ as the archetypal image. He writes: "Here Paul describes Christ in terms Judaism reserved for divine Wisdom, which was portrayed as God's archetypal image by which he created the rest of the world. Philo describes God's Logos, his Word, as his image and firstborn son."[35] Several other scholars see "image of God" in this passage as identifying the image with wisdom or the word, which will be explored later. Some Jewish writings make this connection especially with relation to how God can be known, although the OT support is lacking.[36] This wisdom tradition appears to have influence throughout the hymnic passage and finds its starting point in Genesis 1. Moo cites Philo's regular connection of "image" to Genesis 1 while also identifying image with wisdom and word. He also draws connections between John 1 and Hebrews 1:3 drawing out an important question explored within Jewish theology and Greek philosophy, namely, where can God be seen? Considering this he posits: "We should probably conclude, therefore, that our hymn, similarly, alludes to both these traditions."[37] This further affirms the Son as the archetypal image. "In place of the Jewish tradition, which finds the image to be expressed in wisdom or the word, the hymn claims that the original image is to be found in the person of Jesus Christ, God's Son." Moo continues, "And this decision came via the early Christians' confrontation with the reality of the resurrected and glorified Christ, whom they recognized to be 'the perfect manifestation of the invisible God.'"[38] Hoehner, et. al. appear to confirm this understanding: "The focus is probably more on Jesus as the embodiment of God's Wisdom than on Jesus as essentially, ontologically being 'Wisdom.' In Jesus, the Wisdom of God, that revelatory reflection of God, was totally present."[39] The Son's manifestation as the revelatory reflection of God further reinforces Jesus as archetypal image.

It appears that from both the Adam-Christ and the Wisdom-Christ traditions connected to Colossians 1:15 and the surrounding context, that support can be garnered for Christ as the archetype of the "image" eternally.

2 Corinthians 4:4

In one of his many correspondences with the believers in the city of Corinth, Paul writes, "In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Cor 4:4). Paul concludes the verse with the same phrase examined in Colossians 1:15; ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ. As a result, many of the conclusions drawn from Colossians 1:15 are further reinforced by this verse. A few additional points continue to shed light on the Bible's revelation of what is meant by Jesus as the image of God.

To draw out the full implications of this verse, it is critical to recognize its connection to 2 Corinthians 3:18. Here Paul proclaims, "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit" (2 Cor 3:18). Mark Seifrid connects these two verses as evidence that, in both, Paul's understanding of "image of God" and the glory of Lord come together to identify Christ with God and vice versa to show "the glory of Christ, God's image, is the glory of God found in Jesus."[40] Harris agrees that, "Given passages such as Phil. 2:6; Col. 1:19; 2:9, we may safely assume that for Paul εἰκών here, as in Col. 1:15, signifies that Christ is an exact representation as well as a visible expression of God." He continues, "ἐστιν is a timeless present, indicating that Christ is eternally the perfect reflection of God or at least that in his glorified corporeality Christ remains forever God's visible expression."[41] Keener sees in this verse additional support for the connection of "image" with Jewish wisdom tradition and Jesus. "Christ is the complete revelation of God's glory (cf. 3:18). Christ thus fills the place assigned to preexistent, divine Wisdom in Jewish tradition."[42] Colin Kruse sees a connection to creation and to Jewish wisdom literature in Paul's choice of terminology in this passage. Bringing both together, Kruse believes that "for Paul Christ is the likeness of God after the fashion of Adam as far as his humanity is concerned, and after the fashion of Wisdom as far as his transcendence is concerned."[43] Further, Garland believes that this verse reveals that: "As the image of God, Christ brings clarity to our hazy notions of the immortal, invisible God who lives in unapproachable light (1 Tim 1:17; 6:16)."[44]

Paul's words to the Corinthian church in 2 Corinthians 4:4 confirms and reinforces the message about Christ, the image of God, found

in Colossians 1:15 attesting to the Christ's acts of representation and manifestation of the Father.

Hebrews 1:3

The unknown author of the book of Hebrews opens the letter by declaring the superiority of Jesus over everything and everyone. Within this declaration the author pronounces of Jesus: "He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature," (Heb 1:3a). As was the case in the Colossians passage, some scholars believe this to be part of a more ancient hymn that predates the writing of Hebrews, still others see it as a confession of faith.[45] Regardless where scholars land in this debate, there is agreement that the message presented here is parallel to the one found in Colossians and 2 Corinthians, though the terms used are not the same. These terms will provide corroboration and additional insights regarding the understanding of Jesus as the image of God.

The term used in this verse Χαρακτήρ, [*charaktēr*] "exact representation," is different than that used in Colossians 1:15 and 2 Corinthians 4:4, however, it is still believed to be "a stronger equivalent of ἀπαύγασμα, and of εἰκών."[46] Its meaning is similar to that of *eikōn*. In classical Greek it is used "of an engraver, one who mints coins, a graving tool, a die, a stamp, a branding iron, a mark engraved, an impress, a stamp on coins and seals."[47] Metaphorically it meant "a distinctive mark or token impressed on a person or thing, by which it is known from others, a characteristic, the character of."[48] It was a Greek idiom for a person's features and used of the type or character regarded as shared with others. It meant also an impress or an image. One can recognize with a fair amount of ease the similarities in the definitions of these two words and how they are used. Ellingsworth concludes, "In the present verse, χαρακτὴρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ reinforces ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης in describing the essential unity and exact resemblance between God and his Son."[49] Wellum, citing David Wells, points out: "This language so strongly affirms the full deity of the Son that in church history the Arians refused to recognize the authenticity of Hebrews on the basis of this text alone."[50] The two phrases that make up the beginning of this verse "present the incarnate Son as the one who makes visible the very glory of God himself, which is obviously something only God can do (cf. John 1:14–18)."[51]

Whether or not one holds the Apostle Paul as the author of this letter, it is difficult to deny the consistency between the message of this passage with the message found in Colossians 1:15 and 2 Corinthians 4:4. Though the terms are different and perhaps the author is different as well, the message is the same. Donald Guthrie summarizes the message of the passage: "This statement itself contains a deep truth, for the exact resemblance relates to God's nature (*hypostaseōs*). The statement is not unimportant to the theological thinker, for it supports the view that Jesus was of the same nature as God. If so, no difference can be made between the nature of the Father and the nature of the Son."[52] Ellingsworth's conclusion is even more explicit pointing out that this verse "describes what the Son is and has done."[53] He "*Is the exact likeness of God's own being* may be expressed most satisfactorily in a number of languages as 'is just like God,' or 'is the same as God,' or 'what God is like is what he is like,' or 'what is true about God is true about his Son.'"[54] The entire content of this verse presents the relationship between the Son and the Father as one of "timeless eternity"[55] "the Son reveals in his person, not merely in his words, what God is really like."[56] David Allen writes, "Each word pulsates with deity."[57] To which Guthrie adds: "To reflect the glory of God in this way presupposes that the Son shares the same essence as the Father, not just his likeness."[58] Vincent hearkens back to the coin or stamp imagery indicated in the verse: "Here the essential being of God is conceived as setting its distinctive stamp upon Christ, coming into definite and characteristic expression in his person, so that the Son bears the exact impress of the divine nature and character."[59] Author after author affirms the powerful and unmistakable message of this opening passage of Hebrews. The author begins with a bold declaration regarding the relationship of the Father and the Son in which he "reminds his readers that nowhere has the glory of God been more perfectly manifest than in the person of God's Son. In Christ all the majesty of God's splendour is fully revealed."[60] Both oneness and distinctness are stressed through the language of this verse. Allen explains: "Jesus is the effulgence of God's glory because he shares the same divine nature as the Father, yet he is distinct from the Father in his person."[61] Perhaps more compellingly than in any of the verses explored, this verse announces the meaning and implications of the declaration that the second person of the Trinity is the image of God.

These three verses serve as a representation of what the NT has to say about the second person of the Trinity and his relationship to the *imago Dei*. Jesus's own words in John 14:9, serve as his personal summation and testimony: "The one who has seen me [Jesus] has seen the Father." The verses examined show that in contrast to the OT use of image of God, in the NT it is primarily Christ who is described as "the image of God."[62] The "image of God" in reference to the Son reveals that he "did not become the image of God at the incarnation, but has been that from all eternity."[63] "Image" in the NT carries with it an Adam-Christ connection as well as a Wisdom-Christ connection. Kruse observes both: "Christ is the likeness of God after the fashion of Adam as far as his humanity is concerned, and after the fashion of Wisdom as far as his transcendence is concerned."[64] Christology and anthropology come together in the *imago Dei* revealing that Jesus is both the eternal image and the incarnational image.

The Eternal Image and the Incarnational Image

The *imago Dei* in relation to the Son is to be understood eternally and incarnationally. The eternal image of God refers to the Son's pre-incarnate existence in which the image of God is eternally reflecting God's nature. The incarnational image is the Son's human form fully embodying God's nature in human form. Since Jesus is both the eternal image and the incarnational image one must ask, what is the relationship between the two images in the one person? Understanding each in relation to the other provides valuable insights into Christology and anthropology.

It has already been established through the study of Colossians 1:15 and Hebrews 1:3 that Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, is the eternal image (*eikōn*) of God the Father, perfectly and eternally reflecting the nature and glory of God. Further support for this conclusion is found in John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." This eternal image is ontological, meaning that the Son shares fully in God's intratrinitarian nature. This eternal image is also relational, distinguishing the Son from the Father.[65] As a result, the Son eternally "images" the Father within the Godhead. Since the days of the Early Church this has been understood as Nicene Trinitarianism.[66] As noted earlier the doctrine of eternal generation illuminates and informs a

biblical understanding of the eternal image. The Nicene Creed says of the Son that he is "begotten of the Father before all ages," and "of one substance with the Father."[67] In these phrases the Early Church testified that the Son possesses the same divine nature, being, and attributes as the Father. His is an eternal generation within God which is timeless so that the Son's identity is not susceptible to duration or succession of moments. Because the Son is eternally begotten of the Father's essence, He perfectly expresses the Father's being and character. He is the perfect image and representation of the Father's nature or essence. Athanasius writing in defense of the Son's begottenness through eternal generation supports this, writing, "He is the unchanging Image of His own Father. For men, composed of parts and made out of nothing, have their discourse composite and divisible. But God possesses true existence and is not composite, wherefore His Word also has true Existence and is not composite, but is the one and only-begotten God."[68] Because of the simple nature of God, in the generation of the Son, the Father had to give his entire nature so that "the eternal generation of the Son entails the total equality of nature between the Father and Son in God."[69] Aquinas's attribution and development of "image" as a personal name for the Son within the Trinity supports this as well and will be further developed later in the paper.[70] Gregory of Nyssa in arguing against the Anomoeans contends for the eternal image as well.[71] Commenting on Gregory of Nyssa's understanding of the relationship of the Father and the Son within the Trinity, The Center for Baptist Renewal writes, "The Son is the 'only of only,' yet is not alone since he has a Father; he is God of God, yet he is not God the Father; he is begotten but in a way whereby he partakes in the Father's invisibility, incorruptibility, immortality, and eternality. As such, the Son subsists as everything that it is to *be* God without introducing division or temporality to the divine nature."[72] The testimony of these Early Church Fathers is firmly rooted to the insights gleaned from Colossians, 2 Corinthians, and Hebrews further revealing the nature of Jesus as the eternal image.

The eternal image is an ontological reality, that could only be known through a mirror dimly (1 Cor 13:12) in humanity if it had not been for the incarnation. In the incarnation, the Son supremely imaged God. In it, the eternal Son takes on humanity and manifests the image of God in visible, bodily, historical form. He is the embodiment of God. John 1:14 provides a

glimpse into this reality as does Philippians 2:6–8, and 2 Corinthians 4:4–6. The timeless eternally generated Son, in the incarnation, images God in life, actions, and sacrificial love for humanity in time. This is a functional and relational image contrasted with the first Adam who failed to fulfill what God intended for him as created in God's image, thus Christ is considered the last Adam (Rom 5:12–20; 1 Cor 15:21).

David Mathis comments on the significance of the incarnational image and the relationship of the *imago Dei* in humanity and of Christ: "The man Christ Jesus — not merely as God the Son, but as God the Son *become man* — is the great answer to Scripture's previously unsolved riddle of what it means, at bottom, to be '*in* God's image.' Humans are *in* God's image; Jesus *is* God's image. He is the full and complete embodiment of what it means for God himself to enter into his created world as a creature." Mathis makes the connection more explicit: "Which means that God created the first man and woman in Genesis 1 and 2 in view of what he himself would be as a creature ('in his image'), when he would enter in as man in the person of his Son."[73] Hoekema agrees pointing out: "It was only because man had been created in the image of God that the Second Person of the Trinity could assume human nature."[74] The Son is the eternal archetype of the image of God from which the ectype is found in humanity so that the Son was able to assume the ectypal image in order to reveal the invisible image of God perfectly embodied in space and time to God's creation while also redeeming the image of God in humanity through his substitutionary atoning work. It is therefore understood that the Son (*logos*) is the eternal image who assumed the incarnational image as Jesus of Nazareth, God the Son incarnate.

The eternal image is the image from eternity while the incarnational image is assumed at the point of the incarnation and remains from Jesus' earthly ministry forward into eternity. The function of reflecting the Father proceeds from the eternal image while the function of revelation and restoration proceeds from the incarnational image. The eternal image "necessarily implies natural Sonship by way of eternal generation," grounding Sonship and speaking of the relational distinction and full equality of the Father and the Son.[75] The incarnational image is the means of redemption and renewed image for humanity. The only one who could perfectly reveal God and restore the image of God had to be God. This helps to reveal the relationship

between the eternal image and the incarnational image. To reiterate, there could be no incarnational image without the eternal image. Wellum provides a thoughtful summation of the relationship of the eternal image and the incarnational image: "Through Jesus's own words and works — both implicit and explicit — he knowingly and intentionally identified himself as the divine Son of God and the eternal *imago Dei*. In the same way, he also identified himself as the incarnational *imago Dei* and the man who would fulfill all of God's covenant promises as his true Son-King and the last Adam."[76] Wellum then concludes:

> So, while we were created in God's image, we are not the original image since the eternal Son is the archetype image and humans are the ectype, obviously allowing for the Creator-creature distinction. The Son, then, from eternity is the pattern by which we are created, which makes sense of why the divine Son assumed our human nature (and not the nature of another creature) to redeem us. By being made in the image of God as a man, God the Son has become the incarnate Son, the last Adam, and the first man of the new creation, to restore what Adam lost in his sin.[77]

Distinguishing in this manner between the eternal image, the incarnational image, and the anthropological image, provides a depth of insight into the person and work of Christ that draws this researcher to reflect and rejoice in the words of Philippians 2, "Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil 2:9 – 11).

Description or Proper Name?

The question of whether the term "image" is to be considered a description or a proper name as it relates to Jesus remains to be investigated. For the purposes of this paper, description relates to role or function and proper name relates broadly to relation and origin.[78] It appears scholars are divided regarding this question with both camps providing compelling points to support their preferred conclusion. Representatives of each supposition will

be summarized and then the material will be compared to draw a conclusion in light of what has been presented to this point.

Many scholars interpret the passages that have been explored as supporting an understanding of "image" as a descriptive title rather than a proper name. They consider *eikōn* in Colossians 1:15, to mean representation. In 2 Corinthians 4:4 the image is the means through which believers are transformed and thereby a description of the work of Christ, and in Hebrews 1:3, *charaktēr* is considered parallel to *eikōn* in Colossians and thus carrying the same meaning of representation. James Dunn provides an example of this approach as can be seen in his comments on these verses earlier in the paper. In addition to Dunn, N. T. Wright holds this view. He connects the image of God in humanity to their vocation. He writes, "they are God's agents, God's appointed stewards over creation. This is what it means to be 'in God's image': to reflect God's wise, fruitful ordering into creation, and to reflect creation's praise back to the creator. Humans are the creatures through whom God had intended to tend his world, to make the garden fruitful, to name the animals, to reflect his glory into the whole creation."[79] This was their "vocation," but they failed "to play their part in that larger divine purpose."[80] He considers the image of God as a title, though not proper name, reflecting the theological reality of the incarnation. Christ both fulfills His own role, and the role God intended for humanity by "reflecting perfectly the character and life of the Father." He continues, "it is only in Jesus Christ that we understand what 'divinity' and 'humanity' really mean: without him, we lapse into sub-Christian, or even pagan, categories of thought."[81] Wright repeatedly references the work and role of Jesus in eternity and the incarnation, understanding "image" as a description of what Jesus does rather than who he is. Wright traces a triple narrative through Scripture within this framework ultimately highlighting Jesus as the answer to the failure of Adam and Israel in fulfilling their vocation. Jesus does for humanity "what they could not do for themselves."[82] In doing so, Wright gives a descriptive attribution to the "image" in Jesus.

Augustine builds the case for "image" as a descriptive term based on a trinitarian approach. Stephen Wellum provides a helpful overview of Augustine's argument. He notes that it seems like a stretch to call "image" a name for the Son, given Augustine's convincing point that the image of God refers to the entire Trinity rather than simply the eternally begotten Son.

Elaborating on the creation of humanity in God's image in Genesis 1:26–27, Augustine writes, "'Our,' being plural in number, could not be right in this place if man were made to the image of one person, whether of the Father or the Son or the Holy Spirit, but because in fact he was made in the image of the trinity, it is said *to our image*."[83] Wellum shows how Herman Bavinck took up Augustine's position and further clarified while acknowledging that one must be cautious if choosing to apply the image to only the Son: "It is not stated that man was created only in terms of some attributes, or in terms of only one person in the divine being," he then continues, "the meaning of the image of God is further explicated to us by the Son, who in an entirely unique sense is called the Word (*logos*); the Son (*huios*); the image (*eikōn*), or imprint (*charaktēr*), of God (John 1:1, 14; 2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15; Heb 1:3); and the one to whom we must be conformed (Rom 8:29; 1 Cor 15:49; Phil 3:21; Eph 4:23f.; 1 John 3:2)."[84]

Each of these individuals maintains the significance of the NT declaration the Jesus is the image of God but sees this significance rooted in the descriptive nature of the term rather than as a proper name for the second person of the Trinity.

Perhaps the most well-known of the theologians espousing the proper name position is Thomas Aquinas. In his *Summa Theologica*, Thomas addresses the question of "whether the name of Image is proper to the Son."[85] Aquinas adopts a broad understanding of name in which image is a name uniquely attributed to the Son, distinguishing him from the Father and the Holy Spirit, thereby it is "proper to the Son." Elsewhere Aquinas summarized: "Christ is the most perfect image of God. For in order that something be perfectly an image of something, three things are necessary … First, a likeness; second origin; third, perfect equality." He continues, "Therefore, since those three are present in Christ, the Son of God, because namely his is similar to the Father, arises from the Father and is equal to the Father, he is in the highest degree and perfectly called the image of God."[86] Thomas lists three objections to considering "image" a proper name for the Son before proceeding to develop his response in the *Summa*. These objections relate to the plural "let us make," in Genesis 1:26 in reference to the creation of humanity in God's image leading to the conclusion that the "image" encompasses the Trinity and "image" is used in relation to humanity as well as the Son so therefore must be a descriptive term. In this case since

"image" is not used exclusively of the Son but also describes humanity in places like Genesis 1:26 it must not be considered a proper name. However, the Bible's use of the term with the Son is unique given that humanity is created *in*, *according to*, or *as* the image of God, whereas Jesus *is* the image of God. Aquinas makes a clear distinction of the Son within the Trinity and with humanity, allowing for the Son to possess the term "image" as a name proper to him not simply a description. Hughes comments, "We must understand that the incarnation of the Son is not the identification of us with him who *is* the Image but his identification with us who are made *in* the image. We may say that as man, living *in* or *according to* the image, the incarnate Son conformed to himself who, as God, *is* the eternal image."[87] Aquinas further responds by pointing out the distinction between Greek and Latin doctors. The former, using image in reference to the Trinity, and the latter in reference to the Son alone. In reference to the Trinity, Thomas does not deny that humanity is created in the image of the Trinity, drawing parallels between the Holy Spirit and humanity. Yet he also shows the "image" is used differently for the Son than for humanity so that "image" truly can be a name proper to the Son. Aquinas writes,

> The image of a thing may be found in something in two ways. In one way it is found in something of the same specific nature; as the image of the king is found in his son. In another way it is found in something of a different nature, as the king's image on the coin. In the first sense the Son is the Image of the Father; in the second sense man is called the image of God; and therefore in order to express the imperfect character of the divine image in man, man is not simply called the image, but "to the image," whereby is expressed a certain movement of tendency to perfection. But it cannot be said that the Son of God is "to the image," because He is the perfect Image of the Father.[88]

From the foundation that Aquinas developed others have continued to argue for considering image a proper name for the Son. Returning to the NT for support Hammett believes: "The context in Colossians 1 and Hebrews 1 suggests that calling Christ the "image of God" and "exact expression of his being" are ontological claims, claims of deity."[89] Moo also sees the terms used in Colossians 1:15–16 as titles. "Christ is presented as God's intermediary in creation (v. 16), and he is given titles that were often

connected with wisdom/word: especially "image" and "firstborn" in v. 15."[90] David Allen makes a similar case from Hebrews 1:3. "That both of these clauses are coordinated by *kai* and introduced by the present participle ōn indicates that the author was speaking ontologically and eternally, not functionally, for in the latter case the sonship was by adoption rather than by nature."[91]

Aquinas appears to make the strongest case for the term "image" being considered a proper name for the second person of the Trinity. Biblically, the only place that the image can possibly be understood as used to reference the Trinity is in the Genesis account at the point of humanity's creation in which the plural "let us" is found (Gen 1:26). The NT attributes "image" primarily to Jesus in a manner that declares him *the* image of God. Theologically, Aquinas' explanation of image applied to the Trinity, and specifically to why the Holy Spirit cannot be called the Image, because "by His procession, He receives the nature of the Father, as the Son also receives it, nevertheless is not said to be 'born;' so, although He receives the likeness of the Father, He is not called the Image,"[92] provides a compelling case for the fact that image applied to the Son goes beyond descriptive title to proper name.

