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CIRCULATION MANAGER
Carolyn Thompson
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IAN ARTHUR FAIR: A TRIBUTE

ROYCE MONEY

President, Abilene Christian University

Some people are born with it. Others spend their lives in relentless pursuit of it. Many abuse it by using it for selfish gain. I refer to the gift of leadership. My friend Ian Fair has the gift of servant leadership in abundance. He also has the extraordinary gift of teaching. In a most unusual way, Fair combined these gifts at Abilene Christian University and more specifically in its College of Biblical Studies for twenty-three years. And we are forever changed for the better because of him.

Ian had a way of convincing other Christian scholars in Churches of Christ to come to ACU to teach. Tony Ash, Jack Reese, Doug Foster, Jeff Childers, Carroll Osburn, James Thompson, Wendell Willis, David Wallace, Gailyn Van Rheenen, Charles Siburt, David Wray, and Jeannene Reese are but a few of the notable professors who were persuaded by this great Christian man to come to ACU and join the faculty. After I had served a short stint in ACU’s Marriage and Family Institute, he convinced me that I should join the Bible faculty in 1984, an academic appointment I still proudly hold. Obviously, he is a hard man to turn down!

The above list does not take into account a number of young scholars in the Restoration heritage who received a timely word of encouragement somewhere during their graduate studies to devote their lives to scholarship and ministry. Ian was serious about both. He would not hire professors who did not have extensive ministry experience in the church. He believed vigorously (Ian does everything vigorously!) that scholarship and ministry belong together. Scholars serve the church, and the church comes to maturity through their contributions. He was, and continues to be, first and foremost a churchman.

For thousands of Christians around the world, I say, “Thank you, Ian.” Thank you for showing us how to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. Thank you for showing Christ to us and modeling for us how to love and serve and lead. You have allowed God to do great things through you. Only the Lord knows the full impact of your life on the Kingdom. To God be the glory!
APPRECIATION FOR IAN ARTHUR FAIR

In 1986, a senior at a Christian college in Tennessee visited Ian Fair for advice about future theological studies and a career in ministry in Churches of Christ. Discouraged by his previous educational and ministerial experiences and certain that the Christianity he had known lacked both intellectual vigor and compassion, he was looking for a reason to stay. The interview convinced the student that the tradition of his youth could still support the harmonious life of the mind and the heart. I was that senior, and the interview marked a turning point in my life. Over the years, countless students, to say nothing of ministers and other church leaders, have encountered Ian Fair and received from him wisdom, encouragement, and a renewed commitment to service. Some of those who have benefitted from his work, both students and colleagues, have contributed to this Festschrift in his honor.

A native of Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, Ian Fair began his career as a civil engineer for South African Railways. After becoming a Christian in 1959, he started to preach. In 1965 he began his second career as a theologian by enrolling as an undergraduate at Abilene Christian University, from which he received a B.A. He later received a B.A. (Honors), M.A. in New Testament Theology, and Ph.D. in systematic theology from the University of Natal in South Africa, where he had returned to preach and teach. With his father in the faith, Tex Williams, he helped establish the Natal School of Preaching near Pietermaritzburg and served there as director and instructor (1969–74). He later taught at the Sunset School of Preaching (1974–78), and then at Abilene Christian University (1978–2001). There he was chairman of the Bible Department in 1983–85 and then the first dean of the College of Biblical Studies (1985–97).

Ian Fair has been blessed with a loving partner, June, who has been at his side constantly. They are proud of their three sons, Deon, Nigel, and Douglas, and their grandchildren. Many others count themselves honorary relatives.

Fair’s academic interests range widely, from NT theology (especially the Apocalypse), to preaching, to missions, to contemporary theology. While he might have spent his career publishing recondite studies for a few scholars, he has chosen to live in service of the church, writing countless books and articles and delivering thousands of sermons and lectures for ministers and laypersons, always with panache and insight. His doctoral dissertation examined “The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg as a Reaction to Dialectical Theology.” He cowrote with Bill Humble a booklet on The Seven Churches of Asia (Gospel Advocate, 1995). His most recent book, Leadership in the Kingdom (ACU Press, 1996) distilled
years of theological reflection and practical wisdom. His friends await eagerly his commentary on Revelation, of which we have a foretaste in the booklet *Revelation: Visions of Victory* (Hillcrest, 2000). Perhaps despite appearances, this eclectic body of work derives from a solid center of Scripture and theology in service of the community of faith. While teaching a range of courses in Abilene Christian University’s graduate and undergraduate programs, he also served as an entrepreneurial and inspiring administrator who not only assembled a creative and highly collaborative faculty but used his skills as an engineer to supervise the building of one of the finest academic buildings anywhere. He has done many things well.