Conclusion

I have sought to demonstrate the biblical and theological evidence of the relationship between the theological categories of Christology and anthropology in light of the *imago Dei*, revealing an emphasis on Jesus Christ as the image of God who functions both as the eternal ontological self-expression of the Father within the Trinity and as the archetype and destiny of humanity as the incarnational image who reveals and redeems.

One implication for revelation includes humanity's ability to truly understand oneself. Wellum notes, "historic Christianity teaches that we cannot fully understand who we are apart from the identity of Christ as the Son and the true image of God."[93] Another implication is as the Image He also reveals the Father, aptly captured by Athanasius. "Whence, lest this should be so, being good, he gives them a share in his own image, our Lord Jesus Christ, and makes them after his own image and after his likeness: so that by such grace perceiving the image, that is, the Word of the Father, they may be able through him to get an idea of the Father, and, knowing

their maker, live the happy and truly blessed life."[94] Ironically, the image in humanity is the means by which the incarnation is made plausible as Wellum points out, "apart from the Bible's teaching regarding humans as image-bearers, it is difficult to make coherent and plausible the very idea of an incarnation."[95] Later he adds, "the *imago Dei* in humanity also grounds the logical plausibility of the very idea of an incarnation."[96] Erickson elaborates the point: "What he did instead was to become united with a specimen of the one creature that had been made in his own image and likeness. In other words, there was a natural likeness or affinity between God and the human person in whom he became incarnate. There was a type of fit of the one for the other."[97] The Son, the eternal and incarnational image, is central to the divine work of revelation.

The image is also central to the divine work of redemption. Utilizing the image-son-Adam typology, Wellum shows the relationship of the *imago* to redemption. He writes, "the image-son-Adam typology shows us that this righteous rule of God must come through a righteous obedient man. This typological trajectory that begins in creation ends in Christ."[98] He continues, "the first part of the biblical metanarrative gives us a determinative typology for understanding the identity of Christ: he is the true image-Son and last Adam. In short, the reign of Christ will be righteous because he is the exact image of God, the obedient Son of God, and the faithful Adam of a new humanity."[99] This connection is vitally important because, as Athanasius noted, "none other could create anew the likeness of God's image for men, save the image of the Father."[100] Ultimately, the incarnational image secured redemption for those who place their faith in Him. "Through Jesus's own words and works — both implicit and explicit — he knowingly and intentionally identified himself as the divine Son of God and the eternal *imago Dei*. In the same way, he also identified himself as the incarnational *imago Dei* and the man who would fulfill all of God's covenant promises as his true Son-King and the last Adam."[101]

It is hard, if not impossible, to overstate the glorious truths that are unlocked through mining the depths of "the image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15), "the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature" (Heb 1:3). Jesus Christ is the ultimate expression of the *imago Dei*. He is central to gaining an adequate understanding of the *imago Dei* both eternally and incarnationally.

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[99] Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate*, 130.
[100] Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, 74.
[101] Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate*, 187.

Suffering and the Humanity of Christ

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Since the Fall, human existence has been marked by suffering. In his incarnate life, Jesus entered into this condition, living in perfect faith and obedience, ultimately giving his life as a substitute for sinners, accomplishing their redemption from sin through his death, resurrection, and ascension. As one who assumed true humanity within a fallen world, Christ's earthly life was characterized by profound suffering. According to Scripture, Jesus suffered not only physically in his crucifixion, but as the prophesied "suffering servant" (Isa 52:13–53:12), he also endured the betrayal and loss of close companions (Matt 26:14–16; John 6:66), rejection (John 1:11), abandonment (Matt 26:69–75), misunderstanding (John 12:16), false accusations (Mark 14:55–56), physical abuse (John 19:1), mockery (Matt 27:27–31), and public humiliation (Luke 23:35–39) that culminated in his death on the cross (Matt 27:45–54).

As theologians consider the suffering of Christ, two common errors tend to emerge: (1) theologians assert that God himself experienced the suffering of Christ, denying the impassibility of God, while (2) others maintain that Christ utilized divine resources, such as the beatific vision, which enabled him to endure suffering in a manner inaccessible to believers today.[1] These errors carry significant implications, not only for our understanding of the nature of God and the person of the Son, but also for how believers find hope amid present suffering.

This article will examine the suffering of God the Son incarnate and seek to answer the questions: in what sense did the incarnate Son suffer as a man, and what are the implications of his suffering for believers? I will answer these questions in four ways. First, it will present a theological account of the person of the Son, affirming the person-nature distinction and the Chalcedon definition that maintains the duality of divine and human natures without confusion, mixture, or compromise. Second, I will explore the suffering of Christ as recorded in Scripture, examining the biblical data to ascertain both the purpose of Christ's suffering and the means by which he obediently endured. Though uniquely sinless and unfallen, Christ endured genuine human suffering utilizing the same spiritual resources available to believers including the knowledge of God, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and the exercise of faith. Third, in contrast to Jürgen Moltmann's theology of divine passibility, I will argue that the suffering of Christ was experienced solely in his humanity, maintaining the classical doctrine of divine impassibility. I will conclude by examining how the genuine suffering of Christ shapes the Christian life, focusing on the believer's call to follow Christ's example of faithful, obedient endurance (1 Pet 2:21; Heb 12:1–3).

Jesus, the Incarnate Son

Chalcedon confirmed the biblical teaching regarding the hypostatic union of Christ as having two complete natures, divine and human, united without confusion, change, division, or separation, with the properties of each nature being preserved.[2] Still, centuries later, theological errors concerning the person of Christ continue to obscure both theology proper and Christology, with significant implications for practical theology and biblical counseling.[3] This section will first examine the "person-nature" distinction, followed by a brief treatment of Christ's divine and human natures.

The Person-Nature Distinction

Prior to Chalcedon, categories of person and nature were developed to make sense of the biblical teaching of the oneness and threeness of God: that God is one divine nature subsisting in three distinct persons. The Synod of Alexandria (362) played a pivotal role in clarifying the "nature-person"

distinction by uncoupling the terms ousia and hypostasis to provide separate terms in identifying the one nature of God (ousia) and the three persons of the Trinity (hypostasis). Successive church councils helped define a person as the who — the active subject, the one who says "I" and performs actions and defined the nature as the what — or the essence or qualities that make something what it is, including the mind and the will.[4] Indeed, a person has a nature and can act only according to the capacities inherent in that nature.[5] Building upon this foundation, Chalcedon affirmed that Christ exists as one person in whom two distinct and complete natures, divine and human, are united without confusion or division:

> Christ, Son, Lord, unique; acknowledged in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation — the difference of the natures being by no means taken away because of the union, but rather the distinctive character of each nature being preserved, and [each] combining in one Person and *hypostasis* — not divided or separated into two Persons, but one and the same Son and only-begotten God, Word, Lord Jesus Christ.[6]

Contra Monophysitism, the definition articulates a clear distinction between *person* and *nature,* thereby defining the orthodox formulation of the hypostatic union.[7] The definition likewise rejects heresies such as Nestorianism which falsely asserted two distinct persons in Christ. This person-nature distinction aided the church in rightly understanding the Son's incarnation by upholding both his divine and human natures as articulated in Scripture.

The church fathers established that God exists as one *nature* in three distinct *persons* (Father, Son, Spirit) and that Christ exists in one *person* (the person of the Son), with two distinct *natures* (divine and human). God is one in nature, "a unity (not uniformity), who reveals himself as possessing a single will, a single activity, and a single glory … All three persons, Father, Son, and Spirit, subsist in the divine nature and possess the same divine attributes equally, not as three separate beings but as the one true and living God."[8] It is only through the external works (*opera ad extra)* and immanent relations (*opera ad intra*) that the distinctions between the persons of the Trinity can be observed.

The immanent relations of the Trinity are summarized as paternity, filiation, and spiration. "The Father eternally begets the Son ("paternity"), and the Son is eternally begotten of the Father ("filiation"). The Father and the Son eternally breathe forth the Spirit ("active spiration"), and the Spirit is eternally breathed forth by the Father and the Son ("passive spiration")."[9] In salvation, the economic works of the Trinity are evidenced in how the Father elects (Eph 1:3–5), the Son redeems (Gal 3:13), and the Spirit applies redemption (Eph 1:13–14). The person-nature distinction is foundational for rightly understanding both the triune nature of God and the union of divine and human natures in the person of the Son.[10]

Christ's Human Nature

Genesis 2:7 presents human nature as a union of material and immaterial elements, created in the image of God. Adam is formed from the "dust of the ground," signifying the material aspect, and receives the "breath of life" which some theologians identify as the immaterial component, commonly identified in theological terms as the soul, or inner man.[11] John Cooper describes this integrated constitution as a "holistic dualism," highlighting the inherent relationship between the material and immaterial.[12] To be human, then, is to exist as an embodied soul, a psychosomatic unity in which the material and immaterial are intrinsically joined.[13] The essential components of a human nature therefore include a body-soul composite, with shared properties and capacities. Gregg Allison identifies these common human capacities as "rationality, cognition, memory, imagination, emotions, feelings, volition, motivations, purposing, and more," while noting the common human properties of "gentleness, courage, initiative, nurturing, patience, protectiveness, goodness, and more."[14] While these essential capacities and properties vary in degree among individuals, they are what constitute the essence of embodied-soul humanity. Thus, in the incarnation, God the Son assumed a complete human nature to his person containing all the common capacities and properties that are essential to humanity including a physical body and rational soul made through the hypostatic union.

The fact that humans are created in God's image clarifies the mystery of how the second person of the Trinity assumed a human nature. Since humanity reflects the *imago Dei*, it is entirely coherent to affirm that the person of the Son can subsist in a human nature whose capacities are patterned after

God himself.[15] As Christ was entirely without sin, he perfectly embodies the image of God as man was intended (Gen 1:26–27; Heb 1:3) with all of the common human capacities and properties unmarred by sin. The divine Son, then, took on a complete human nature, perfectly bearing God's image as both a son and a vice regent as God intended humanity to do in the Garden of Eden (Gen 1:26–28).[16]

As a man, the divine Son fully experienced life through his human nature, as consistently affirmed in Scripture. Through the incarnation, he assumed flesh and embraced the spatial and temporal limitations inherent to humanity (John 1:14; Luke 2:7). In his human nature, Jesus developed physically, spiritually, and intellectually, following the typical pattern of human development (Luke 2:40, 52). He experienced the limitations intrinsic to human finitude including hunger (Matt 4:2; 21:28), thirst (John 4:7), fatigue (John 4:6), the need for rest (Mark 4:38), and a full range of sinless human emotions (Matt 14:14; 26:37; Luke 10:21; John 2:15; 11:35). His human nature also entailed a limitation of knowledge (Matt 24:36) and a human will (Luke 22:42). Furthermore, Christ faced genuine temptation, though he remained entirely without sin (Matt 4:1–11; Heb 4:15).[17]

In his human nature, Christ endured various forms of suffering (Matt 27:27–31; Mark 14:55–56; Luke 23:35–30; John 1:11, 19:1) and underwent a real, physical death (Matt 27:50; Luke 23:46). He was then raised bodily from the dead (1 Cor 15:45) and ascended bodily into heaven (Luke 24:50–53) where he now reigns as the Incarnate, Davidic Son (Rom 1:3–6; Col 3:1), awaiting the day of his return to judge the world as the glorified God-man (Acts 1:11; Col 3:4). Christ did not relinquish his human nature in his death and resurrection but retains his humanity in a glorified state. He continues to rule as God the Son incarnate.[18] However, while *fully* human, Christ was not *merely* human.[19] As the eternal Son incarnate, he continued to possess the fullness of the divine nature even as he assumed a complete human nature.

Christ's Divine Nature

The divine nature of the Son is the one nature of God. The divine nature is not a generic category shared by the persons of the Trinity in the same way that individual humans share in the human species; rather, it is fully, indivisibly, and uniquely possessed by each of the three divine persons: Father, Son, and

Holy Spirit.[20] Thus, the Son, just as the Father and the Spirit, is identical to God, distinguished only by his external or economic works (*opera ad extra)* and the immanent relations within the trinity (*opera ad intra*).[21] As the eternally begotten Son of the Father (filiation), the external mission was the assumption of human nature in the incarnation and atonement (*opera ad extra*). The Father and the Spirit did not become incarnate; the incarnation terminated solely on the person of the Son.[22] Yet, in becoming incarnate, the Son did not divest himself of the divine nature, nor did the incarnation temporarily terminate his eternal divinity or his divine functions. Stephen Wellum notes, "the Son continued to be who he had always been as God the Son. His identity did not change, nor did he change in ceasing to possess *all* the divine attributes *and* performing and exercising all his *divine* functions and prerogatives."[23]

In retaining his divine nature, the incarnate Son possessed the full range of both communicable and incommunicable divine attributes including omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, immutability, eternality, infinity, self-existence, aseity, sovereignty, impassibility, and transcendence. Simultaneously, he continued to exercise his divine role as the eternal Word through whom all things were created (John 1:3) and by whom all things are sustained (Heb 1:3). The incarnate Christ remained the divine Son even as he assumed a human nature into his person and simultaneously upheld his divine functions while living as a man.[24]

While kenotic theories seek to reconcile Christ's full humanity with his divinity by proposing a temporary limitation or suspension of divine attributes during the incarnation, such views ultimately compromise the doctrine of divine immutability.[25] Moreover, they stand in contradiction to the Chalcedonian definition of the hypostatic union, which affirms the full and undiminished union of both natures in the one person of the Son. The Son of God did not surrender or diminish any of his divine attributes in the incarnation. Rather, he lived fully as a man according to his human nature, while retaining the fullness of his divinity by living and acting as the divine Son through his divine nature. Wellum rightly observes, "Once we understand that Christ's nonhuman properties are not properties of his human nature but of his divine nature, we can see how a *person* who is fully human could have properties that no one who is *merely* human could have."[26] Using the person-nature distinction, there is no contradiction, then, to say

that the person of Christ was both omniscient *and* limited in knowledge.[27] In his divine nature, the Son possessed all knowledge; in his human nature, he only had the knowledge God the Father provided by the Spirit. Christ, then, did not need to empty himself of his divinity to assume a true human nature. He was and is fully God *and* fully man.

The Suffering of Christ

When the "Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14), the second person of the Trinity stepped into a fallen world marred by sin and decay. In the incarnation, Christ subjected himself to the full range of human experience, including human pain, suffering, and even death.[28] Though impeccable, Christ was not immune to the suffering caused by the Fall. Indeed, in many respects, Christ experienced the effects of the Fall to a greater degree precisely because he was unfallen and without sin, suffering innocently in every way and experiencing the fullness of each and every temptation presented to him.[29] His obedient endurance in extreme suffering set an example for believers to emulate in their own experience of suffering (1 Pet 2:21; Heb 12:1–3). This section will examine how Christ suffered and endured according to his human nature. It will begin by analyzing the biblical evidence that affirms the reality of his suffering, then explore the theological rationale offered by the biblical authors regarding the purpose of his suffering.[30] Finally, it will address the means by which Christ persevered in suffering.

The Biblical Data

Centuries prior to the incarnation, the prophet Isaiah foretold of the suffering Messiah who would be "despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief … stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted … pierced … crushed … [and] oppressed." (Isa 53:3–7). The cause of his suffering is identified as the transgressions and iniquities of God's people, while its redemptive purpose is to bring healing to the nation of Israel through his wounds (Isa 53:5). The suffering servant Isaiah depicts is not the political redeemer the nation of Israel anticipated; however, his suffering allowed him to identify with the people he came to redeem. The NT

provides evidence that Christ is the Messiah Isaiah prophesied by detailing the suffering he experienced.[31]

The NT authors clearly portray the genuine suffering of Christ in every dimension of human existence: physical, emotional, and relational. In his humanity, he endured scourging (Matt 27:26), beatings (Luke 22:63), and crucifixion (Matt 27:35). He also endured the ordinary suffering of hunger (Matt 21:18–19), thirst (John 19:28), and weariness (John 4:6) that are native to a creaturely existence. Emotionally he faced verbal abuse, mockery (Luke 22:63–65), temptation (Heb 4:15), and profound anguish (Matt 26:38–39). Relationally, he was betrayed and abandoned by friends (John 13:21–30), grieved the death of loved ones (John 11:35), and was rejected by his own family (John 1:11). In his humanity, he felt the full weight of suffering: the lashes of the whip, the pain of betrayal, and the sorrow of death.

Christ's experience of typical human suffering was exacerbated by his unfallen and sinless state. Having never experienced imperfection, Christ felt the weight of suffering in its deepest form. Theologians have noted, "by virtue of the hypostatic union with the Logos, the natural operations of Christ's human being function at a superlative pitch of perfection in all their capacities, with the result that he sorrowed and suffered to the fullest human extent."[32] Just as Christ endures the fullness of temptation by never yielding, he also bears the fullness of sorrow and suffering because he alone is without sin. He feels the frailty of his physical body as he labors toward the cross, calling on his disciples to hold him up in prayer. Macleod notes, "Could there be a more impressive witness to the felt weakness of Jesus than his turning to those frail human beings and saying to them, 'I need your prayers!'?"[33] But in his weakest moment the disciples failed him, adding to the pain and anguish of his suffering. They slept when they should have been praying; they denied him when they should have been with him (Mark 14:66–72). Christ bore the full weight of redemption alone.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Christ is described as "sorrowful and troubled" (Matt 26:37), pleading with the Father to remove the suffering that awaited him, yet ultimately submitting to the will of God. Bruce Ware notes, "We dare not trivialize the agony of Christ here by thinking that somehow, because he was God, this obedience was easy or automatic. It was no such thing. Rather, as a man, Jesus obeyed the Father,

in the power of the Spirit, and as such he had to "learn obedience" by being tested in harder and harder ways."[34] This act of surrender mirrors a common form of human suffering: yielding personal desires to God's sovereign plan. In his humanity, Christ expressed a genuine desire to avoid the cross if redemption could be accomplished by any other means. Yet, in keeping with the doctrine of inseparable operations, his divine will remained perfectly united with the will of God. Christ's submission to the divine will in his humanity involved deep sacrifice that led to unimaginable pain and suffering.

Physically on the cross Christ was pulled to the extreme of human limitations. After being whipped and forced to carry his cross to the place he would die, Christ was physically nailed to the cross (John 19:17–18). According to medical experts, the nails in the wrists and feet would have damaged or severed major nerves causing continuous pain to radiate up both of Christ's arms and legs as he hung on the cross for hours.[35] The weight of his body would have dislocated his shoulders and elbows, while placing extreme pressure on his diaphragm making it nearly impossible to breathe and leading to a slow suffocation or eventual heart attack.[36] But though his physical pain was excruciating and unbearable, his loss of his sense of filial relationship with the Father was most devastating. Macleod writes,

> In the moment of dereliction, there is no sense of his own sonship. Even in Gethsemane, Jesus had been able to say, 'Abba!' But now the cry is, '*Elōi, Elōi'*. He is aware only of the god-ness and power and holiness and otherness of God. In his self-image, he is no longer Son, but Sin; no longer *Monogenēs*, the Beloved with whom God is well-pleased, but *Katara*, the cursed one: vile, foul and repulsive.[37]

This loss of awareness marks unimaginable suffering for the eternal Son who has always known Sonship. Though the loss is one of conscious awareness alone, the sheer weight of God's wrath in that moment faced without the awareness of his Sonship was unbearable. The suffering and punishment that was intended for sinful humanity was placed on the sinless Christ. What began in the incarnation with the assumption of a human nature culminated in the awful weight of agony on the cross where Christ faced not only brutal physical suffering but also deep emotional turmoil. As Macleod notes, "The humiliation of Christ was not a point, but a line, beginning at Bethlehem

and descending towards Calvary. But Calvary itself, in turn, is a line, as, on the cross, the Lord moves deeper and deeper into the abyss."[38]

The author of Hebrews notes that in his earthly ministry, Christ cried out with loud cries and supplications (Heb 5:7), demonstrating that his suffering was substantive, not symbolic. "It is clear from all the accounts that Jesus' experience of turmoil and anguish was both real and profound. His sorrow was as great as a man could bear, his fear convulsive, his astonishment well-nigh paralysing."[39] There is no category of human suffering that Christ did not experience in his human nature, and though he suffered greatly, he did not respond in sin, but humbly embraced the purpose for which he had been sent.

The Purpose of Christ's Suffering

The central purpose of the incarnation was the atonement. Indeed, redemption was dependent on Christ's suffering, which required his incarnation.[40] The divine Son assumed a true human nature to identify with humanity and serve as the perfect propitiation for sin (Rom 3:25). Since the penalty for sin is death (Rom 6:23), Christ became man so that he might die as a substitute for humanity, thereby satisfying God's wrath for sin and crediting those who trust Christ by faith with his righteousness (Rom 4:5). Suffering, therefore, is not merely a consequence but an essential aspect of the incarnation and of Christ's divine mission to satisfy God's wrath as a propitiatory sacrifice.[41]

John Piper identifies seven achievements of Christ's suffering: satisfying the wrath of God (Gal 3:13), bearing the sins of humanity and purchasing forgiveness (1 Pet 2:24), providing a perfect righteousness to sinners (Phil 2:7–8), defeating death (Heb 2:14–15), disarming Satan (Col 2:14–15), purchasing perfect final healing for his people (Rev 7:17), and ultimately bringing his people to God (1 Pet 3:18).[42] Christ's suffering was the means by which he satisfied God's wrath, set a model for the redeemed to follow, and revealed the surpassing greatness and glory of God.

The author of Hebrews notes that to bring many sons to glory, "it was fitting that he [God]… should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering" (Heb 2:10). As the sinless Christ, the perfection he acquired through suffering was not ethical in nature but vocational, demonstrating his qualification to accomplish the work of redemption.[43]

Christ was able to bring "many sons to glory" precisely because he suffered as a man. The fittingness of the suffering of the Son corresponds to the fact that to redeem humanity, the Son had to be made like man "in every respect" (Heb 2:17). Wellum observes,

> Unless the Son took upon himself our humanity and suffered for us, there would be no suffering to help humanity, no fulfillment of God's promises for humanity, and no return to the planned glory of humanity. Jesus's suffering and death, then, was not a failed end to the incarnation but the precise purpose of the incarnation, all of which fulfills the Creator-Covenant Lord's plan to perfect a new humanity to rule over his good creation.[44]

The suffering of Christ ultimately fulfilled God's promise to redeem a people for himself. It is by the wounds of Christ that God's people are healed (Isa 53:5) and brought back into right relationship with God. The suffering of Christ equipped him for his mediatorial role, enabling him to bear the penalty for sin and serve as the Great High Priest on behalf of the redeemed and are the basis of his continuing high priestly work in heaven.[45] In his role as High Priest, Christ is able to sympathize with his people precisely because he endured real temptation and suffering. He understands human frailty, having taken on a full human nature and shared in its weaknesses. Apart from suffering, then, there is no savior.

While the primary purpose of Christ's suffering was redemption, his suffering also serves as an example for his people to follow (1 Pet 2:21; Heb 12:1–3). In 1 Peter, Peter writes to exiled believers who are enduring intense suffering for the sake of their allegiance to Christ. Peter exhorts these suffering Christians to look to Christ's example of suffering, emphasizing his patient endurance in suffering without sin or retaliation.[46] In addition, the author of Hebrews presents Christ as the supreme moral example of suffering who believers are called to emulate so that they won't grow weary or fainthearted (Heb 12:1–3). Christ's faithful, obedient endurance in his life and death are the model by which humanity is called to suffer, and it is only because Christ "despised the shame" of the cross that Christians are empowered by the Spirit to faithfully endure without growing weary.

The Means of Obedient Suffering

For believers to emulate Christ's obedient suffering, it is essential to understand the manner in which he suffered in his humanity. As demonstrated above, Christ endured real, profound suffering through his human nature in order to accomplish redemption.[47] "The Christological tradition, inherited from the Fathers and the Scholastics, held that the Son of God did suffer, but *as a man and not as God.*"[48] Misunderstanding the means of Christ's faithful endurance and the role of his divinity has far-reaching implications for Christology. Scripture presents Christ's endurance of profound suffering in his humanity through perfect faith and reliance on the Spirit, rather than by drawing upon his divinity.[49]

In his earthly ministry, Jesus was always dependent on the Father. As Wellum explains, "Christ, as the Son, in order to accomplish our redemption *as our mediator*, spoke, acted, and knew in dependence upon his Father and in relation to the Spirit, primarily in and through his humanity, unless the Father by the Spirit allowed otherwise."[50] In this way, "The Son of God abandoned any use of his divine prerogatives and capabilities which, as a man, he would not have enjoyed, unless his heavenly Father gave him the direction to use such prerogatives."[51] Though Christ used divine prerogatives to further his mission as permitted by the Father, Scripture never portrays Jesus using his divine capabilities to escape or diminish suffering, for doing so would have disqualified him from serving as our high priest (Heb 4:15), obeying as the last Adam (1 Cor 15:45), and becoming our propitiation for sin (Rom 3:25). D. A. Carson observes, "He therefore would not use his power to turn stones into bread for himself: that would have been to vitiate his identification with human beings and therefore to abandon his mission, for human beings do not have instant access to such solutions. But if that mission required him to multiply loaves for the sake of the five thousand, he did so."[52] In other words, "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

In addition, Christ "did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied himself" (Phil 2:6–7) by living a fully human life, suffering not as the divine Son, but as the man Christ.[53] Macleod shows how Christ's limited knowledge as a man is evidence of his genuine faith arguing, "He had to learn to obey without knowing all the facts and to believe without being in possession of full information. He had to forego the comfort which

omniscience would sometimes have brought."[54] Had Christ exercised his omniscience in his humanity, he would have no need of faith to endure, for his knowledge would have assured him of the outcome of his suffering. However, in fully embracing his humanity Christ suffered as a man exercising genuine faith in God and his promises. In addition, in his humanity,

> The assurance of the Fathers love, the sense of his own sonship and the certainty of his victory were all eclipsed, and he had to complete his obedience as the one who walked in darkness, knowing only that he was sin and that he was banished to the outer darkness. He suffers as the one who does not have all the answers and who in his extremity has to ask, Why? The ignorance is not a mere appearing. It is a reality. But it is a reality freely chosen, just as on the cross he chose not to summon twelve legions of angels. Omniscience was a luxury always within reach, but incompatible with his rules of engagement. He had to serve within the limitations of finitude.[55]

In order for Jesus to fulfill the office of mediator, he had to do so within the limitations of both a human body and a human mind.[56] His obedience was wrought by faith and trust in God, not by his omniscience or omnipotence. He endured his suffering obediently, without retaliation, by continually entrusting himself to God (1 Pet 2:21). Though he had the ability as the divine Son to call down legions of angels to rescue him from his suffering, he faithfully endured and accomplished redemption by continually "'handing over' (*paredidou*) to God every dimension of his life."[57] Though Christ had access to divine power as the divine Son, use of his divinity would have nullified his ability to redeem humanity. Therefore, he willingly suffered within the limits of his human nature in order to bear the penalty for sin as the perfect sacrifice and propitiation.

As a man, Christ was empowered by the Holy Spirit, just as believers are today.[58] It was through the ministry of the Spirit that Christ was "able to offer himself without spot to God (Heb 9:14)."[59] And it was the ministry of the Spirit that kept Christ's faith intact and aided him in not falling into despair. Macleod observes, "More remarkably still, Jesus' own faith remained intact. Even at the lowest point, where he cannot say 'Abba!' he says '*Elōi!*' ('*My* God!)… To lose faith and lapse into despair would itself have been sin. But what a tribute it is to the spiritual strength of Jesus that

even as he walks through this darkness he reaches out towards a God still perceived as his own."[60] Even in his darkest hour on the cross, perceiving, as a man, both the loss of his filial relationship to God and the experience of being forsaken by God in the place of sinners, Christ continues to cry out to him in a personal manner. Empowered by the Spirit, he never loses faith; never sinks into despair.[61]

Christ, then, does not lessen the reality of his suffering by drawing upon his divine nature. Rather, he endures suffering fully within his humanity, relying solely on the resources available in his human nature, namely true, enduring faith, and the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit. The efficacy of Christ's suffering signifies that it was not merely an example of endurance, but that it truly accomplished the redemption of sinners through his substitutionary atonement. Christ could not have accomplished this if he had drawn upon his divine nature or relied on divine resources uncommon to humanity, for doing so would have disqualified him from serving as the promised Last Adam, son of Abraham, true Israel, Davidic son, and Messiah.

Common Errors

A proper understanding of Christ's two natures and the person-nature distinction are essential for accurately interpreting how he suffered during his earthly mission. Theological misconceptions in this area typically fall into two major errors: the first denies the doctrine of divine impassibility, while the second attributes Christ's endurance of suffering primarily to his divinity. Both reflect a fundamental misunderstanding of the person-nature distinction, though in different ways. As Christ's suffering in his human nature has been addressed above, this section will examine Jürgen Moltmann's conception of divine passibility in relation to the suffering of Christ.

Jürgen Moltmann and Divine Passibility[62]

German theologian Jürgen Moltmann reconciled the problem of evil by concluding that for God to be loving, he must be able to fully identify with sufferers which, in his view, requires that God himself must suffer. For Moltmann, God cannot be impassible for in order for him to love and relate to humans, he must also be able to suffer.[63] Moltmann rightly sees the cross

as the focal point of the entire Bible, however, he rejects the person-nature distinction and thereby rejects the classical Trinitarian understanding of the cross, as well as Chalcedonian Christology.[64] In Moltmann's understanding of the *communicatio idiomatum*, the divine and human attributes are ascribed to the whole person of Christ rather than to one or the other nature. In this understanding, what pertains to his human nature also affects his divine nature.[65] For Moltmann, the oneness of Christ makes it possible "to ascribe suffering and death on the cross to the divine-human person of Christ. If this divine nature in the person of the eternal Son of God is the centre which creates a person in Christ, then it too suffered and died."[66] Moltmann ascribes Christ's suffering not to the nature but to the person. Thus, since Christ suffered, the person of the Son suffered, ascribing suffering to God himself. The suffering of God, for Moltmann, is not accidental but essential for God to have the capacity to genuinely love.

> If God is truly involved in the lives of people, if he actually enters into acts within time and history, and most of all, if he does so as the God of love, then such a God must, by necessity, experience suffering … It is not only that God acts within history to change history, nor that he acts within the lives of human beings in order to affect them, but equally the course of history and vicissitudes of human life affect and change him.[67]

For Moltmann, it is God's passibility that enables him to love.[68] However, by attributing the human attribute of passibility to Christ's divinity, Moltmann has humanized the divine.[69] Thomas White observes, "There is an added danger in the language of divine passibility of projecting human pathos and suffering back from the economy of creation into the divine nature."[70]

Thomas Weinandy notes, "The catalyst for affirming the passibility of God … is human suffering. God must be passable for he must not only be in the midst of human suffering, but he himself must also share in and partake of human suffering. Succinctly, God is passable because God must suffer."[71] However, as Matthew Barrett has observed, the logic of passibility disregards the Creator-creature distinction.[72] In Moltmann's understanding of passibility, he ascribes human limitations to God's ability to relate to humanity by requiring that God suffer in order to know his people. However, as God, he does not have to be identical to humanity to know and relate

to humanity. In other words, as Creator, God does not have to experience every facet of human existence to relate to his creation.

Barrett counters Moltmann's claim that in order to truly love God must suffer by arguing that "Far from undermining love, impassibility actually safeguards God's love, guaranteeing that his love is and remains perfect. Only an impassible love can ensure that our God does not need to be more loving than he already is."[73] Barrett rightly emphasizes one of the primary issues with Moltmann's argument for passibility: If God cannot be fully loving apart from suffering, then God's love is subject to change. Rejecting the person-nature distinction, as Moltmann does, denies the doctrine of divine impassibility, which in turn undermines the immutability of God. Undermining the doctrine of divine immutability undermines the entire doctrine of God, for if God can change, he ceases to be God. Thomas White observes that "the notions of divine suffering and change frequently are associated with a mistaken idea of the incarnation which confuses God's humanity, in which God [the Son] truly suffered, with his divinity, in which the suffering Christ remains impassible and immutable."[74] White rightly argues that Christ truly suffered in his humanity while the divine nature of the Son remained both impassible and immutable. The person-nature distinction accurately delineates the suffering of Christ as terminating on the nature, not the person, upholding the doctrine of divine impassibility.

Hope and Implications for Sufferers

Suffering is an inevitable reality of life in a fallen world, yet the genuine suffering of Christ in his humanity offers profound hope to those who suffer in four ways. First, through his wounds, Christ secured redemption and the guarantee of future resurrection and then new creation, which serves as the basis of the believer's hope in this life (Isa 53:5; 1 Cor 15:20; Rom 8:17). Second, Christ fully entered into human weakness and suffering, identifying with the afflicted, and now serves as their compassionate High Priest who intercedes for them and provides help in their time of need (Heb 4:15). Third, his suffering affirms the redemptive purpose of trials, as even the Son learned obedience through what he suffered (Heb 5:8). In this way, suffering is not arbitrary but directed by divine purpose and meaning (2 Cor

4:16–18; Rom 5:3–5; Jas 1:1–2). Finally, Christ's perseverance in suffering serves as an enduring and accessible example for believers to follow in their own seasons of suffering so that they do not grow weary (1 Pet 2:21; Heb 12:1–3).[75]

The primary implication of Christ's suffering and the greatest hope for sufferers is the redemption from sin Christ secured through his blood, inaugurating the new covenant and guaranteeing the future resurrection and glorification of the saints in the new creation. Jesus's life, death, resurrection, and ascension are an ongoing reminder of the temporal nature of suffering.[76] Believers can endure amid suffering because they know their suffering has an expiration date. In the incarnation and atonement, Christ has dealt with the believer's biggest problem: the wrath of God that promised eternal suffering and damnation. Because Christ has been raised, believers have a guarantee of their own future resurrection and the end of all pain and suffering for all eternity (1 Cor 15:52–54; Rev 21:4).

The new creation offers such profound hope to believers that Paul refers to the present sufferings of Christians as light and momentary in comparison to the glory that will be revealed on the last day (2 Cor 4:17).[77] This contrast highlights the disparity between present suffering and future glory: suffering is light and momentary whereas future glory is heavy and eternal.[78] God's promise to accomplish something of eternal value through temporal affliction transforms how believers interpret the hardships he allows. Paul encourages believers to look not to what is seen (temporal suffering) but what is unseen (eternal realities) (2: Cor 4:18). Faith, then, looks to the future, standing on the promises of God, not on the reality of present circumstances. Ultimately, God assures his people that in Christ, all suffering will end at the final consummation, when redemption is fully realized, and all things are made new. The temporal nature of suffering and the guarantee of future resurrection (1 Cor 15:20) provide hope and endurance in present suffering, as believers look to the unseen realities of the coming new creation as they endure suffering in this present evil age.[79]

Second, Christ's genuine experience of suffering in his humanity enables him to fully empathize with human weakness, not as an abstract truth or theoretical concept, but through personal, lived experience. Because Christ truly suffered as a man, believers can be confident that he understands the depths of human pain, temptation, and sorrow, and that he faithfully walks

with them through every trial as one who intimately knows their affliction. One of the deepest pains of suffering is the feeling of isolation, whether real or perceived, yet Christ comforts the afflicted with his immanent presence as one who understands (Ps 34:18, 46:1–2, 11; Heb 4:15).

The book of Hebrews highlights several enduring implications of Christ's human suffering. First, his full participation in humanity enables him, even in his exaltation, to "sympathize with our weaknesses" (Heb 4:15). Second, having himself been tempted and having suffered, he is "able to help those who are being tempted" (Heb 2:18),[80] while also serving as the supreme moral example of enduring faith amid suffering (Heb 12:1–3). Believers find assurance not only in the sufficiency of Christ's atoning work, but also in the experiential reality that their High Priest has entered into human suffering and remains both willing and able to help them in their time of need. The isolating nature of suffering is alleviated by a Savior who was forsaken in their place, ensuring they will never be forsaken (Heb 13:5).

Third, just as Christ's suffering served the divine purpose of qualifying him for his mediatorial role and securing redemption, so too, Christian suffering serves a redemptive purpose. To the sufferer, suffering may often feel meaningless, but for the believer, suffering is always used by God to produce his purposes, even when divine purposes may not be immediately observable (Gen 50:20; Rom 8:28–29). Believers are repeatedly called to look to the cross, the greatest example of suffering and evil, as the ultimate example of God's redemptive purposes in suffering. If God, in his sovereignty, used the evil of the cross to satisfy his wrath, so too, will he use the sufferings of sinners for redemptive purposes. Scripture connects trials and difficulty to the good things God wants for his people and is working to produce in them, namely sanctification (Rom 5:3–5; 8:28–29; 2 Cor 4:16–18; Jas 1:1–2). God's purposes in suffering bring great comfort and hope to believers because their suffering is not arbitrary, but deeply meaningful and essential in attaining their highest good, which is conformity to Christlikeness.[81]

The primary purpose of suffering in the life of a believer is sanctification (Rom 5:3–5; Rom 8:28–30; Jas 1:1–2).[82] For the believer, suffering is never punitive, but formative and corrective (Heb 12:6). In God's providence, he uses the suffering of this life to expose sin and lead his people in greater repentance and faith. Suffering serves to reveal the genuineness of faith (1 Pet 1:6–7) and substantiates the legitimacy of God's people as his sons

and daughters (Heb 2:10–13; 12:6).[83] Suffering also serves to keep believers dependent on God and far from the deceptiveness of self-sufficiency and pride (2 Cor 1:8–9). God uses suffering to humble his people (2 Cor 12:7–10) and to remind them that this world is not their ultimate home (Heb 13:14). Suffering serves the believer by conforming them to the image of Christ (1 Cor 3:18) and produces endurance and steadfastness (Jas 1:2–3). Peter, Paul, and James exhort believers to not only endure suffering, but to rejoice in their suffering because of God's redemptive purposes in it (Rom 5:3–5; 1 Pet 4:13–14; Jas 1:2–3).[84]

Finally, Christ's suffering serves as an example for believers to follow.[85] Peter exhorts believers to endure suffering in faith and obedience, grounding this exhortation in Christ's perfect example (1 Pet 2:21; 5:9–11). Christ's endurance was rooted in his unwavering trust in the Father: he "continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly" (1 Pet 2:23). Likewise, believers are called to a similar posture of trust amid suffering, entrusting themselves to their "faithful Creator while doing good" (1 Pet 4:19). This act of entrusting involves submitting to God's sovereign purposes and relying on his sustaining grace, empowered by the Spirit, to endure whatever trials he permits, following Christ's example, who submitted to the Father's will (Luke 22:42) and endured unimaginable suffering without sin. The author of Hebrews adds that Christ, who alone is the founder and perfector of the faith, endured the cross by looking to the ultimate reward of his suffering: sitting at the right hand of God (Heb 12:2). Similarly, believers are called to faithfully endure by looking to the future reward of glorification.[86]

Christ's obedience amid suffering and temptation was marked by sinlessness. Just as Christ was empowered by the Spirit in his endurance, so also the same Spirit now indwells, sanctifies, and strengthens believers who have been adopted by God to imitate Christ in their suffering (Eph 1:5;13–14). Though Christ was impeccable, his faithful perseverance provides an authoritative example by which believers may resist sin, endure trials, and grow in sanctification as they fix their eyes on him and the future resurrection, entrust themselves to God, and walk in the power of the Spirit.

Conclusion

The genuine suffering of Christ in his humanity is well documented in Scripture and constitutes an essential aspect of both the incarnation and the atonement. Denials of the authenticity of Christ's suffering and distortions of the person-nature distinction ultimately compromise the integrity of Chalcedonian Christology and render Christ's example useless for present suffering. Only through Christ's genuine suffering in both body and soul is he qualified to serve as the perfect mediator and atoning sacrifice for sin. It is this real and complete suffering that provides enduring hope to those who suffer as they look not to themselves, but to their empathetic high priest as the perfect model of faithful, obedient endurance in the face of unparalleled suffering.

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1 Due to space limitations, the traditional Roman Catholic position of the beatific vision is outside the scope of this paper. Thomas White argues that it is only by Christ's human vision of God that we can "understand the mystery of Christ's obedience and prayer without falling into either a confusion of the natures or a denial of the unity of his persons." Thomas Joseph White, *The Incarnate Lord: A Thomistic Study in Christology* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2017), 237. The central issue with this position is that the beatific vision is enjoyed by redeemed humanity only in glorification, putting Christ in a separate category from humanity. In addition, it diminishes the authentic suffering of Christ as a man and renders his cries on the cross as meaningless. See also Jean Galot, "Le Christ Terrestre et la Vision," *Gregorianum*, 67,3 (1986), 434 (translated), and Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology: Volume Two: Eleventh Through Seventeenth Topics* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 1994), 349, 352.

2 Edward R. Hardy, ed., *Christology of the Later Fathers* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1954), 373.

3 Chalcedon rejected Christological heresies by establishing an orthodox definition of biblical Christology, however, some theologians who purport to embrace the Definition have functionally denied the Definition in their interpretation and application of the incarnation, perfect life, death, bodily resurrection, ascension, and rule of Christ. Misinterpretations, misapplications, and outright denials of classical Christology have massive implications for every facet of theology. In biblical counseling, misunderstandings and misapplications of both the deity and humanity of Christ have led to a downstream of heretical trauma theologies infused with notions of feminist and liberation theology that not only distort the Christ of Scripture but are foundational to counseling methodologies that are ultimately anti-gospel. See Serene Jones, *Trauma and Grace: Theology in a Ruptured World* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009); Karen O'Donnell, *Feminist Trauma Theologies: Body, Scripture, and Church in Critical Perspective*, ed. Katie Cross (London: SCM Press, 2020).