The contributors to this volume mirror the breadth of Fair’s theological concerns and professional achievements. The articles fall into three large groups: the first three explore the dynamics within and beyond Abilene Christian University that have shaped Ian Fair’s role, and not incidentally, Churches of Christ. The second group of articles explores biblical images of leadership and responses of the community of faith to leaders. The third group examines dimensions of community.

In the first cluster of essays, Tim Sensing describes the roles of deans in American universities as cultural models, and Jack Reese, Fair’s successor at Abilene Christian University, explores how the dynamics of academic administration listed by Sensing played out in Fair’s career. James Thompson surveys the history of the Bible department at ACU since the 1920s, opening an important window into the twentieth-century history of the Restoration Movement and its intellectual life.

The second group of essays examines biblical explorations of leadership. Mark Hamilton studies the role of kingship in Job, noting how the motif reflects the book’s characteristic theological sleight of hand. David Wallace reexamines the intertextual links between royal psalms and the book of Hebrews, showing how the latter work uses older Scripture for new ends. Ken Cukrowski surveys the current discussion of emperor worship and the book of Revelation, shaking up conventional wisdom in important ways.

The third group of essays reflects on both historical and theological dimensions of the communal life of a Christian group. Jeff Childers calls for a renewed attention to the ancient fathers (and, we may hope, mothers) of the church as both witnesses to the Spirit’s work and as touchstones for a faith able to flourish in a post-Christian world. Tony Ash discusses the case of John’s disciples in the Acts of the Apostles, raising the question of the nature and limits of the Holy Spirit’s work in the ancient Christian community. Douglas Foster sketches the complex history of the Restoration Movement’s understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit. Jeanene Reese, in a serious reexamination of the biblical witness, argues for a reconsideration of the unequal ministry roles of men and women that have hitherto marked Churches of Christ (and many other Christian groups). Finally, Frederick Aquino contributes an important essay on the nature
of informed judgment, that combination of wisdom and knowledge that underlies theological decision-making in the church.

As a group, the articles in this volume probe the nature of authority and community in the Bible and in the contemporary Church. This twin focus on past and present—both leading to God’s future—allows for renewed attention to those theological issues that have most concerned Ian Fair—and indeed all of us. We can think of no more fitting tribute to our teacher and colleague.

Finally, this volume could not have been completed without the encouragement of several persons. Thanks go to James Thompson for opening the pages of Restoration Quarterly to this endeavor and for contributing an important essay to it and to Carolyn Thompson for her assiduous work as the journal’s copy-editor. Jack Reese, Fair’s successor as dean, encouraged this venture and insured that it be done in style. The contributors of the volume agreeably fulfilled their commitments on time and with skill. My graduate assistants, Jason Martin and Phillip Stambaugh, assembled material relating to Fair’s work. My wife Samjung Kang-Hamilton permitted her distracted husband to spend one more hour at the office when he should have been attending to more domestic concerns. To all of them, I offer sincere thanks.

Mark W. Hamilton
Abilene Christian University
THE ROLE OF THE ACADEMIC DEAN

TIM SENSING
Abilene Christian University

Chief academic officers of colleges and universities wear various names. Some of those labels include academic vice chancellor, provost, dean of academic affairs, and dean. The subsequent essay by Jack Reese views Fair’s career as dean of ACU’s College of Biblical Studies through the lens of the following summary of research on the role of the academic dean.

The various demands facing deans often limit their ability to accomplish primary tasks. Because of the wide variety of roles deans assume at any given institution, generalizing about their work is difficult. Deans who fill the role as “chief academic officers” of their institutions or colleges have the primary responsibility of overseeing the teaching and research functions. The balance between teaching and research (two competing forces) depends on a particular school’s mission. The following study narrows the discussion to the question, What can the dean do to facilitate an institution’s academic mission concerning teaching and research?

In 1870 President Charles Eliot of Harvard, to lessen some of his administrative duties, appointed the first dean of an American institution. Frederick Rudolph observes that before the Civil War most institutions relied on the president, a treasurer, and a librarian to fulfill administrative duties. He attributes the growth in administration to three factors: enrollment increases, demands for new services, and the need to free teachers from management. Rudolph notes that in 1860 the median number of administrators in American colleges was four. This number grew to 30.5 by 1933. Responsibilities varied from institution to institution depending upon particular situational needs. For example, student personnel work was mixed with the role of academic administration until Harvard developed a student affairs deanship in 1890. From

the beginning, differing views concerning the range of roles and responsibilities expected of the academic dean has prevailed in institutions of higher learning across the country due to institutional size, diverse historical development of the office, and differing governance styles of presidents. The complexity of presiding over an academic unit containing a variety of different and unrelated disciplines about which the dean may have only generalized knowledge requires skills beyond that needed by most faculty.