4 The mind/will issues was not resolved clearly until Third Council of Constantinople (681).

5 Stephen J. Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate: The Doctrine of Christ* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016), 449.

6 Edward R. Hardy, ed., *Christology of the Later Fathers*, 373. The person-nature distinction is essential for preventing inconsistencies within Christology. The affirmation of two distinct and separate natures in Christ upholds the Creator-creature distinction while denying the co-mingling of the divine and human in a *tertium quid* that is neither divine nor human. See Wellum *God the Son Incarnate*, 449–50 and Donald Macleod, *The Person of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1998), 188–93.

7 Though Chalcedon made clear distinctions between person and nature, questions remained on the precise definitions of those terms until later councils. The Second Council of Constantinople (553) clarified that nature refers to *what* Christ is, while person/hypostasis refers to *who* Christ is.

8 Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate,* 287.

9 Swain, *The Trinity*, 61. For a full treatment of the immanent relations of the Trinity which is of vital importance to maintaining the doctrines of the Trinity and the dual natures of the Son, see Fred Sanders, *The Triune God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2016).

10 Misunderstandings concerning the person-nature distinction have profound ramifications for soteriology. If Christ was not fully God *and* fully man, he could not serve as a propitiation for sin. If he was simply man, he could only pay the penalty for his own sin; if only God, he could not identify with man and serve as their substitute or mediator.

11 Joshua R. Farris. *An Introduction to Theological Anthropology: Humans, Both Creaturely and Divine* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020), 20. The Word-man and Word-flesh controversy is outside the scope of this paper. I will argue the Word-man perspective, affirming Christ's assumption of a complete human nature, comprised of a physical body and rational soul, including a human will (dyothelitism). See John E. McKinley, "A Model of Jesus Christ's Two Wills in View of Theology Proper and Anthropology," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 19.1 (2015): 69–89.

12 John W Cooper. *Body, Soul and Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 164.

13 Anthony A. Hoekema. *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 217.

14 Gregg R. Allison. "What is a Man? Looking at a Historical, Contemporary, and Essential Answer," ERLC, June 6, 2022, https://erlc.com/research/what-is-a-man/.

15 David F. Wells, *The Person of Christ: A Biblical and Historical Analysis of the Incarnation* (Westchester: Crossway, 1984), 177–78. For further mysteries pertaining to the Incarnation, see Paul Helm, "The Mystery of the Incarnation: 'Great is the Mystery of Godliness,'" *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 19.1 (2015): 25–37.

16 Peter Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 200.

17 While the debate surrounding Christ's impeccability is beyond the scope of this paper, this paper maintains the position of impeccability. For a full treatment of the impeccability debate see John E. McKinley, *Tempted for Us: Theological Models and the Practical Relevance of Christ's Impeccability and Temptation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009). McKinley highlights the role of the Spirit as foundational to embracing both the genuine temptation of Christ as a man and his inability to sin. In contrast, Charles Hodge presents an argument for peccability in Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology Volume 2* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Academic, 1999), 452, though the Trinitarian implications of peccability make this position extremely problematic. See Macleod, *Person of Christ*, 229–30.

18 Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 171. In contrast, William Lane Craig has recently theorized what amounts to an "intermediate state" for the risen Christ, asserting that in his ascension he left the constraints of space and time, temporarily shedding his physical body only to regain it at the consummation. This view is highly problematic and has massive implications for Christology as it diminishes the ongoing reality of the resurrection, ascension, and exaltation. See William Lane Craig, "#714 Zygotic Jesus," *Reasonable Faith with William Lane Craig*, January 11, 2021, https://www.reasonablefaith.org/writings/question-answer/zygotic-jesus.

19 Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate, 451.*

20 Scott R. Swain, *The Trinity: An Introduction* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2020), 60.

21 Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate*, 291.

22 Macleod, *The Person of Christ*, 185.

23 Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate*, 291.

24 The doctrine of the *Extra Calvinisticum* has been affirmed throughout church history. E. David Wills provides a thorough explanation of the doctrine in E. David Wills, *Calvin's Catholic Christology: The Function of the So-Called Extra Calvinisticum in Calvin's Theology* (Leiden: Brill, 1966), cited in Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate*, 332.

25 Kyle Claunch argues against Kenotic Christology in Kyle Claunch, "The Son and the Spirit: The Promise of Spirit Christology in Traditional Trinitarian and Christological Perspective," (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017), 51–80. Claunch explores the emphasis on the full humanity of Christ in theologians Gerald Hawthorne, Klaus Issler, and Bruce Ware. Claunch ultimately, and I think rightly, sees their versions of Christology as functional kenoticism, leaning too heavily on the humanity of Christ while downplaying or negating the ongoing divine functions of Christ in the incarnation.

26 Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate*, 451.

27 The communication of attributes (*communicatio idiomatum*) states that what is true of the *nature* is also true or predicated of the *person*. The attributes of Christ's human nature are therefore distinct from the attributes of his divine nature, yet the attributes of both can be ascribed to the person of the Son. For further discussion see Macleod, *Person of Christ*, 193–99; Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms 2nd edition* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 72–75; or Richard Cross, *Communicatio Idiomatum: Reformation Christological Debates* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

28 Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate*, 291.

29 Some have questioned how Christ could have experienced the fullness of temptation if he was unable to sin. Macleod helpfully argues that though Christ was impeccable, in his human nature he may not have always had an awareness of it. He concludes that it would be unwise to assume Christ's knowledge of his impeccability, citing Christ's use of fellow believers, the Word of God, and prayer in his fight against Satan's temptations, but never finding comfort or taking refuge in his own impeccability. Macleod, *Person of Christ*, 230. Bruce Ware upholds the impeccability of Christ and the genuine temptation of Jesus by affirming his inability to sin but maintaining that Christ did not sin by relying on empowering grace of the Spirit to resist temptation. In this way he was both tempted and resisted in his human nature. Bruce Ware, *The Man Christ Jesus: Theological Reflections on the Humanity of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 81.

30 Heresies such as Docetism deny the reality of Christ's physical body and thereby eliminate his ability to genuinely suffer as a true man. This stands in contradiction to the biblical data of Christ's authentic suffering in the fullness of his humanity. See Paul L. Gavrilyuk, *The Suffering of the Impassible God: The Dialectics of Patristic Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

31 Jeremy R. Treat, *The Crucified King: Atonement and Kingdom in Biblical and Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 66. Cf, John Bright, *The Coming Kingdom* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1980), 152.

32 Aaron Riches, *Ecce Homo: On the Divine Unity of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 194.

33 Macleod, *Person of Christ*, 173.

34 Bruce Ware, *God's Greater Glory* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 169.

35 Cahleen Shrier, "The Science of the Crucifixion," *Azusa Pacific University*, March 01, 2002. https://www.apu.edu/articles/the-science-of-the-crucifixion/ Accessed June 21, 2025. See also, Frederick T. Zugibe, MD, PhD, *The Crucifixion of Jesus: A Forensic Inquiry* (New York: M. Evans and Co, 2005).

36 Shrier, "The Science of Crucifixion."

37 Macleod, *Person of Christ*, 176.

38 Macleod, *Person of Christ*, 175.

39 Macleod, *Person of Christ*, 174.

40 Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate*, 221.

41 The purpose of Christ's suffering is only fully realized in the Penal Substitution model of atonement. Other atonement models, including Christus Victor, Satisfaction, and Moral Example, provide aspects of redemption, but the biblical evidence shows that Christ suffered and died not simply to defeat sin and Satan, to satisfy God's justice, or to live a perfect moral life, but to satisfy God's wrath for sin and to be a propitiatory sacrifice. In addition, it is only through Christ's substitutionary atonement that sinners are imputed with his righteousness through their union with Christ (Rom 6:5–6; Gal 2:20). See William G. Witt and Joel Scandrett, *Mapping Atonement: The Doctrine of Reconciliation in Christian History and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2022).

42 John Piper, "The Suffering of Christ and the Sovereignty of God," *Suffering and The Sovereignty of God*, ed., John Piper and Justin Taylor (Wheaton: Crossway, 2006), 87–88.

43 David Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection: An Examination of the Concept of Perfection in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982). See also Douglas Moo, *Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2024), 81.

44 Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate*, 221.

45 Emma Ford, "Our Suffering, Sympathetic High Priest: Accomplishments and Implications of Christ's Incarnation in Hebrews 2:14–18 and 4:14–16," *Presbyterian* (47 no 1, Spring 2021), 127.

46 Thomas R. Schreiner, *1 & 2 Peter and Jude* (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2020), 159.

47 As maintained in the person-nature distinction above, Christ's human and divine natures remained entirely separate in the incarnation. In his human nature, Christ had access only to that which is common to humanity. Making use of the divine attributes to alleviate or avoid suffering would have disqualified him from serving as our high priest and mediator, and as a result, accomplishing our redemption. Christ had to suffer *as a man* in order to bear the penalty of God's just wrath owed by sinful humanity.

48 Thomas G. Weinandy, *Does God Suffer?* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000), 15.

49 Gerald Hawthorne has noted that many theologians today, in an attempt to prove Christ's deity, have placed unbalanced weight on the Spirit's presence and role in the life of Christ. In doing so, theological traditions have underemphasized the full humanity of Christ which, Claunch points out, has led to a functional or implicit Docetism that treats Jesus as a "super-human" imbibed with the divine nature. See Claunch, "The Son and the Spirit," 53–54. See also Gerald Hawthorne, *The Presence and the Power: The Significance of the Holy Spirit in the Life and Ministry of Jesus* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2003). While the emphasis on the Spirit may be taken to an extreme, it does not negate the Spirit's presence and power in the earthly ministry of Christ.

50 Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate, 456.*

51 D. A. Carson, *The Farewell Discourse and Final Prayer of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 35.

52 Carson, *Farewell Discourse*, 35–36.

53 As previously discussed, Christ's self-emptying cannot be understood as a literal emptying of his divine attributes as proposed by kenotic theories. Christ retained both his ontological and functional divine attributes even as he took on the form of a servant in the incarnation. Kenotic Christologies undermine the Chalcedon Definition by suggesting a temporary separation or suspension of the Son's divine attributes which stands in opposition to the hypostatic union and the dual natures of Christ.

54 Macleod, *Person of Christ,* 169. Macleod maintains Christ's infallibility despite his limitation of knowledge. See also Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate,* 458–459.

55 Macleod, *Person of Christ,* 169.

56 Macleod, *Person of Christ,* 169.

57 Schreiner, *1&2 Peter and Jude,* 160.

58 Believers share the same access to the Spirit as Jesus had; however, while Jesus received the Spirit "without measure" (John 3:34), believers experience the Spirit's presence and power with increasing measure through the ongoing process of sanctification.

59 Macleod, *Person of Christ,* 178.

60 Macleod, *Person of Christ,* 178.

61 Ware, *The Man Jesus Christ,* 34.

62 A full debate over the passibility of God is outside the scope of this article. For current scholarship and historical account of this debate, see James Keating and Thomas Joseph White, *Divine Impassibility and Human Suffering* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009).

63 Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: 40th Anniversary Edition* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 324. Ironically, the heresy of Arianism argued that the Son's passibility made him less than God thereby rendering Christ a created being precisely because he was able to suffer, cf. Donald Fairbairn, "Patristic Exegesis and Theology: The Cart and the Horse," *WTJ* 69, no. 1 (2007): 10.

64 Moltmann, *The Crucified God,* 333–346.

65 Blurring the Creator-creature distinction produces disastrous theological outcomes, as seen in Moltmann, process theism, and open theism. As noted previously, a misunderstanding of the *communicatio idiomatum* has massive implications for every facet of theology.

66 Moltmann, *The Crucified God,* 345.

67 Weinandy, *Does God Suffer?*, 8.

68 Moltmann, *The Crucified God,* 325. One question that arises out of Moltmann's view of passibility is how the Triune God was capable of love prior to his ability to suffer with his creation. Was the Triune God incapable of the fullness of genuine love in eternity past because of lacking creatures with whom to identify in suffering? Moltmann's framework makes the Creator dependent on the creature for the full expression of his divine attributes, which stands in direct opposition to biblical revelation. Further, if suffering and genuine love are ascribed to the whole Christ and not the nature, then it would seem to follow that only the person of the Son, and not the Father or Spirit, could experience the fullness of love because suffering terminated on his person alone. The Son shares the same divine nature with the Father and the Son, yes, but Moltmann's reasoning seems to require the Son to know a love that the other persons of the Trinity do not. How can God be love (1 John 4:8), if only the Son is capable of the fullest expression of love?

69 Matthew Barrett, *None Greater: The Undomesticated Attributes of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2019), 131.

70 Thomas Joseph White, *The Trinity: On the Nature and Mystery of the One God* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2022), 306.

71 Thomas G. Weinandy, *Does God Suffer?* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000), 2.

72 Barrett, *None Greater*, 120.

73 Barrett, *None Greater*, 123.

74 Thomas Joseph White, *The Trinity: On the Nature and Mystery of the One God* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2022), 307. To avoid confusion White could be more precise with his language here by ascribing suffering to Christ (the man) and impassibility to God (the divine Son).

75 The implications of Christ's suffering are immense for the purpose of counseling. Secular counseling modalities seek to help sufferers by providing temporary symptom relief or unbiblical rationales for sinful responses to suffering. Biblical counseling does not provide a system but a Savior; one who is both empathetic and all-powerful, able to understand and to help. It is precisely because of the incarnation, perfect life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ that sufferers can walk in joy and peace amid horrifying life circumstances — not diminishing the reality of their suffering but humbly embracing God's redemptive purposes in suffering and imitating their Savior who perfectly endured, relying on the Spirit's help in times of weakness.

76 The Lord's Supper offers a recurring reminder of Christ's suffering and promise of future resurrection (1 Cor 11:26). This corporate meal is not designed to last forever, but only to be observed "until he comes again." For the believer who persists in faith amid suffering, a better meal is coming (Rev 19:6–10).

77 In contrast, for those outside of Christ, life in this fallen world represents the height of their experience, since in eternity their suffering will only intensify as God's wrath remains unsatisfied against their sin.

78 Dane Ortlund, *2 Corinthians*, in *Expository Commentary*, vol. X, *Romans-Galatians*, ed. Iain M. Duguid, James M. Hamilton, Jr., and Jay Sklar (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 462.

79 Viewing trials in light of the coming new creation does not end the very real experience of intense suffering in this life, but it does provide genuine hope for the believer and places the temporal suffering of this life in right relation to the eternal cosmic realities that exist. Helping sufferers to rightly view their suffering in this way helps diminish the all-encompassing nature that suffering tends to have in a person's life and reorients their experience in light of the truths of Scripture.

80 Ford, "Our Suffering Savior," 129.

81 See Elisabeth Elliot, *Suffering is Never for Nothing* (Nashville: B&H, 2019); David Powlison, *God's Grace in Your Suffering* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2018); Paul Tripp, *Suffering: Gospel Hope When Life Doesn't Make Sense* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2018).

82 Though not original to him, I am indebted to my pastor who has repeatedly driven home the point that God is far more concerned with changing me than changing my circumstances. God cares far too much about our holiness to focus on our temporal happiness. Brian Powell, "Remain Here with God" (Sermon preached at Holy City Church, Charleston, SC, May 30, 2021). Bruce Ware also emphasizes this point in *God's Greater Glory*, 164–70.

83 Gareth Lee Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 137.

84 This does not mean that we rejoice in suffering itself, for suffering is a result of the Fall. Rather, we rejoice that though we suffer due to sin (either our own or the general effects of living in a fallen world), suffering does not have the final word, nor is it meaningless. Suffering in the life of the believer is the crucible that purifies faith as pure gold (Prov 17:3).

85 Claunch makes a helpful clarification in the believer's imitation of Christ's suffering: "While Christians are to imitate the sufferings of Christ with respect to how he responded to his revilers and persecutors, they are not to imagine that the purpose of their suffering is the same as the purpose of his. Rather, just as the Spirit empowered the Son in and through his human nature to complete the mission on which the Father had sent him, so the Spirit empowers Christians to complete the mission on which the Father and Son send them (see John 20:21–22)." Claunch, "The Son and the Spirit," 110.

86 Cockerill observes that in Hebrews 11 "God's faithful people have always been empowered for endurance by keeping their vision on the present power and future-oriented promises of God (11:1, 3, 6)," noting how Abraham and Moses were sustained by the vision of God's future reward. Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 610.

Mapping Doctrinal Drift in Biblical Counseling: From Classical Christology to Trauma-Bound Theology

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Christology stands at the center of the Christian message. Classical/orthodox Christology has been passed hand to hand through the centuries, shaped by the outcomes of theological discussions and ecumenical councils. The Councils of Nicaea (325), Chalcedon (451), and those that followed provided the early church with classic formulations that have long served to safeguard the faith against heresy. While these conciliar definitions have historically functioned as a doctrinal tether, they have not been without critique. In our contemporary context, one significant line of challenge emerges from the perspective of trauma theology.

Trauma theologians understand the human experience of trauma to be so profoundly disruptive that traditional readings of Scripture are rendered insufficient for facilitating comprehension or healing. To the trauma theologian, the effects of trauma are so far reaching that even extensive explorations into the field of theodicy are inadequate. From this perspective, a new theology must imagined to account for trauma and its effects. Trauma theologian Shelly Rambo describes it this way: "Trauma forces us beyond a familiar theological paradigm of life and death,

and places us, instead, on the razed terrain of what remains. Trauma presses theologians to seek new language to express God's relationship to the world."[1] And so, trauma theologians labor to re-imagine theology, and Christology in particular, in order to make them more palatable and potent for trauma survivors.

This article will be developed in four parts with four goals: (1) make a general presentation of trauma theology; (2) contrast it with classical Christology; (3) describe the historical path from classical Christology to trauma theology; (4) and introduce the subsequent effects of trauma theology in biblical counseling. These four aims are presented in support of this article's thesis: Emerging from the divergent traditions of liberation and feminist theology, the developing field of trauma theology represents a significant departure from classical Christianity and, while it may inform biblical counseling on trauma, it should be critically engaged and not allowed to supplant classical Christology. In other words, I will argue for theologians and biblical counselors alike to remain committed to classical theology despite the sympathetic contributions of trauma theology.

Shifting Ground: A Survey of Trauma Theology

Trauma theology has emerged as a developing discipline within contemporary theological scholarship. Based in interdisciplinary engagement with psychology, philosophy, and lived experience, trauma theologians seek to critically examine and reconstruct traditional theological frameworks in light of the realities of traumatic suffering.[2] As a discipline, it possesses its own methodologies, theoretical concerns, and constructive aims, thus distinguishing itself from pastoral practice or psychological counseling alone.[3] Over the last two decades, trauma theology's prominence has expanded considerably, evidenced not only by its growing presence in peer-reviewed theological publications but also by its increasing incorporation into popular religious discourse and biblical counseling contexts.[4] This dual visibility underscores the field's significance and its growing influence. Further, institutions such as Baylor University, the University of Aberdeen, Boston University, Princeton Theological Seminary, and Union Theological Seminary host faculty and offer courses that contribute to the ongoing development of the field of trauma theology.[5] This section will provide some

introductory comments on three interrelated subjects: (1) trauma, (2) trauma theology, and (3) trauma theology in literature and counseling.

1. What is Trauma?

If trauma is the lens by which trauma theologians read and reinterpret Scripture, a basic understanding of trauma is essential. Generally, trauma may be described in a medical or a psychological sense. The medical usage relates to physical injuries or wounds involving observable organic damage. By contrast, the psychological use of trauma indicates mental, emotional, behavioral, and physical effects arising from the experience of terror and horror.[6] A person's body is always involved in psychological trauma as the body mediates the experience of the soul.[7] This article refers to the psychological use of the word.

Defining Trauma[8]

Serene Jones describes a traumatic event as, "one in which a person or persons perceives themselves or others as threatened by an external force that seeks to annihilate them and against which they are unable to resist and which overwhelms their capacity to cope."[9] The inability to cope manifests in involuntarily reliving the event through intrusive memories, flashbacks, nightmares, and disturbed emotional states. In sum, trauma has four elements: (1) the experience of a life-threatening event; (2) the inability to adequately fight back or escape; (3) the threat overwhelming personal resources; (4) the initial experience being relived in life-distressing forms.[10] In essence trauma refers to the experience of overwhelming events that results in a specific range of disturbing and persistent effects.[11] Two questions naturally follow; what makes an event overwhelming? And what are the disturbing and persistent effects of trauma?

What Makes an Event Overwhelming?

Psychiatrist Judith Herman summarizes, "the salient characteristic of the traumatic event is its power to inspire helplessness and terror."[12] In other words, "Trauma is the response to a deeply distressing or disturbing event that overwhelms an individual's ability to cope, causes feelings of helplessness, diminishes their sense of self and their ability to feel the full range of emotions and experiences."[13] Events may overwhelm a person

because of the magnitude of the danger, the powerlessness of the person, and the lack of resources for restoration.[14] The experience of trouble largely depends on a person's own interpretation of the danger. When a person feels that he no longer has the capacity to endure or recover, traumatic effect is likely.

What are the Disturbing and Persistent Effects of Trauma?

Events become traumatic because they "produce profound and lasting changes in physiological arousal, emotion, cognition, and memory."[15] Herman describes the "lasting changes" with "two contradictory responses of intrusion and constriction."[16] Intrusion indicates reliving the original overwhelming event in flashbacks and nightmares. Constriction points to paralyzing effects like freezing, numbed emotions, and hopelessness.[17] Often, the lasting effects of trauma are diagnosed by psychologists and psychiatrists as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders Fifth Edition (DSM-5) provides a set of criteria for PTSD that list four key enduring responses after exposure to an overwhelming event. The persistent responses include (1) presence of at least one intrusive symptom associated with the traumatic event, (2) "persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with the traumatic event," (3) "negative alterations in cognitions and mood associated with the traumatic event," and (4) "marked alterations in arousal and reactivity associated with the traumatic event."[18] The DSM-5 requires that the traumatic event cause significant sequalae and endure over time.[19]

2. What is Trauma Theology?

Trauma theology, then, may be defined as, "a theological discipline that seeks to both do theological justice to traumatic experiences and also to reimagine theologies in the light of such experiences."[20] Trauma theology is a discipline constituted by particular goals and methodologies. The trauma theologian's primary goal is to construct reimagined theologies in the wake of traumatic experiences.[21] This differs from a systematic theologian's goal, which might be present a work that "answer[s] the question: What are Christians to believe, do, and be today, in light of all that Scripture affirms regarding any particular doctrine?"[22] Trauma theology answers the question: How can

I reimagine Scripture to answer the questions that trauma raises for the Christian? This section notes key contributions of three trauma theologians.

Serene Jones

In her book, *Trauma and Grace*, Serene Jones, former Yale University professor and current president of Union Theological Seminary, reflects on the way her extended engagement with trauma literature has shaped her interpretation of Scripture.[23] She now conceives of the Bible as "one long series of traumatic events and accounts of how people struggle to speak about God in the face of them."[24] Beyond mere reading, Jones seeks to apply the biblical text in ways that are sensitive to the presence and impact of trauma. While she affirms the grace present in Scripture, she devotes significant attention to helping others recognize both the trauma embedded in biblical narratives and the potential harm of engaging Scripture without trauma sensitivity. Jones aims to equip the church in reaching suffering people "in the cold space of [their] distress," helping those "whose hearts and minds have been wounded by violence" to "feel and know the redeeming power of God's grace."[25] In sum, Jones aims to explore the ways personal and communal trauma challenges one's theological understandings, especially in light of the disruptive effects of trauma.

Shelly Rambo

In the 1990's at Yale University, Shelly Rambo studied with other scholars whose work took place at the intersection of psychology and literature, namely around post-World War II suffering. Interested in the connection between literature and theology, Rambo determined that theology "needed to pay attention to these dimensions of human experience."[26] Now Assistant Professor of Theology at Boston University, Rambo works as a trauma theologian to create new theological categories and language to meet the challenge trauma brings to theology. She expresses this challenge in her book, *Spirit and Trauma*, as she writes, "Trauma forces us beyond a familiar theological paradigm of life and death, and places us, instead, on the razed terrain of what remains. Trauma presses theologians to seek new language to express God's relationship to the world."[27] In this, she advocates for trauma theology, which does the shared theological work of answering questions of theological suffering yet calls for "a distinctive theological

articulation."[28] Trauma theologians argue "that trauma poses unique challenges, transforming the discourse about suffering, God, redemption, and theological anthropology in significant ways."[29] In other words, trauma challenges theological categories and cannot be confined to the fields of counseling or psychology. This line of thinking is why Rambo argues for trauma studies, because trauma studies "had broadened to present profound challenges to epistemology, constructions of the self, and theological understandings of time."[30] In sum, Rambo argues that trauma is so disruptive to individuals and to theological constructs that a new discipline of constructive theology, namely trauma theology, must be employed.[31]

Karen O'Donnell

Personal tragedy led trauma theologian Karen O'Donnell to develop her thinking in this field.[32] In the wake of loss, O'Donnell pled for answers.[33] "Why did God let this happen to me? The theology I knew gave me no answers," she determined.[34] "Her experience of surviving and healing from trauma led O'Donnell to examine theologies of trauma and prompted her to write her own trauma theology as a 'survivor's gift that is offered as both a comfort and a challenge.'"[35] For O'Donnell, trauma theology helped her to answer the difficult questions that arose from her trauma, for trauma theology deals in lived experience.

As discussed in the previous section, trauma refers to the experience of overwhelming events that results in a specific range of disturbing and persistent effects.[36] One of the most common effects of trauma is reliving the traumatic event. In interacting with a story of a woman named Leah who struggled to be in church due to the effects of trauma, O'Donnell writes, "as trauma theologians, we recognise Leah's story as one that is all too common. What is needed here is a clearer understanding that the church can often be a difficult place for traumatised people to navigate."[37] Further, trauma theology seeks to reimagine theology in such a way that it is acceptable and applicable to trauma survivors. Many trauma theologians consider trauma theology a form of practical theology, which, "seeks to engage critically with the dissonance between theology and lived reality."[38] In other words, trauma ruptures experience, including one's experience with theology in such a way that new, sufficient answers must be found.

In sum, O'Donnell defines trauma theology as:

> a theological discipline that seeks to both do theological justice to traumatic experiences and also to reimagine theologies in the light of such experiences. Whilst suffering has always been of interest to Christian theology, trauma theology distinguishes between suffering and trauma, noting the specific impact trauma has on the embodied life of trauma survivors. Envisioning trauma experience as an earthquake that shatters theological landscapes, trauma theology sees its work as that of construction of reimagined theologies in the wake of these experiences.[39]

Trauma Theology Differs from Trauma-informed Theology

While trauma theology is constructive and doctrinal, trauma-informed theology is pastoral and practical. Trauma-informed theologians do not seek to reimagine traditional Christian doctrines but rather work to ensure that the application of theology and the presentation of biblical texts are safe for trauma survivors. In other words, trauma-informed theologians, pastors, and counselors aim to adapt Christian teaching to make it more palatable for those who will be unable to bear a typical presentation. In this, "a trauma-informed church will, by necessity, produce trauma-informed pastoral care that is sensitive to the experiences and needs of trauma survivors."[40]

While the aims and scope of trauma-informed theology differ from trauma theology, the former is firmly rooted in the latter. As O'Donnell observes, "such pastoral care will *need* to be grounded in accessible trauma-sensitive theology and in congregational attitudes that are willing to reflect critically on beliefs and undertake the work of reimagining them in the light of trauma experiences."[41] In this sense, trauma-informed theology represents the practical extension of trauma theology. Without conceptual categories and theological grounding, the practical applications of trauma-informed theology would be untethered from theory and too abstract to be useful. This paper treats trauma theology and trauma-informed theology together, despite their differences, because both recognize the ways trauma disrupts an individual's understanding of God and Scripture, and both aim to establish new pathways for engaging Christianity that do not retraumatize survivors.

3. Trauma Theology in Literature and Counseling

As review, trauma theologians call for "a distinctive theological articulation" of trauma's relationship to the Bible.[42] Trauma theologians read the Bible as trauma literature.[43] Further, biblical counselors informed by trauma theology see trauma all over the Bible.[44] From Genesis to Revelation, the biblical volumes have been read and exposited through a trauma lens.[45] Perhaps the most common reference to trauma in Scripture is the cross of Christ. Rather than seeing the cross of Christ as the redemption of souls and the finished work of Christ, trauma theologians and trauma informed theologians use the cross as the primary link between God and human suffering.

Jesus as Traumatized[46]

Both academic and popular pieces identify the cross as trauma in order to advocate for a trauma-sensitive reading of scripture. More importantly, those who read the cross as trauma want to present Jesus Christ as the sympathetic high priest who can relate to his people in their trauma.

Theological sources from trauma theologians promote the Bible as trauma literature and employ a trauma hermeneutic as the authors interpret Christ's cross as trauma. OT scholar David Carr calls the cross is "Christianity's founding trauma" and "a sign of trauma." This trauma is "faced by God alongside us."[47] Carr reads trauma throughout the Scripture and concludes that "the Jewish and Christian Bibles both emerged as responses to suffering, particularly group suffering."[48] Carr notes that "the cross of Jesus, of course, is just one of many painful episodes that fed into the Bible."[49] According to Carr, both the Jewish and Christian texts call followers to "catastrophe as a path forward." Jesus's call to "take up your cross and follow me," epitomizes the call to a path of suffering for Christians.

Likewise, Serene Jones identifies the cross a "horribly torturous, traumatic death." Jesus "doesn't protect himself in some supernatural way so that he doesn't experience the trauma. He's totally traumatized by it."[50] And yet, Jones argues that love helps Christ on the cross. She continues, "On the cross, Jesus is consumed by violence, sin, and yet he (Jesus and God) does not let it conquer love ... Jesus wasn't up there saying, 'torture me; I'm going to endure this and still be faithful to God.' No, it's more about the horror of the violence and persistence of love."[51] Jones draws out the theme of Jesus' love for his people in order to "make theological sense of what

happened on the cross in a way that speaks to the experience of traumatized victims without glorifying violence."[52] Jones draws her readers eyes off of their own broken selves to "gaze up at this dying body." She asks survivors to "find comfort in it, to desire its goodness, to embrace its hope. We are compelled deep within to believe that in the throes of this traumatic event, God uniquely meets humanity in the fullness of love and offers to us the grace of life abundant."[53]

Several popular authors writing for counselors and those serving trauma survivors also read the cross as trauma. Diane Langberg, a counselor who has studied trauma and worked with trauma survivors for more than forty years, wrote an oft-quoted book on trauma and theology, *Suffering and the Heart of God*. In it Langberg twice says, "The Crucified is the One most traumatized."[54] Both times she repeats this sentence, she aims to communicate the sympathetic nature of Christ. Langberg knows and has seen the horrific effects of trauma on countless lives. She writes that Jesus continues to be traumatized in order to make sure her readers know that Jesus himself understands human suffering.

Todd Stryd writes so that traumatized people might reject trauma as their identity and find comfort in Christ.[55] Traumatized people can fully connect with Jesus, whom he calls Jesus both "trauma victim" and "trauma survivor."[56] Because Jesus was "made like his brothers and sisters in every way," Styrd argues that "Jesus's incarnation was an incarnation into a traumatizing existence." Styrd grounds his argument in the cross as Jesus was "betrayed, forsaken, brutalized, violated, mocked, and exploited." Yet, Styrd looks beyond the cross to the resurrection calling Jesus "the consummate trauma survivor." He then calls trauma survivors to follow Christ in healing as they "follow his path of righteous defiance."[57]

Other popular level authors reference the cross as trauma calling for survivors hope in Christ and to call those who care for survivors to do so with care.[58] Steve Midgely asserts that though "all the traumas of the Bible climax here," and that Jesus "experienced traumatic events" "beyond doubt."[59] He calls sufferers to see a suffering, yet victorious savior. Kelly Simpson points to Jesus as the best example of "trauma stewardship," because he never despaired or lost hope. Though he "struggled through his own trauma" Simpson asserts that Jesus was a good steward of his pain. She calls Christians to follow Jesus in trauma stewardship.[60]

This section has provided groundwork for the rest of the paper by offering a framework for understanding trauma, introducing trauma theology and its key contributors, and demonstrating how trauma theology appears in "cross as trauma" literature. Next, I will explore classical Christianity by particularly addressing areas that trauma theology critiques.

Solid Ground: The Classical Confession of the Person and Work of Christ

Theology is the work of Christians. Theology coheres as Christians put together all that the Bible teaches "in terms of application, logical coherence, and metaphysical entailments in light of the church's tradition and contemporary questions, as it draws out theological judgments for today, consistent with the bible's own presentation across the entire Canon."[61] Christology, the theology about Jesus Christ, was largely developed by the early church at the Councils of Nicaea and Chalcedon. This section will pick up and expand on three key components of the Chalcedonian definition that are called into question by trauma theology. These Christological anchors are Jesus as (1) "truly God and truly man," (2) "for us men and for our salvation," (3) "recognized in two natures ... not as parted or separated into two persons, but one and the same Son and Only-begotten God the Word, Lord Jesus Christ."[62] These three foundational pieces will be discussed in light of the cross-as-trauma rhetoric.

Truly God

Jesus Christ is truly man, but not merely man.[63] The one Person of the divine Son is not a mere man, but the person of the divine Son who takes on a true human nature "consisting of reasonable body and soul."[64] This point serves as the crucial, foundational basis of the person and work of Christ. In every moment of Jesus' life, he acted in his human nature, yet he remained truly God. This means that the person of the divine Son suffered, bled, and died as a man. When trauma theologians look at the cross, they see an event that throws theology into question. For Serene Jones, trinitarian formulation is edited by the cross. "The doctrine of the Trinity rose from how we think about the fact that this Jesus who died on the cross is also God and God didn't die, but Jesus died, so who is God?"[65] Elsewhere she explains, "the

Trinitarian God, who eternally loves this world, comes into this world as a person ... [but] this one who comes, Jesus Christ, is hung upon a cross to die."[66] Jones then points out the implications of such a statement with a question. "What happens when this one who exists eternally in the Godhead and yet occupies our humanness dies a very human death? God refuses to turn from us, even in the most brutal grip of tortured death and divine abandonment, and instead takes death into Godself."[67] Jones' question and answer indicates a trauma theology constructed from a human view of what happens on the cross rather than a view of the cross beginning with an understanding of *who* hangs there. The divine Person of the Son suffers on the cross according to his human nature. Steven Duby explains that texts like Acts 20:28 ground the "efficacy of Christ's suffering ... in it belonging to a person who is both human and divine."[68] Biblical Christology seeks to understand the cross considering the person and work of Christ, not the human interpretation of the cross. A Wellum notes, "a biblical Christology, then, will stand in direct contrast to most contemporary Christologies that view Christ primarily in human terms, reducing and denuding his uniqueness and making him more congenial to our postmodern and religiously pluralistic age."[69] The doctrine of God and the identity of the God-man must govern one's understanding of the cross in order to arrive at biblical conclusions.

And Truly Man

Jesus was truly God and truly man. Though Jesus' humanity is totally like ours, he remains different than other humans as the human nature assumed by the divine Son is fully human, unfallen, and sinless.[70] So, though Jesus is fully human, it is still the person of the divine Son who acts humanly. Aaron Riches explains, "Jesus is fully human in the ontological and metaphysical sense, but his mode of being human is uniquely that of the divine Son."[71] This means that Jesus perfectly obeys the Father throughout his life (Heb 4:15). Turretin, commenting on how Jesus suffers, reminds readers that on the cross, "he might be destitute of the ineffable consolation and joy which arises from a sense of God's paternal love and the beatific vision of his countenance (Ps. 16); but not as to "the affection of righteousness" because he felt nothing inordinate in himself which would tend to desperation, impatience or blasphemy against God."[72] In synthesizing Jesus' experience of

the cross, trauma theologians assume Jesus' reactions to be like ours. David Wells argues against this idea.

> It is then assumed that to be human, Christ must be as fallible as we are, as confused, as filled with doubts, as unsure about the future, as agnostic about the purposes and plans of God, as diffident and about the possibilities of knowing God, and as baffled about ethical norms and the possibility of absolutes period to present a Christ who is the exegesis of God's character and plans, who acts and speaks as God, who knows from whence he came and why, and who did on the cross what only God could do is, it is argued, to present a Christ who is not human![73]

The Christ who suffered and died on the cross suffered and died as a true man. Scripture makes this very clear, for only the God-man could redeem a sinful race.[74]

For Us Men and For Our Salvation

Just as the doctrine of God grounds a biblical understanding of the cross, the storyline of Scripture serves as the foundational reason *for* the cross. Traditionally, the storyline of the Bible is explained in four plot movements: creation, fall, redemption, and new creation.[75] These four elements form a plot arc with inherent tension. God created man in his image to know and glorify him. Yet, man rebels against God and sins and "the wages of sin is death," (Rom 6:23). No man is able to save himself from sin or death. With this question asked, "we can now take the Bible's covenantal storyline and see how it identifies who Christ is. If we step back and ask, Who is able to fulfill all God's promises, inaugurate his saving rule in this world, and achieve the full forgiveness of sin? The answer: *God alone*."[76] Trauma theologians see the cross as Jesus' expressions of divine sympathy, forgetting the primary purpose of the cross: to redeem sinners.[77]

These and other truths serve as the biblical foundations that trauma theology tends to overlook.[78] Classical Christology, by contrast, maintains a close connection to the doctrine of the person and work of Christ, emphasizing the continuity preserved through the Chalcedonian definition. Nevertheless, deviations from this tradition have emerged, with trauma theology representing one such development.

Detours and Deviations: Theological Movements Toward Dislocation

As discussed, theological views shift over time as theologians interact with the world around them. Stephen Wellum explains, "Beginning with the Enlightenment and continuing through modernism and now postmodernism, the intellectual rules that determine how people think the world works and what is possible have shifted away from historic Christianity to deny its basic theological convictions."[79] In this way, many divergent theologies have arisen in the centuries between Chalcedon and today. Trauma theology is one such derivative. But, what are the roots of trauma theology? This section will trace the movement towards trauma theology from the post-World War II suffering theology of Jürgen Moltmann, through the rise of feminist theology in the 1970's-1990's, to the trauma theology of today.

Post-World War II Theology

Jürgen Moltmann lived as a prisoner of war in European camps throughout 1945 – 1947.[80] After he was released, he returned his country left to deal with the physical and spiritual aftermath. Moltmann relates his experience, "shattered and broken, the survivors of my generation were then returning from camps and hospitals to the lecture room."[81] What would the academics and theologians say in the wake of their experiences? Moltmann concludes, "A theology which did not speak of God in the sight of the one who was abandoned and crucified would have had nothing to say to us then."[82] In light of Moltmann's suffering, he wants a God who both witnesses suffering and suffers himself. According to Moltmann, God does suffer. He argues, "God is, God is in us, God suffers in us, where love suffers. We participate in the trinitarian process of God's history. Just as we participate actively and passively in the suffering of God, so too we will participate in the joy of God wherever we love and pray and hope. In this sense God is the great companion — the fellow-sufferer, who understands."[83] Though Moltmann's portrayal of God is sympathetic, it also discloses a panentheistic theology.[84] A panentheistic God contains everything within himself, but only in his experience, not his essence.[85] Panentheism represents theological lines of reasoning that collapse distinctions between God as Creator and his

creation. Panentheism implies a passible God who can suffer along with his creation, as his creation is within him.

This suffering God appeals to Shelly Rambo, who cites post-World War II theology as the beginning of her experience with trauma theology.

> I remember as a master's student going to these brown-bag lunches hosted by the Yale Psychiatric Institute, at which ... clinicians were offering open sessions to the public to discuss their clinical work with Holocaust survivors ... If you look at the history of trauma studies, that time at Yale University was very pivotal ... Trauma studies were expanding to include different mediums (clinical discourse, video), as well as different forms of writing (poetry, literature, theory) ... Adding something about trauma studies, I think the history of trauma studies is so interesting, because it is only about one hundred years old. Suffering has always been around. The question is how we attend to it. The discourse of trauma emerges in psychoanalytic theory in the nineteenth century and is connected to the study of war (much of the data grows from a study of combat victims and their symptoms).[86]

In other words, trauma's link with war and the effects of war created an environment with amenable conditions for the rise of trauma theology after World War II.[87] Moltmann and other theologians of the 20th century shared an inclination to require rethinking of theological categories considering catastrophic suffering. Their work led to an increased willingness to let trauma alter theological frameworks.

Feminist Theology

Trauma theology follows feminist theology through the open door of post-World War II suffering theology. As post-war theologians attempted to answer the questions of historic and collective evil, emerging feminist theologians followed close behind, seeking to get answers to their own questions about collective and systemic wrongs. "One can summarise the definition of feminist theology as the critical, contextual, constructive, and creative re-reading and re-writing of Christian theology."[88] Like post-war theology, feminist theology seeks "re-read" and "re-write" theology in light of personal experiences. As post-war theologian saw catastrophic, historical suffering as grounds to re-interpret Scripture. Similarly, "The uniqueness

of feminist theology, according to most feminists, is in claiming women's experience as the foundation of theological reflection."[89] Significant experience, seemingly under-represented by Scripture, have called these theologians to revise classical doctrine.

Trauma would be the next significant area of experience seemingly underrepresented by Scripture. "The lineage of 'trauma theology' is deeply feminist," explains Rambo. "There was no stated break from one to pursue the other. While we were gathered around trauma, it was our shared feminist commitments that made us think that theology shaped women's lives in particular ways, and not always for the better."[90] These shared experiences called for a re-thinking of doctrine that would allow sufferers to account for their experiences. "Trauma theories" like feminist theologies, "track the undertow of traditions and their impact on those who are afforded less representation. Analysis of trauma offers a way of accounting."[91]

The genealogy of trauma theology can be traced with reasonable clarity. In the aftermath of World War II, theologians such as Jürgen Moltmann, sought to reconfigure theology in light of the horrific suffering of the Holocaust. Their work was followed by feminist theologians, who sought liberation from systemic forms of oppression. Trauma theology emerges at the intersection of these movements. In this sense, it represents the convergence of two theologies grounded in human experience. As with most historical studies of theology, tracing such origins inevitably risks oversimplification by overlooking the diverse figures and dynamics involved. Nevertheless, the effort remains valuable insofar as it equips future Christians to remain doctrinally grounded.

The Return Path: Away from Trauma Christology, Toward Orthodox Christology

How should those influenced by trauma theology find their way back to solid ground? Wellum provides an answer in the categories of "Christology from above" and "Christology from below." He explains, "Christology *from above* starts with the triune God of Scripture and *his* word, and it seeks to identify Jesus's person and work from within the truth of Scripture."[92] On the other hand, Christology from below attempts "to do Christology from the vantage point of historical-critical research, independent of a commitment to the full

authority of Scripture and a Christian-theistic worldview."[93] This distinction helps readers to identify the problems with Christology from below, which is a distinctive of trauma theology. Christology from below "fails to ground the uniqueness and universal significance of Jesus because it removes him from the Bible's storyline and interpretive framework."[94] This is key for understanding trauma. This final section will respond to trauma theologians' claim that Jesus was traumatized by presenting the NT's presentation of the cross. Though simple, this example is a model of Christology from above as it clearly situates the cross within the NT's own interpretation of the cross. After all, "to know *who* Jesus is and to speak rightly of him, the church, from its first days, has done Christology *from above*, namely, from the vantage point of Scripture."[95]

The Bible presents the cross of Christ as the means by which God redeems his people through the work of his Son. The cross is described in the NT as redemption, obedience, sacrifice, reconciliation, justification, victory, moral example, and the glory and wisdom of God.[96] Though there are more views of the cross presented in Scripture, there are six that are specifically relevant to this discussion.

First, the cross of Christ is the way God redeems his people. In salvation, we understand that Jesus gave himself as a ransom for us all (1 Tim 2:5–6). Galatians 3:13 states that, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us." Jesus redeemed us by paying the penalty for our sin. It was on the cross that he bought back his people with his own blood. Remember that the redemption was necessary because of sin. Wellum also asks, "How could God remain just and the justifier of the ungodly? In Scripture, *this* question drives the Bible's redemptive story."[97] The answer to this question is found in the person of Jesus Christ who acts to redeem his people.

Second, the cross of Christ is presented as an act of Christ's obedience. Romans 5:19 compares Adam's disobedience, which made all men sinners, with Jesus' obedience, which by his obedience to God the Father on the cross makes many righteous. Philippians 2 extols the obedience of Jesus as it says, "he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Phil 2:8). Where man failed, Jesus succeeded in obeying God for his people. Jesus demonstrated his will, or volition, in going to the cross, for it was an act of true obedience. "This death and this suffering, unlike all

of our human examples of death and suffering, is *uniquely and freely willed* in order to destroy humanity's servitude to sin."[98] Jesus chose the woeful cross in perfect obedience to his Father.

Third, Jesus' cross was an act of sacrifice. The price for human sin has always been death (Rom 3:23). Set against the backdrop of the OT and the Levitical Priesthood, Jesus offers himself as the sacrifice that would cleanse his people once and for all. The OT Israelite priests had to continually make sacrifices for themselves and the people they represented. "But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb 9:26b). In love, Jesus sacrificed himself to save his people. He knew what he was doing as he died on the cross, "having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end" (John 13:1b).

Fourth, Jesus' cross was an act of reconciliation, which made peace between God and man (Rom 5:1–5). Reconciliation is a Pauline concept that encompasses other relational aspects like making peace, granting access, and being brought near.[99] Reconciliation implies a prior relationship that has been broken and is now restored. Jesus makes peace between God and man, and between people, by the blood of his cross (Col 1:19–20).

Fifth, the cross stands as the reason for justification. Justification is "a mighty act of God by which he declares sinful people not guilty but righteous instead. He does so by imputing, or crediting, the perfect righteousness of Christ to them."[100] First, God thinks of our sins as forgiven. When Jesus took our sins on himself, our very sins and their legal ramifications left us and rested on his shoulders (1 Peter 2:24). However, we also need a declaration of righteousness, which comes through the cross. Paul, in 2 Corinthians 5:21 proclaims, "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." Justification is the legal action of God where Christians are both forgiven and declared righteous.

Sixth, the cross is victory over evil. The cross fulfills the crushing of Satan foreshadowed in Genesis 3:15. Though not all elements of Christ's victory are fully realized, the cross of Christ secures triumph over evil. Truly, "what the New Testament affirms, in its own uninhibited way, is that at the cross Jesus disarmed and triumphed over the devil, and all the "principalities and powers" at his command."[101] Jesus' cross did not look like victory to onlookers. Indeed, some still see his cross as trauma because of

its horrific nature.[102] It is likely that most readers of the crucifixion account would have been traumatized by the event. But John Stott sees the cross of Christ another way. "Look at him there … What looks like (and indeed was) the defeat of goodness by evil is also, and more certainly, the defeat of evil by goodness. Crushed by the ruthless power of Rome, he was himself crushing the serpent's head (Gen 3:15)."[103] As Colossians 2:15 affirms, God disarmed the evil powers of this world by triumphing over them in Christ. Jesus secured victory over evil at the cross.

Lastly, the Bible sees the cross as the glory of Christ and the wisdom of God. The gospel writer John refers to Jesus as both lifted up and glorified (John 3:14, 12:23). "The lifting up and the glorification both refer to the cross. The positive terms used for Jesus' death indicate that it is the pathway to his exaltation and glorification. Jesus is exalted not despite the cross, but precisely because of it." [104] Further, Paul writes about Christ crucified as the wisdom and power of God in 1 Corinthians 1. He does this because in God's immense power and wisdom, he determined that the crucified Christ would be the means by which he saves his people. In all these descriptions of the cross, not one of them highlights the negative impacts of the cross. To be sure, Jesus suffered and died on the cross, but reading the narratives of the cross event in light of a broader biblical theology of God's plan of redemption prevents readers from bifurcating the cross and its life-giving effects. Christ's work on the cross must be viewed not simply from a human standpoint, but from the point of view of Scripture. [105]

The church knows that she can correctly identify *who* Jesus is only by placing him in the context of the Bible's storyline, teaching, and worldview. In fact, any attempt to do Christology by some other means leads only to a Jesus of our own imagination.[106]

Conclusion

I have argued that trauma theology, emerging from the divergent traditions of liberation and feminist theology, represents a significant departure from classical Christianity and, while it may inform biblical counseling on trauma, it should be critically engaged and not allowed to supplant classical Christology. The thesis was advanced through four movements: (1) make a general presentation of trauma theology (2) contrasted with

classical Christology (3) and to describe the historical path from classical Christology to trauma theology (4) and the subsequent effects of trauma theology in biblical counseling.

Trauma theology seeks to present a sympathetic savior to those who suffer, portraying Jesus as kind, loving, and compassionate. Yet, in this framework, Jesus lacks the power to deliver his followers from sin and suffering. By contrast, the Jesus of Scripture not only offers compassion but also possesses the authority to end suffering itself. As sufferers, we require more than consolation; we need deliverance. Indeed, "the true power of divine compassion is inextricably linked to the cross, where the suffering servant defeats the sources that first introduced suffering to the world." [107] Christian hope rests in the finished work of Christ on the cross, which secures victory over sin and death. Trauma survivors need not merely a sympathetic companion but the incarnate Son of God who demonstrates both authority and power to deliver his people.

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1 Shelly Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma: A Theology of Remaining* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 14.

2 Trauma theology is an interdisciplinary endeavor just as much as the subject of trauma itself is interdisciplinary. Scott Harrower, *God of All Comfort: A Trinitarian Response to the Horrors of This World* (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2019), 38; Shelly Rambo, "'Theologians Engaging Trauma' Transcript," *Theology Today* 68, no. 3 (2011): 229, https://doi.org/10.1177/0040573611416539.

3 See Karen O'Donnell's definition of trauma theology in *St. Andrews Encyclopaedia of Theology.* O'Donnell, Karen. "Trauma Theology." In *St. Andrews Encyclopaedia of Theology*, edited by Brendan N. Wolfe. University of St. Andrews, 2023. https://www.saet.ac.uk/Christianity/TraumaTheology

4 Uses of trauma theology will be noted in several popular works below. However, several new works have been produced in series focused of trauma theology. One such example is New Studies in Trauma and Theology by Wipf and Stock Publishers. Further, a simple google or amazon search for trauma and theology will produce a myriad of results. https://wipfandstock.com/search-results/?series=new-studies-in-theology-and-trauma.

5 SCM Press issued a call for academic proposals on trauma theology in May of 2024. The series will be called "Studies in Trauma Theology," and the editorial board is made up of faculty from these universities. The leading scholar in the field of trauma theology, Serene Jones, is the 16th president of Union Theological Seminary. Princeton Theological Seminary offers a Master of Arts in Theology focusing on Justice and Public Life. This degree program places an emphasis on trauma and related topics. "Announcing the 'Studies in Trauma Theology' Series," accessed August 9, 2025, https://scmpress.hymnsam.co.uk/blog/announcing-the-studies-in-trauma-theology-series; "Rev. Serene Jones, MDiv, PhD," *Union Theological Seminary*, n.d., accessed August 9, 2025, https://utsnyc.edu/blog/faculty/serene-jones/; "Princeton Theological Seminary Launches New MAT Program Focusing on Justice and Public Life," *Princeton Theological Seminary*, December 9, 2022, https://www.ptsem.edu/about/the-quad/news/news-princeton-theological-seminary-launches-new-mat-program-focusing-on-justice-and-public-life/.

6 Harrower, *God of All Comfort*, 38 – 39.

7 Gregg R. Allison, *Embodied: Living as Whole People in a Fractured World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2021).

8 Common definitions refer to trauma as four different things: a state, an effect, an experience, and an event. Trauma is "a disordered psychic or behavioral *state*," indicated by a "person's *experience of emotional distress*." The American Psychological Association defines trauma as, "any disturbing *experience* that results in significant fear, helplessness, dissociation, confusion, or other disruptive feelings intense enough to have a long-lasting negative effect on a person's attitudes, behavior, and other aspects of functioning." Trauma may also be referred to as an event. "Traumatic events include those caused by human behavior (e.g., rape, war, industrial accidents) as well as by nature (e.g., earthquakes) and often challenge an individual's view of the world as a just, safe, and predictable place. The difficulty of defining trauma comes in part from the many, even contradictory uses of the word. A summary definition of trauma may incorporate each of these facets (state, effect, experience, and event) but will center on a person's *experience* after enduring a traumatizing event. "Trauma | Psychology Today," accessed August 1, 2025, https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/trauma; "APA Dictionary of Psychology," accessed August 1, 2025, https://dictionary.apa.org/.

9 Serene Jones, *Trauma and Grace: Theology in a Ruptured World*, 2nd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2019), 13.

10 John Henderson, "Crisis and Trauma in Counseling," unpublished class notes for 34830 (The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Summer Semester, 2023), 25.

11 Henderson, "Crisis and Trauma in Counseling," 49.

12 Judith L. Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (Basic Books, 2022), 49.

13 Karen Onderko, "What Is Trauma?," *Unyte Integrated Listening*, September 13, 2018, https://integratedlistening.com/blog/what-is-trauma/.

14 Henderson, "Crisis and Trauma in Counseling," 24.

15 Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 50.

16 Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 69

17 Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 69

18 American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Text Revision Dsm-5-Tr*, 5th edition (Amer Psychiatric Pub Inc, 2022), 271.Fifth Edition, Text Revision (DSM-5-TR)

19 American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.*

20 O'Donnell, "Trauma Theology," 5.1.

21 O'Donnell, "Trauma Theology," 5.1.

22 Gregg R. Allison, *The Baker Compact Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016), 189.

23 Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, xi.

24 Jones sees two primary traumatizing events in Scripture. First, Jones cites the cross of Christ. She explains, "It's hard to imagine anywhere in literature or in the annal of human experience a more traumatic event than the torture and execution of this man Jesus." The second event Jones perceives is the traumatization of the early church. Jones cites the failure of the disciples to recognize Jesus on the road to Emmaus as an example of the effects of trauma in the wake of Jesus' death. These examples from Jones illustrate her reading of Scripture through the lens of trauma studies. Jones, *Trauma and Grace, xi.*

25 Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, xvi; 8.

26 Shelly Rambo, "'Theologians Engaging Trauma' Transcript," *Theology Today* 68, no. 3 (2011): 226, https://doi.org/10.1177/0040573611416539.

27 Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma*, 14.

28 Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma*, 5.

29 Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, 5.

30 Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma*, 5.

31 In fact, Rambo calls for a re-working of faith as she writes, "Trauma becomes not simply a detour on the map of faith but, rather, a significant reworking of the entire map." Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma,* 9–10.

32 Karen O'Donnell, *Broken Bodies: The Eucharist, Mary and the Body in Trauma Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2018), ch. 8.

33 Another such theologian is Flora Keshgegian, who seeks to revise historical Christology in light of traumatic experiences. One of the early leaders in the field of trauma theology, Keshgegian's influential view of man-centered Christianity has spread through others in the field. Keshgegian sees "theology to be a discursive practice that seeks to realize and embody in wisdom and word the transforming and liberating practice of Christianity." She continues, "The truth of theology is manifest in its effectiveness; *the word is true if it redeems*. That word is Wisdom, the agent of redemptive action. *In the beginning is not word*, but the silence and the hearing. In the beginning is the remembering, which leads to re-membering." Though it is a play on words, Keshgegian's assertion that "In the beginning is not word …" puts her intention to re-write Christology on display. Flora A. Keshgegian, *Redeeming Memories: A Theology of Healing and Transformation* (Abingdon Press, n.d.), 24.

34 O'Donnell, *Broken Bodies,* ch.8.

35 Megan K. McCabe, "Review: When and Where Trauma and Theology Meet," *America Magazine*, September 16, 2019, https://www.americamagazine.org/arts-culture/2019/09/16/review-when-and-where-trauma-and-theology-meet/; O'Donnell, *Broken Bodies*.

36 Henderson, "Crisis and Trauma in Counseling."

37 Chris Greenough, "Traumatised People Are Not Your 'Mission Field,'" *The Shiloh Project*, April 1, 2021, https://shilohproject.blog/traumatised-people-are-not-your-mission-field/; Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, 7.

38 O'Donnell, *Feminist Trauma Theologies*, 23.this book seeks to articulate an explicit understanding of feminist trauma theology for the first time. Bringing together scholars from a range of disciplines, this book explores the relationship between trauma and feminist theologies, highlighting methodological, theological, and practical similarities between the two. The #MeToo and #ChurchToo movements, sexual abuse scandals, gender based violence, pregnancy loss, and the oppression of women in Church spaces are all featured as important topics. With contributions from a diverse team of scholars, this book is an essential resource for all thinkers and practitioners who are trying to navigate the current conversations around theology, suffering, and feminism. With a foreword by Shelly Rambo, author of Resurrecting Wounds"},"event-place":"London","ISBN":"978-0-334-05872-4","language":"English","number-of-pages":"384","publisher":"SCM Press"},"publisher-place":"London"},"source":"Amazon"},"title":"Feminist Trauma Theologies: Body, Scripture & Church in Critical Perspective"},"title-short":"Feminist Trauma Theologies"},"author":[{"family":"O'Donnell"},"given":"Karen"}],"issued":{"date-parts":[["2020"]]}}}],"schema":"https://github.com/citation-style-language/schema/raw/master/csl-citation.json"}

39 O'Donnell, "Trauma Theology," 5.1.

40 O'Donnell, "Trauma Theology," 7.1.

41 O'Donnell, "Trauma Theology," 7.1. Italics added.

42 Shelly Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma,* 5.

43 David Carr sees the Bible as a long line of one trauma after another. He argues, "The cross of Jesus, of course, is just one of many painful episodes that fed into the Bible." David McLain Carr, *Holy Resilience: The Bible's Traumatic Origins* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 2.

44 Eliza Huie writes, "It doesn't take long for traumatic events to show up in the Bible... Trauma makes an alarming entrance in the New Testament as well." Eliza Huie and Elyse Fitzpatrick, *Trauma Aware: A Christian's Guide to Providing Help and Care* (Harvest House Publishers, Inc, 2025).

45 Here are four key examples: Shelly Rambo on John in Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma*; David Carr on both Jewish and Christian texts in David McLain Carr, *Holy Resilience: The Bible's Traumatic Origins* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014); Kathleen O'Connor on Lamentations: "Lamentations' testimony is bitter, raw, and largely unhealed. Its poems use 'wounded words' to illumine pain and resist God's acts in the world." Kathleen H. O'Connor and Walter Brueggemann, *Lamentations and the Tears of the World* (Orbis Books, 2002); Tina Pippin, *Apocalyptic Bodies: The Biblical End of the World in Text and Image* (Routledge, 1999).

46 The synthesis of literature in the section was helped by Laura-Lee Alford's paper for 84950, "You Keep Using that Word. I Do Not Think It Means What You Think It Means": Hermeneutical, Theological, and Practical Problems of Calling the Cross *Trauma."*

47 Carr, *Holy Resilience*, 157.

48 Carr, *Holy Resilience*, 2.

49 Carr, *Holy Resilience*, 2–3.

50 Jones, *Trauma and Grace,* xvi,.

51 Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, xvi, italics added.

52 Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, 85.

53 Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, 72.

54 Diane Langberg, *Suffering and the Heart of God: How Trauma Destroys and Christ Restores* (New Growth Press, 2015), 78; 118.

55 Todd Stryd, "Psalms 129, 130, and 131: A Framework for Trauma Care," *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 38, no. 1 (2024): 5–28.

56 Stryd, "A Framework for Trauma Care," 25–26.

57 Stryd, "A Framework for Trauma Care," 26.

58 For more examples of popular sources citing the cross as trauma, see Eliza Huie, Trauma Aware; Abby Perry, "Did Jesus Experience Trauma? Experts Say 'Yes'," Christianity Today, December 13, 2021, https://www.christianitytoday.com/partners/gloo/did-jesus-experience-trauma-experts-say-yes/; Dean Bonura, "The Trauma of the Cross: A Narrative for Healing," The Warrior's Journey, accessed October 15, 2024, https://thewarriorsjourney.org/challenges/trauma-cross-narrative-healing/; and Matthew Stanford, "Five Things the Scriptures Teach Us about Trauma and Suffering," Hope and Healing Center and Institute, accessed August 15, 2025, https://hopeandhealingcenter.org/five-things-the-scriptures-teach-us-about-trauma-and-suffering-by-dr-matthew-s-stanford/.

59 Steve Midgley, *Understanding Trauma: A Biblical Introduction for Church Care* (Good Book Company, 2025), 67–69.

60 "Trauma stewardship honors the survivor, the pain, the story, and our limitations. It abides in hope and honors God, who never wastes pain." Kelly Simpson, "Helping the Traumatized," *The Gospel Coalition*, June 25, 2021, https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/helping-traumatized/.

61 Stephen J. Wellum, *Systematic Theology: From Canon to Concept, vol. 1* (Brentwood: B&H Academic, 2024), 135.

62 The Chalcedonian Creed, *The Westminster Standard.* Accessed August 1, 2025, https://thewestminsterstandard.org/the-chalcedonian-creed/ Chalcedonian Creed.

63 Stephen J. Wellum, *The Person of Christ: An Introduction* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2021), 66.

64 The Chalcedonian Creed, *The Westminster Standard.* Accessed August 1, 2025

65 Jones argues that she is working from a view of the Trinity that "follows a classical logic," yet her writing may indicate a social trinitarian view. Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, xiv; 176.

66 Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, 147

67 Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, 147.

68 For more see Steven J. Duby, *Jesus and the God of Classical Theism: Biblical Christology in Light of the Doctrine of God* (Grand Rapid: Baker Academic, 2023), 321; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* 3.46.12.2, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, accessed August 10, 2025, "https://www.newadvent.org/summa/4046.htm#article2.

69 Stephen J. Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate: The Doctrine of Christ* (Crossway, 2016), 190.

70 Wellum, *The Person of Christ:*158.

71 Aaron Riches, *Ecce Homo: On the Divine Unity of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 135.

72 Francis Turrettin et al., *Institutes of Elenctic Theology.* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 1992), 354.

73 David F. Wells, *The Person of Christ* (Westchester: Crossway, 1984), 173–74.

74 For more, see Wellum, *The Person of Christ,* ch. 2.

75 Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate,* 113.

76 Wellum, *The Person of Christ*, 47.

77 Here is a popular example of how trauma theology has impacted modern thinking. "Central to trauma theology is the crucified Christ, as in that moment, the experience of human suffering and trauma can be fully understood by God. The cross becomes a symbol of solidarity; an expression of the experiences of trauma, suffering, and abandonment Jesus suffers in the crucifixion. Rather than bypassing the suffering in the human experience, trauma theology highlights how God enters into human pain without rushing to resolve it. From this, survivors of trauma can see God within their trauma, not just as a God who understands them. Faith can now be a way to help understand trauma rather than a way to suppress and ignore it." "Trauma Theology and Pastoral Care | Student Christian Movement," accessed August 12, 2025, https://www.movement.org.uk/blog/trauma-theology-and-pastoral-care.

78 For more on the necessity of Christ's death, see Turretin, *Institutes*, Vol 2, 14.10.

79 Wellum, *The Person of Christ*, 22. Wellum cites Colin Brown, *Jesus in European Protestant Thought (1778–1860)* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1985).

80 Jürgen Moltmann, *A Broad Place: An Autobiography*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Fortress Press, 2009).

81 Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God* (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1993), 1.

82 Moltmann, *The Crucified God,* 1.

83 Another quote is representative of Moltmann's panentheistic thought. "God is unconditional love, because he takes on himself grief at the contradiction in men and does not angrily suppress this contradiction. God allows himself to be forced out. God suffers, God allows himself to be crucified and is crucified, and in this consummates his unconditional love that is so full of hope" Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 248, 255.

84 "Meaning 'all is in God,' this view equates the universe with God (like pantheism) but allows God to have a separate identity distinct from the universe (unlike pantheism). In panentheism, everything that exists is contained within God, but God is separate from and greater than everything that exists." John D. Barry et al., eds., "Panentheism," in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

85 "The world is in God, but only in his existence, not in his essence. Hence God includes everything, but everything is not God." David Ray Griffin, *A Process Christology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1973), 188.

86 As a leading trauma theologian, Rambo's experience with these emerging studies at Yale is indicative of the beginning as of the field in general. Rambo, "Theologians Engaging Trauma," 224–29.

87 The connection between trauma and war is well documented. Here is one such example of a study linking way and traumatic effect. Ebrahim Masoudnia and Fatemeh Rahmati Farmani, "Psychosocial Etiology of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Caused by War Trauma among Iran–Iraq War Immigrants in Mehran, Iran," *Journal of Migration and Health* 9 (January 2024): 100225, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jmh.2024.100225.

88 Kelebogile T. Resane, "Moltmann in Conversation with Feminist Theologians: How Does His Theology Correlate and Differ with Feminist Theology?" *Verbum et Ecclesia* 42, no. 1 (2021): 10, https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v42i1.2319.

89 Carter quotes Lisa Isherwood and Dorothea McEwan, *Introducing Feminist Theology* (Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 92.as well as a first rate resource for those wishing to refresh their acquiantaince with it. Despite claims in some quarters that 'feminism' has been surpassed by 'gender' this book explains how vital a feminist agenda remains, and how much is still to be done, both at the theological and the practical level, to transform Christianity from two centuries of male-gendered discourse and ecclesiastical structure into a religion that adequately reflects the life of modern women."},"event-place":"Sheffield","ISBN":"978–1–84127–233–7","language":"English","number-of-pages":"158","publisher":"Sheffield Academic Press","publisher-place":"Sheffield","source":"Amazon","title":"Introducing Feminist Theology","author":[{"family":"Isherwood","given":"Lisa"},{"family":"McEwan","given":"Dorothea"}],"issued":{"date-parts":[["2001"]]}},"locator":"21"}],"schema":"https://github.com/citation-style-language/schema/raw/master/csl-citation.json"} Micah Daniel Carter, "An Evangelical Analysis and Critique of Feminist Christology" (PhD Diss, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2008), 24. https://repository.sbts.edu/handle/10392/470.

90 O'Donnell, *Feminist Trauma Theologies*.this book seeks to articulate an explicit understanding of feminist trauma theology for the first time. Bringing together scholars from a range of disciplines, this book explores the relationship between trauma and feminist theologies, highlighting methodological, theological, and practical similarities between the two. The #MeToo and #ChurchToo movements, sexual abuse scandals, gender based violence, pregnancy loss, and the oppression of women in Church spaces are all featured as important topics. With contributions from a diverse team of scholars, this book is an essential resource for all thinkers and practitioners who are trying to navigate the current conversations around theology, suffering, and feminism. With a foreword by Shelly Rambo, author of Resurrecting Wounds","event-place":"London","ISBN":"978–0–334–05872–4","language":"English","number-of-pages":"384","publisher":"SCM Press","publisher-place":"London","source":"Amazon","title":"Feminist Trauma Theologies: Body, Scripture & Church in Critical Perspective","title-short":"Feminist Trauma Theologies","author":[{"family":"O'Donnell","given":"Karen"}],"issued":{"date-parts":[["2020"]]}}],"schema":"https://github.com/citation-style-language/schema/raw/master/csl-citation.json"}

91 O'Donnell, *Feminist Trauma Theologies*.this book seeks to articulate an explicit understanding of feminist trauma theology for the first time. Bringing together scholars from a range of disciplines, this book explores the relationship between trauma and feminist theologies, highlighting methodological, theological, and practical similarities between the two. The #MeToo and #ChurchToo movements, sexual abuse scandals, gender based violence, pregnancy loss, and the oppression of women in Church spaces are all featured as important topics. With contributions from a diverse team of scholars, this book is an essential resource for all thinkers and practitioners who are trying to navigate the current conversations around theology, suffering, and feminism. With a foreword by Shelly Rambo, author of Resurrecting Wounds","event-place":"London","ISBN":"978-0-334-05872-4","language":"English","number-of-pages":"384","publisher":"SCM Press","publisher-place":"London","source":"Amazon","title":"Feminist Trauma Theologies: Body, Scripture & Church in Critical Perspective","title-short":"Feminist Trauma Theologies","author":[{"family":"O'Donnell","given":"Karen"}],"issued":{"date-parts":[["2020"]]}}],"schema":"https://github.com/citation-style-language/schema/raw/master/csl-citation.json"}

92 Wellum, *The Person of Christ,* 24.

93 Wellum, *The Person of Christ,* 24.

94 Wellum, *The Person of Christ,* 28.

95 Wellum, *The Person of Christ,* 21.

96 Many of these ideas came from Stephen Wellum, "The Work of Christ" (unpublished class notes for 27070, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Summer Semester, 2022), 109–16.

97 Wellum, *Systematic Theology,* 427.

98 Aquinas, *Summa Theologica,* Q. 46.6.

99 Wellum, "The Work of Christ," 113.

100 Allison, *The Baker Compact Dictionary*, "Justification."

101 John R. W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2006), 226.

102 Perry, "Did Jesus Experience Trauma?"

103 Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, 223–24.

104 Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 227.

105 Additional views in include propitiation and moral example. Scripture views the cross of Christ as an act of propitiation. Christ's death paid for our sins and in so doing, assuaged God's wrath (Rom 3:24–26). An old hymn captures the meaning of propitiation with beauty. "Death and the curse were in our cup, O Christ, 'twas full for Thee! But Thou hast drained the last dark drop — 'Tis empty now for me. That bitter cup — love drank it up; Now blessings' draught for me." (Anne Cousins) The cross of Christ also serves as a moral example for his people. At the cross, onlookers see Jesus' love, obedience, sacrifice, and power. Christians are meant to take up their crosses and to follow Jesus (Luke 9:23). This verse may not be applied literally to all believers, it exhorts Jesus' followers to live and die as he did, loving God and others.

106 Wellum, *The Person of Christ*, 21.

107 Scott Christensen, *What about Evil? A Defense of God's Sovereign Glory* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2020), 384.

Book Reviews

Is God a Vindictive Bully? Reconciling Portrayals of God in the Old and New Testaments. By Paul Copan. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2022, 320 pp., $27.99 paper.

Paul Copan currently serves as a professor at Palm Beach Atlantic University, holding the endowed Pledger Family Chair of Philosophy and Ethics. He is a Christian theologian, analytic philosopher, apologist, and author. *Is God a Vindictive Bully?* serves as a follow-up and companion volume to Copan's *Is God a Moral Monster?* (Baker, 2011) and shares a strong connection to *Did God Really Command Genocide?* (Baker, 2014), written with coauthor Matthew Flannagan. This third book focuses on filling in gaps present in the two previous works. All three share the aim of presenting "a unified portrayal of the kind and severe God of both testaments" (xiv). The depth of this aim is broad enough that Copan can modify and expand on the material in the previous books without much overlap. Several new questions are also raised and answered.

The thesis of the book is based on Romans 11:22 where Paul writes, "Note then the kindness and the severity of God" (ESV). Copan's focus is to explore "the dual biblical affirmation of God's kindness and severity" (6), which he believes is consistently portrayed in the OT and the NT without discrepancy. Criticism of this thesis comes from outside and inside the Christian faith community. For those criticizing from outside, particularly the New Atheists, Copan emphasizes, "*God is far more loving, kind, patient, tender, and merciful* than we could ever know" (6). For those criticizing from within, Copan stresses, "*God is more severe and harsh and unsafe* than they suggest" (7). The book is divided into seven parts, each addressing a unique category of criticism targeting perceived inconsistencies in the portrayal of God between the OT and the NT. Part one spans the first four chapters, connecting the current attacks from within back to the early church and the heresy of Marcion, the original advocate for pitting the God of Moses and the God of Jesus against one another. Copan focuses much of his attention in this section on the difficult passages addressed by two

critics from within, Andy Stanley and Greg Boyd, who, he concludes, read Scripture selectively.

Part two, chapters 5–9, answers the question: "What makes the law of Moses so special?" The OT law is compared with the law codes of adjacent cultures at the time, revealing both the similarities and uniqueness of the OT law. Copan believes the similarities build Scripture's credibility. The differences reveal a uniqueness in the law of Moses that is internally consistent with the rest of the OT and the NT. Copan believes viewing "the final form of the Pentateuch as a literary and theological unity" (41) clears up questions regarding the dating of Pentateuch material, thereby confirming internal consistency and early dating.

Capital punishment is the focus of Part three, chapters 10–12. The author cites several NT passages affirming that "the death penalty was divinely and justly permitted" (71), then he proceeds to make a case that in most instances "these severe punishments were not to be literally carried out" (72). Multiple accounts within the Mosaic Law reveal that capital crimes were settled through monetary punishments. The only exception is murder. Copan argues that the Israelites understood that the exaggerated language of the Mosaic Law was used to show its seriousness, ethically, morally, and relationally, rather than to be acted upon literally.

Part four, chapters 13–19, shifts the focus to moral questions in which God seems harsh, vindictive, or hateful. The author navigates accounts in the Bible that bring up questions of fairness for many, carefully explaining the historical and literary nuances that provide clarity in each case. The kindness and severity of God cut through the instances of hardening Pharaoh's and other's hearts, divine smitings, and the brutal language of the imprecatory Psalms. God is shown to patiently withhold judgment and provide a multitude of warnings before responding to evil practices committed against other humans, particularly God's people, with similar severity.

Chapters 20– 25 make up part five which wrestles with the treatment of women and slaves in the OT. Copan acknowledges that the cultural conditions of Bible times were "less-than-ideal" (149) while rejecting recent accusations of misogyny, commodification, and enslavement of women. Instead, he posits *heterarchy* to describe the complex web of relational mutual dependence in Israelite communal life. The author shows that

dehumanizing chattel slavery is forbidden by the Mosaic law which seeks to elevate the dignity of all human beings, promoting humanizing conditions for all slaves — indigenous and foreign — and for women.

The topic of warfare in the OT prompts some modern theologians like Roger Olson to "create two radical portrayals of God in Scripture" (189). Part six, chapters 26–31, attends to the difficulties of warfare and violence. Copan emphasizes the consistency between the two biblical concepts of love and vengeance. He asserts that misinterpreting exaggerated language and mistranslating the Hebrew word *herem* explain much of the confusion. The author presents divine counterviolence as the biblical picture "of God's reluctant, grieved counter violent response to oppression, dehumanization, and other wickedness in the world" (232).

Part seven, chapters 32–34, summarizes the overall message of the book for the critics within and without. For those within, Copan provides a multitude of Scripture texts showing the "textual" and the "actual" God are truly one God of kindness and severity. Copan's interaction with critics from without centers around two questions and five steps, all of which present the distinction between starting points or worldviews. He reckons, "When people abandon belief in the God of Scripture … the alternatives look far more problematic" (260).

The book provides an extensive depth of research into complex content that is distilled into accessible material. Copan attends to many difficult and timely questions about God's character that vex Christians today. His responses are riddled with relevant Scripture passages that are clearly and thoughtfully explained. His conclusions are consistently supported by other noted biblical, historical, and theological scholars. His interactions with critics are charitable, avoiding ad hominem attacks as he draws out flaws in their arguments and expounds his alternative position.

Unfortunately, the small group questions provided at the conclusion of the book are a bit of a letdown. They add little to the book's value. The depth and brevity of each chapter provide all the material needed to foster discussion among groups wishing to dig deeper into the content. Group reading with follow-up discussions of each chapter is likely one of the most beneficial approaches to processing the book's content. This can prove especially helpful for those wishing to dialogue with friends, family members, or coworkers wrestling to find answers to these questions. The book can

also serve as a helpful apologetic resource for church leaders and laypeople looking for thoughtful responses to the questions covered.

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American Crusade: Christianity, Warfare, and National Identity, 1860–1920. By Benjamin J. Wetzel. Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press, 2022, xi + 215 pp., $50.95.

Debates around the extent of Christian nationalism in present-day political discourse often ignore or downplay the historical context, leaving readers with a false impression of the background of Christian nationalism in American public life. Benjamin Wetzel, associate professor of history at Taylor University in Upland, Indiana, provides some needed context in American Crusade: Christianity, Warfare, and National Identity, 1860–1920. Wetzel examines Christian commentary on three major conflicts to demonstrate how ideology and social location led white mainline Protestants to imbue religious or even messianic understandings of the nation during war; meanwhile, "counterpoint" groups in outlying religious communities often relied on a more conservative theology to offer more circumspect interpretations of the conflicts.

Wetzel mines books, sermons, and religious periodicals of the most popular and widely read pastors within mainstream Protestantism as well as those of less renown from "counterpoint" groups to capture "debates about the righteousness of American wars" (3). In each conflict, prominent Protestant clergy relied on American Providentialism, a belief in the United States' elevated role in God's purposes (13), and democratic Christian republicanism, the blending of Enlightenment ideals of liberty with Christianity (25), in order to promote the American side of the conflict as God's side. "Counterpoint" groups deployed these tools, but with more restraint due to differences in ideology as well as social location.

The opening section compares how Northern white Protestants and African American Methodists interpreted the Civil War. The stakes of the war led both groups to promote righteous religious interpretations of the Union cause, but in ways shaped by ideological commitments and

social location. Prominent white clergy freely blended sacred and secular to elevate the Civil War into a holy conflict against the Confederates. The use of liberal theology to justify confident nationalism emerges as a motif here. Horace Bushnell's rejection of Christ's penal substitutionary atonement allowed him to compare the sacrifices of American soldiers with Christ's death on the cross, the fallen soldiers atoning for the sins of the nation (24).

African American Methodists used the pages of the *Christian Recorder*, the official newspaper of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, to offer support for the Union. However, voices in the *Recorder* also criticized those whose "wartime zeal" led them to "allow their civic duties to trump their spiritual ones" (46). A more supernaturalist theology coupled with "the experience of severe racial oppression" (54) prompted other voices in the *Recorder* to critique "the baleful ways that American society had failed to uphold its professed values" (56). By virtue of differing social locations, Northern white Protestants saw only promise in the conflict, while the *Christian Recorder* provided space to debate the promise as well as the accompanying crucible the war presented to African American Methodists.

The connection between ideology and social location played defining roles for how Christians debated the Spanish American War of 1898. Mainline Protestant clergy added the social gospel to earlier notions of American providentialism and Christian republicanism to justify war with Spain as a religious crusade. They declared God chose the United States to serve the benighted Cuban people by rescuing them from Spanish tyranny. Protestant social location played a key role in their condemnation of Catholic Spain as backward and despotic.

American Catholics largely supported the United States against Spain, often using similar rhetoric of American Providentialism used by mainline Protestants, yet "a significant minority" opposed the war because they identified as "Catholics first and Americans second" (82). A more critical distance led them to see the unrighteousness of a nation that marginalized Catholics, African Americans, and Native Americans. Antiwar American Catholics, by virtue of an ideology tied to their social location, advocated a restrained patriotism that advised against the prevailing theological interpretation of the war.

Mainline Protestants extended the scope of the mission during World War I, declaring the United States God's chosen instrument to slay evil in

the form of Germany and redeem the world. Abbott went so far as to argue that all Allied soldiers who died in the conflict would inherit eternal life by virtue of their cause. This "salvation by khaki" came as a result of Abbott's "theological liberalism, with its penchant for overturning historical understandings of Christian doctrines" (107). While more conservative Christians such as Billy Sunday joined in promoting the American war effort against "demonic" Germany, mainline Protestants often collapsed distinctions between religious and patriotic devotion and saw in the war a Christian imperative to remake the world in the image of social and political righteousness.

Missouri Synod Lutherans, many of whom were of German descent, serve as Wetzel's final "counterpoint" group to the mainline Protestants to show how ideology and social location shaped the range of Christian responses to war. Writers in the synod's newspapers remained committed to Lutheran "two-kingdoms" theology, drawing sharp lines between sacred and secular, and thus avoided crusading rhetoric in wartime (128–34). Persecution of German Americans encouraged a more assimilationist posture, but as the war continued, Missouri Synod Lutherans expressed patriotism "without a great deal of compromise in their position regarding two kingdoms and the separation of church and state" (144). Wetzel concludes by tracing the chastened perspective after the carnage of World War I that produced "a more nuanced view of the church's role in American warfare" (150) and generated "mainline Protestantism's increasing distrust of celebratory Christian nationalism" (152).

American Crusade stands out for the way it handles the subtleties of theology, sorting through the nuances of different theological traditions spanning decades. Wetzel makes great use of recent studies of Christianity during these conflicts to define "American providentialism," "Christian republicanism," and the "social gospel." Unfortunately, "Christian Nationalism," which first appears on page 33, lacks this level of clarity. Wetzel uses the term as a shorthand for the blending of religious and nationalist ideas. However, considering the thermonuclear nature of the term in popular discourse over the last decade and his clarity in his use of other terms, a more explicit and contextualized definition may have helped readers less familiar with the field of religious nationalism make sense of his usage.

In detailing the development of religiopolitical thought among mainline Protestants and various "counterpoint" groups, *American Crusade* offers a compelling sketch of the history of religious and nationalist thought during American wartime. Though commonly associated with conservative and right-wing Christians today, Christian Nationalism's greatest champions came from the theological left during the years in question. A willingness to collapse distinctions between sacred and secular and an emphasis on the immanence over the transcendence of God contributed to an ideology that elevated country to or above God.

"Counterpoint" groups, one of the great strengths of Wetzel's book, critiqued this blending. These groups often joined with the mainstream in supporting the various conflicts but avoided bestowing a divine imprimatur on the United States: they saw the nation's flaws in such a way as to question its character as a Christian nation (138). For the counterpoint groups, patriotism did not require conflating the City of God with the City of Man. This historical context with the voices of these "counterpoint" groups can help Christians wrestling with their relationship to the nation-state understand how Christians of the past navigated questions of national identity in theological terms.

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Social Conservatism for the Common Good: A Protestant Engagement with Robert P. George. Edited by Andrew T. Walker. Wheaton: Crossway, 2023, 334 pp., $24.99 paper.

Over the past few years, it seems that increasing moral confusion and political combativeness have marked the American public square. Often evangelicals take the brunt of the rhetorical combat. It is hard to find the sweet spot between being (to use a colloquialism) a squish and a provocateur. However, in *Social Conservativism for the Common Good,* Andrew T. Walker would like to hold up an example for emulation. Some may experience mild cognitive dissonance as Walker, associate dean in the School of Theology and associate professor of Christian ethics and public theology at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, points fellow evangelicals to Robert

George. George is a Roman Catholic, an American legal scholar, and a political philosopher at Princeton University (the intellectual home of Peter Singer). Walker is one of a growing chorus of evangelicals seeking to revive the natural law tradition among Protestants, a project that entails significant engagement with George's work and thought.

The thesis of *Social Conservativism for the Common Good* is that in the present cultural moment Protestantism in general, and evangelicalism in particular, needs to know Robert George, that is to know (if I may be so bold) his "work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope" (1 Thess 1:3). In particular, Walker commends George for a coherent moral theory premised on natural law which frees Christian ethics to be a "public matter with public implications for public policy and public morality" (6). To that end Walker enlists a host of scholars to present George's life and work to his Protestant audience. This includes John Wilsey who presents George as a modern-day Socrates courageously pointing the modern Western man to truth, Micah Watson who presents George as the defender of reason in the face of emotivism, and Matthew Lee Anderson who, true to type, places George in conversation with Oliver O'Donovan on the theology of the body. Additionally, evangelicals familiar with the current political landscape will be attracted to David Dockery's chapter on cobelligerency in the public square, Scott Klusendorf on George's influence in the pro-life movement, Jennifer Marshall Patterson's exposition of George's arguments in defense of traditional marriage, and J. Daryl Charles's discussion of George's arguments for religious freedom. For the intellectual seeking an introduction to George, Walker's outline of the New Natural Law movement is an immensely helpful summary.

Due to the nature of this work, it is difficult to give it a thorough overview, but two chapters I personally find make a fascinating and needed pair are that of Carl Trueman, "Son of Thomas, Heir of Theoden," on faith and reason and Paul Miller, "Partners in Truth Seeking," on George's friendship with Cornel West. Trueman draws out George's courage and intellect as a "careful, nuanced, and gracious" (68) thinker who, like Tolkien's king Theoden, refuses to surrender the field of battle without a fight. Trueman writes that George's example shows Evangelicals that "regardless of outcome, Christians must meet the enemy on the field of battle — graciously, yes, but in a manner that cedes no ground without a fight ... [M]any of us owe him

a debt of real gratitude" (70). And there are few intellectual battlefields that George has not spilt ink on. George has been a champion, as noted above, for the pro-life cause, traditional marriage, and freedom of speech and religion. Yet George, as Miller explains, is no caustic keyboard warrior. Throughout his intellectual career and political activism, he has built more than alliances; he has built friendships. George befriended West, an intellectual and activist whom George met at Princeton, because he "would hear Cornel asking what I thought were exactly the right questions and then giving exactly the wrong answers" (263). Today, it seems more common that such an observation would lead not to friendship marked by occasional sparring but a pitched Twitter battle of takedowns and gotchas, or for the higher-minded public sniper fire of rival op-ed pages. George refuses such a path and together these chapters provide the reader with the tandem that makes George such a unique figure.

The most important critique of *Social Conservativism for the Common Good* is published in its own pages. In the afterword, in an interview between Walker and George, George states, "I've grown used to some of my ideas being misunderstood or being misrepresented. That doesn't happen in this volume ... I'm grateful to every single one of the authors for the work they put into getting it right" (286). As such it must be said that *Social Conservativism for the Common Good* accomplishes its task of introducing the reader to Robert George. The picture it paints captures the brilliance and kindness of the West Virginian banjo-playing happy warrior. However, there remains a lingering question of who the intended reader is for this work. In many evangelical churches there is a substantial gap between the theological knowledge in the pulpit and in the pews, as there is likewise a substantial gap between many pulpits and the academy lectern. As such Walker, who has taken up the project of "Evangelical-izing" George, has his work cut out for him. As a PhD student of Walker, I have come to read, appreciate, and (dare I say) enjoy George, along with Matthew Levering, John Finnis, and Germaine Grisez. However, they were entirely absent from my previous seminary training, and I fear the pragmatism and anti-intellectualism that—while far from universal—can be present in evangelical churches limits the reach of *Social Conservativism for the Common Good* and interest in Robert George, one of the most interesting men of our times, to a select few.

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Making Christian History: Eusebius of Caesarea and His Readers. Christianity in Late Antiquity, 11. By Hollerich, Michael J. Oakland: University of California Press, 2021, pp. xi + 316. $95.00.

Making Christian History is a dazzlingly comprehensive study on the reception of Eusebius's *Historia Ecclesiastica* (*HE*). Michael J. Hollerich, professor emeritus of theology at the University of St. Thomas, provides copious amount of research about a myriad of times and places while maintaining masterful concision. After a chapter on Eusebius's life and works, Hollerich surveys the reception of the *HE* in the Christian empire, the non-Greek East, the Latin West, Byzantium, early modernity, and lastly, modernity and postmodernity.

Summary

Hollerich's first chapter explains the importance of the *HE* in Eusebius's own time. Certainly, the *HE* is the most popular of Eusebius's works. It is also the most important source for recovering the first three centuries of the church (1). More than popularity and preeminence, however, the *HE* is the seminal work that launched a new genre, church history (32). Following Arnaldo Momigliano, a pioneer in the study of how previous ages wrote about history, Hollerich posits that this new genre was befitting the new "nation" that is Christianity, being a kind of "national" history.

In the next two chapters, Hollerich recounts that work was well received from its inception, and that popularity continued to soar in the non-Greek East. The number of imitators that shortly followed speaks volumes: Rufinus, Gelasius, Philostorgius, Socrates, Sozomen, and Theordorat, to name a few (53). Although each historian may have added his own slant or style, all of them remained in the genre that Eusebius defined. Interestingly, while the *HE*'s popularity spread even to the non-Greek East, Eusebius's Rome-centric perspective was irrelevant to Christians in Arab, Persian, and Turkish lands (107). Nevertheless, his genre was utilized as a springboard for more universal histories (111). For example, a translation of the *HE* is one of the earliest Christian works produced in Armenian, leaving an indelible mark on this nation's historiography (116, 120).

The following two chapters turn to the *HE*'s reception in the medieval West and Byzantium. In the West, Rufinus's translation became the normative version that Latin speakers interacted with until the Renaissance (141). Unlike the Easterners who, not having a Christendom under which to write, opted for universal historiography, the West took to writing histories of particular peoples. One only has to call to mind Jordanes and the Goths, Gregory of Tours and the Franks, the Venerable Bede and the English, or Paul the Deacon and the Lombards (144). The histories of the West varied in their reception of Eusebius's genre, preferring instead the history produced by Orosius (143). But while Eusebius waned in the medieval West, his popularity waxed in the Byzantine East. Nicephorus Kallistou Xanthopoulos exemplifies the best, following Eusebius so closely that "he sometimes seems more Eusebian than Eusebius himself" (188).

Hollerich's last two chapters examine the reception of the *HE* in the Renaissance and today. At the dawn of the Reformation, Eusebius's popularity returned in the West. However, instead of standing as a model for imitation (the humanists preferred to follow classical historians, and the Protestants removed the partition between "sacred" and "secular" histories), he became a tool for competing interpretations on the relationship between Scripture and tradition (192). In the modern and postmodern periods, Eusebius's role has been completely inverted from what it was in the Renaissance: he was, and is, the victim of relentless criticism in a "postcolonial, postmodern, post-Constantinian, post-Christian" world (239). However, the minority who continued to read Eusebius from a theological perspective found him to be a rich source for ecumenical engagement (258). Such is the current legacy of Eusebius's history of the church.

Evaluation

Hollerich's monograph covers a broad chronology and interacts with some of the best research in each respective field. To grapple simultaneously with scholarship on late antiquity, Byzantium, and postmodern historiography is no small task. His even-handed approach acknowledges all the major figures and works one would wish to encounter, a comprehensive overview indeed. Each epoch covered is well researched, informs the reader seeking a broader

familiarity with a range of disciplines, and meaningfully shows how the *HE* has been used for the past 2,000 years.

Despite the overwhelming breadth the work covers, Hollerich balances being a useful reference work to each discrete period while also tracing a narrative thread from beginning to end. I was as delighted to learn about the nationalizing tendencies in the medieval West as I was to see an opposite, universalizing movement in the Muslim-ruled East. However, for the reader who does not appreciate the eclecticism inherent in such a work, learning about peculiar topics such as the Armenian historiography of Movsēs Xorenac'i might feel tedious. This should not be counted a flaw since the very purpose of the book is a reception history. Throughout the sundry times and places, Hollerich consistently points back to the theme of how Christians in each milieu conceived of church history and their role in it, thus unifying what seems to be impossibly disparate.

Although not everyone may appreciate diving into the weeds of various, sometimes obscure, places and times, Hollerich's opening and concluding chapters provide a wealth of information about both Eusebius (his life, work, thought) and the contemporary discussions around the *HE* and historiography that anyone interested in church history will benefit from. Hollerich has done far more than merely traced Eusebius's reception in the modern period; he has provided a window into the people, ideas, and methods of how history is currently done. In sum, Hollerich has created a touchstone that will undoubtedly guide readers of Eusebius for generations to come.

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A Concise Guide to Islam: Defining Key Concepts and Terms. By Ayman S. Ibrahim. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2023, xxix + 177 pp., $16.79 paper.

For anyone interested in studying the history, beliefs, and practices of Islam, the question of where to begin can be daunting. For Ayman Ibrahim, professor of Islamic studies at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, a proper understanding of Islam begins with understanding key Islamic terms. To this end, Ibrahim has written *A Concise Guide to Islam: Defining*

Key Concepts and Terms, which is the third of a trio of books in Ibrahim's Understanding Islam series (published by Baker) which are devoted to introducing Islam to students unfamiliar with the religion. The previous two texts were *A Concise Guide to the Life of Muhammad* (2022) and *A Concise Guide to the Quran* (2020). *A Concise Guide to Islam* is divided into six sections covering more than one hundred terms and concepts that define Islam: (1) Islamic Texts, (2) Islamic History, (3) Islamic Faith and Belief, (4) Islamic Practices and Religious Duties, (5) Islamic Jurisprudence, and (6) Islamic Movements. Some of the terms that readers may recognize include Quran, *hadith*, Allah, *Shahada*, *Hajj*, *imam*, *hijab*, *fatwa*, *jihad*, Sunnism, and Shiism. Other terms which will be new for many readers, include *tafsir* (Quran commentary), *tawhid* (the oneness of Allah), *fiqh* (understanding Islamic law), and Salafism (a revivalist trend in Sunnism). Taken together, these terms will provide readers with an introduction into some of the most important issues for Muslims.

Three features of Ibrahim's book make it a unique contribution to the field of Islamic studies. First, Ibrahim covers a wide array of terms and topics related to Islam and presents them in a concise, approachable format. Interested readers could fill an entire library with books that cover each of the topics addressed, and yet, in *A Concise Guide* Ibrahim has produced a single volume that could be read in a few hours. Despite its brevity, the book can serve as an excellent introduction to these vast topics. Secondly, Ibrahim acknowledges the diversity of thought within Islam, which is not a monolith (xxviii). When he describes the practical applications of each concept, he also explains the diversity of opinions that Muslims have on that concept, particularly with regard to those of the Sunnis and Shiites, the two largest sects in Islam. This acknowledgement of diversity in Islam will help readers understand that not all Muslims agree on matters of belief and practice. Thirdly, Ibrahim approaches the study of Islam from a critical perspective, meaning that he questions and critiques traditional Muslims views based on scholarly research. For example, whereas Muslims may claim that the word *qur'an* is a purely Arabic term, Ibrahim informs his readers of the modern scholarly conclusion that *qur'an* has its root in Syriac, arguing from this that the Quran may have been influenced by the religious community living around Muhammad (4). By providing this additional commentary, Ibrahim teaches his readers that many traditional Muslim claims should

be challenged not because of animosity toward Muslims but because of objective research.

Much more than a mere dictionary of terms, *A Concise Guide* is a collection of entries that each synthesize a wealth of scholarly information and present it in a form that lay readers will find accessible. Each section of the book begins with a brief introduction to the broader topic. Each entry begins with a brief definition of the term and then includes a more detailed explanation. Ibrahim chooses to avoid footnotes and quotations for the sake of readers unfamiliar with academic writing, but his writing relies heavily on the most trusted Islamic primary sources — the Quran and Muhammad's traditions — and academic secondary sources. The result is a well-researched introduction to Islam aimed at "nonspecialist interested readers" (xxix).

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The Justice & Goodness of God: A Biblical Case for the Final Judgment. By Thomas R. Schreiner. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2024, 145 pp., $17.99 paper.

Thomas R. Schreiner's *The Justice & Goodness of God: A Biblical Case for the Final Judgment* offers a compelling and timely consideration of an often-neglected topic. Schreiner brings his exegetical expertise to bear on biblical texts concerning divine judgment, crafting a pastorally sensitive introduction to an otherwise thorny biblical subject. Schreiner situates and challenges the modern tendency of Bible readers to downplay final judgment, offering a robust biblical case across the canon for its importance.

The book's central thesis is that God's judgment is an essential aspect of his justice *and* goodness which is traced through careful analysis of final judgment in relation to God's holiness, justice, and righteousness (18–19), the varied terms the Scriptures use for sin (21–34), and relevant passages primarily drawn from the NT (35–102). Schreiner argues persuasively and concisely that without final judgment God's showcasing of his mercy and beauty would not shine as brightly across the biblical witness (124–25).

The first strength of the book is its exegetical depth. Schreiner's commentaries and theological works tend to have a characteristically thorough treatment of biblical texts. This work is no different. Schreiner is

characteristically thorough and nuanced in his treatment of relevant passages on the subject of divine judgment. Readers will appreciate Schreiner's charitable but critical engagement with previous commentators. Sometimes when specialists engage exegetical detail of prior scholarship, the writing can become dense and cumbersome, especially for new readers, perhaps unfamiliar with niche debates filling the Second Temple period and NT lacuna. However, this is not the case with Schreiner's new work. He appropriates accessible quotes from prior NT scholars of a bygone era, such as Leon Morris (e.g., 1, 39, 44n5, 67, 83–84, 94) to move along his writing and offer a fresh account of final judgment. He engages with the original languages and provides helpful glosses on key passages. For example, Schreiner provides brief and cogent descriptions of the biblical differences between sin, transgression, iniquity, and related terms (22–33). By so nuancing, Schreiner can succinctly illustrate how depravity indeed deserves judgment which otherwise would be comprising divine goodness (34). Schreiner rather organically moves from clear definition or exegetical work to NT theology.

The second strength of Schreiner's book is his theological integration. Schreiner seamlessly navigates between tracing a biblical-theological theme into the broader contours of theological readings of the text. He does so with the final judgment as well. There have been increasing contributions to robustly theological readings of Scripture, and while still grounded in tight exegesis and conversation with commentators, Schreiner demonstrates the theological significance of the subject and its relevance for the Christian life today (103–25).

The final strength of the book is pastoral sensitivity. While addressing a weighty topic, Schreiner maintains a tone of pastoral concern, emphasizing the ultimate purpose of final judgment is truly to highlight God's goodness. Clearly of concern throughout, Schreiner conceives that the reason why the gospel seems foreign to some today is the ignoring or outright rejecting of final judgment (x). Some will surely appreciate how Schreiner aptly handles detailed and often difficult passages from Hebrews and Revelation, for he expresses concern for readers not to miss the referent for the symbols and images of a given passage (102). In an era where divine judgment is often dismissed or misunderstood, Schreiner offers a much-needed corrective,

reminding readers from a Calvinistic perspective the ultimate significance of human choices and the justice of God (44–45, 74–79, 106–09).

While the brevity of the book is refreshing, readers may come away wanting a more comprehensive treatment of OT judgment passages. *The Justice & Goodness of God* centrally focuses on NT passages, with the broad grouping of the Synoptics, John, and Acts (35–57), the Pauline and General Epistles (59–79), and the Book of Revelation (81–102). While understandable given constraints due to space, it does leave readers wanting further, more comprehensive treatment of prevalent OT judgment themes. To Schreiner's credit though, even a cursory glance at the index indicates ample citation of the Psalms, Isaiah, and Ezekiel are found throughout his treatment of judgment.

Final judgment as it fits within a broader system of eschatology is eclipsed in the work, largely due to its brevity. While making brief, passing reference in footnotes to Schreiner's position on eschatology over his years of publication (e.g., 9n7, 77n20, 118n1, 121n2), the way in which final judgment fits within his broader scheme of eschatology does not appear to be a pressing concern. While he does trace the function of judgment through the Book of Revelation and a few topics such as the Day of Lord, punishment, and destruction (70–79), there remains eschatological lacuna left to be filled. Readers would surely have benefited if the author put final judgment in further conversation with broader eschatological topics, especially as Schreiner has indicated elsewhere renewed interests to articulate so-called New Creation eschatology (a *via media* between amillennialism and premillennialism like that of contemporary NT scholar Eckhard J. Schnabel and the eighteenth-century Baptist John Gill).

The Justice and Goodness of God is a valuable contribution. Schreiner effectively challenges the modern tendency to downplay divine judgment, offering a robust biblical case for its importance instead. This book will prove particularly useful for seminarians, pastors, and laypeople seeking a greater handle on this crucial biblical topic. Schreiner's succinct and clear writing as well as his logical argumentation make this book accessible to a wide audience, whether seminarians, pastors, or laypeople, while still providing substantial engagement with more advanced NT scholarship especially as he ably refutes contemporary accounts of annihilationism (44–49, 63–65, 98–99, 100n15). It serves as a welcomed and solid

introduction to an oft overlooked topic in biblical studies. Schreiner's charitable engagement in *The Justice & Goodness of God*, even with the pricklier aspects of the biblical topic, ought to assist Christian readers as they think through its NT nuances and seek to live faithfully in view of coming judgment.

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Redeeming Our Thinking about History: A God-Centered Approach. By Vern S. Poythress. Wheaton: Crossway, 2022, 256 pp., $24.99 paper.

Vern S. Poythress is distinguished professor of NT, biblical interpretation, and systematic theology at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He holds six academic degrees and has written extensively on biblical interpretation, language, and science. *Redeeming Our Thinking about History* is part of a larger series written by Poythress that looks through the lens of Scripture to present a God-centered approach to a variety of disciplines like science, logic, mathematics, and philosophy.

Much of modern Western culture wants to either forget or ignore history today as a result of arrogance and immaturity. Against this backdrop Poythress stresses the importance of history because "God says that history is important" (12). He believes, "History is indispensable in the Bible and in the Christian faith" (16). The book's thesis stands on this foundation, insisting, "[W]e must pay attention to God's deeds in history ... We see that record of God's works is good for our souls" (17). Poythress develops this thesis in five parts. Chapter one serves as an introduction highlighting the importance and challenges of studying and writing history. Each part that follows proceeds to answer questions raised in the opening chapter. The questions addressed include "What is a Christian view of history? And how should Christians study and write about history? How should we read about it and experience it?" (11).

Part one includes chapters 2–8 detailing the essential resources God supplies for analyzing history. Poythress maintains a providentialist approach to history, which he makes clear early on stating, "God rules history" (23). God's plan and outline for all of history is found in

the Bible. God understands history completely, but human understanding of history is limited, coming through three interdependent aspects: events, people, and meaning. God is the source of all three. Analysis of these three aspects is best understood through three interlocking perspectives that Poythress borrows from John Frame and the field of ethics. They are situational, existential, and normative perspectives. Utilizing these perspectives helps historians overcome sin and acknowledge human limitations in understanding history.

Part two covers chapters 9 – 11. This section specifically addresses the ways in which the Bible handles history. The Bible has a clear overarching plan that encompasses the whole and its parts. Poythress presents that pattern of history in four phases: creation, fall, redemption, and consummation. Woven through all the complexity and diversity of the Bible is the "central mystery of redemption" (87). Considering prevailing worldviews today, the author emphasizes the uniquely divine authority of the Bible, forming the foundation for a God-centered approach to history.

Chapters 12 – 18 comprise part three of the book. This section shows how the Bible "as a preinterpretive word ... enables us to understand God's purposes in the events in history" (117). The author recognizes necessary cautions when looking for God in history outside the Bible but also acknowledges that there is value in the pursuit. He then presents six principles stemming from a biblical worldview that are essential for proceeding in understanding God's purposes in history. In addition, Poythress directly addresses the expectation within the academy of remaining religiously neutral in studying and writing history, offering a way forward to Christians. This section concludes by exploring the application of historical analysis in the academy and in understanding biblical prophecy against current events.

Part four consists of three chapters, each providing an example of how to write history. The author reminds the reader that history is complicated (169), requiring historians to grow in awareness of their partisan perspective and propensity for embellishing the presentation of heroes. Poythress uses the writing of the history of the Roman Empire as the context for these observations. The Reformation further reinforces the fact that neutrality is next to impossible, showing how religious understanding affects evaluation. Exploring the history of other civilizations serves as an

example that reminds the reader that knowledge is limited and requires humility when studying and writing about it.

The final chapters 22–26 make up part five, which opens with a summary of five approaches to studying history as laid out in Jay D. Green's book, *Christian Historiography: Five Rival Versions* (Baylor, 2015). Poythress summarizes these and two other approaches and then proceeds to show how providentialism transcends them in its biblical consistency and historiographical practice. He further turns to "Christology: A Key to Understanding History," the fifth chapter of Mark Noll's *Jesus Christ and the Life of the Mind* (Eerdmans, 2013), to support his points regarding the value of providentialism. In the author's final analysis, he acknowledges that many historians today reject providentialism, but in his opinion its presence in history is "unavoidable" (222) and therefore must be reckoned with. His final conclusion is that providentialism provides the historian with the framework to study and write with "vigor and with a whole heart ... In humility" (222–23).

A strength of this work is the development of the prevailing approaches to studying and writing history in Western culture today. Poythress reveals deficiencies without demonizing those historians who advocate for the approach. He cautions against erring on the side of arrogantly believing that one can read God's mind historically. The conscientious historian acknowledges and embraces these limitations. A second strength is the clear and simple providentialist groundwork for understanding of history presented in part two. Poythress crafts a substantive explanation of how the Bible is the model and foundation for historical analysis.

One critique of the book is what appears to be confusion over its intended audience. The book appeals to historians and history students with a biblical worldview. The author presents helpful ways for those holding a biblical worldview to approach the general study of history in a way that unashamedly keeps God at the center of the analysis, controlling and orchestrating. At the same time, there are moments in the book when the author appears to lose sight of this audience and entreats the secular historian to come over to his side. Many will surely disagree with the author's points, so it is helpful to remember, though Poythress seems to have forgotten, that the purpose of the work is not apologetic.

This book will be helpful for any history student or historian looking for a biblical alternative to the approaches that remove God entirely from the discipline. Poythress thoughtfully reintroduces God's place in the study, analysis, and writing of history. Despite a slow start to the book, it progressively builds to a strong and cohesive conclusion that is well presented and thoughtfully analyzed.

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