Perceptions of the dean’s role vary widely. Often these conflicting perceptions create double-bind dilemmas difficult for deans to resolve. Some struggles center around the dean’s role in funding programs, budgeting, faculty morale, classroom facilities, student morale, and acquisition of resources. This list varies depending upon the dynamics of a given institution. As many as 168 different duties have been associated with the dean’s position. Bowker summarizes the research concerning the primary roles the dean performs, noting the following categories as the most demanding on the dean’s time: administration, committee service, student personnel work, curriculum functions, and supervision of faculty. Cristina commented on the extent that political and business concerns relating to cost effectiveness is now the driving force for many academic decisions. The battles between efficiency and educational quality seem to be waged by other forces that are controlling decisions institutions should be making in the best interest of students. Outside the academy only accreditation groups are asking the questions concerning educational quality.


7 Tucker and Bryan, Academic Dean.


10 B. Cristina. Class notes, ELC 606 (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1995). He also noted administrative issues as an integral part of his role. These issues included personnel with interpersonal problems, turfism (both protecting turf and building empires), personal and political agendas, budget constraints, and communication breakdowns. He stated, “Many do not understand that what is in the best interest of the university may not be in your best interest.” Many deans are unwilling to make the tough decisions larger contextual issues demand.

11 Ibid.
Gould describes the functions that contribute to the satisfaction deans feel while doing their jobs. These functions all relate to the academic life of the institution and include contributions to academic standards, curriculum development, and hiring of highly qualified faculty who aid the institution. Gould also notes these are not the tasks on which deans spend most of their time. Rather, administrative duties involving faculty relations and morale, committee work, and student counseling fill their day. However, Nargle reported research that would suggest little difference between the “actual” duties and the “ideal” duties of the dean in small private liberal arts colleges as perceived by presidents, deans, and chairpersons.

J. L. Martin conducted an inductive case study research project to ascertain not what was expected of academic deans but what they do that makes them effective leaders. This project resulted in a “substantive” theory on effective academic deans. Effective deans must be cultural representatives, communicators, managers, planners/analysts, and advocates. Cultural representatives of a college or university embody the ideals and mission of the institution. As deans reinforce the cultural values of the institution, they will support the faculty and the administration. More importantly, cultural representatives lead by example confirmed by their involvement in the life of the organization.

A second key factor for effective leadership derives from the dean’s communication skills. By striving for efficient and inclusive structures, networks, and processes, deans will create an environment for dialogue. This collegial community will respect the voice of the marginal and oppositional groups represented in academic units. Much of this environment will be created through symbolic means that deans employ that relate to the perceived visibility and availability of their office. For example, Smith notes that the second most common complaint of Harvard Divinity School professors is the lack of contact of the dean with the faculty. Communication skills must include conflict management skills. Conflict is bound to occur within and between departments, especially when the deans must add new departments or close old departments due to changes in society and limited resources.

Since administrative tasks dominate most of the time of deans, the ability to manage and implement new directions will be crucial to free them for more

13 R. A. Nargle, “Actual and Ideal Functions of the Academic Dean in Selected Small Private Liberal Arts Colleges as Perceived by Presidents, Academic Deans, and Department Chairpersons” (Ph.D. diss., Temple University, 1980).
14 Martin, “Preliminary Theory.”
15 Martin, “Academic Deans.”
16 Martin, “Preliminary Theory.”
17 The number one reason was “lack of money.” J. I. Smith, “Response to ‘the Dean’ Responsibility for Faculty Research,” Theological Education 24 (1987): 115–19.
18 Tucker and Bryan, Academic Dean.
important tasks. Therefore, easily executed tasks will be readily delegated. The deans with the greatest skills in organizational management and good understandings of their limitations are able to focus on other priorities more effectively. The manager skill is closely related to the planner/analyst skill. The more "cognitive complex" is the deans’ ability to handle multiple forces, competing priorities, and complicated issues, the more effective they enhance the teaching and research missions of the institution.

Finally, deans will be an advocate for the college or university by cultivating relationships with various groups and individuals on and off campus. Faculty and other administrators discern the role as advocate as of greater value than other supervisory concerns that occupy too much time.

Dill generalizes the duties of deans who hold varying role requirements in differing institutions. These duties include (1) integrating the interests of various constituencies into a common sense of purpose, including goal setting and strategic planning; (2) creating incentives from existing resources to stimulate new and continuing contributions and commitments to the institution; and (3) maximizing the institution’s efficiency in transforming contributions and commitments of all kinds into educational products and services. American colleges and universities seem to demand more than one individual can provide—the best of all worlds. “Like the European dean, he [she] is expected to be a leading scholar and a leader of scholars; unlike the European dean, he [she] is expected also to be a master of administrative technique, a pivotal man [woman] in the formation of policy, a maker of good decisions, and the self-sacrificing servant of the faculty.” The more effective deans are able to be as administrators, the more time they will have for leadership in academics. However, instead of seeing the demands of administration and academic leadership as dichotomous roles, effective deans will forge a holistic approach.

Deans need to manage resources of all kinds (including symbolic resources) to stimulate and maintain teaching excellence in their respective academic units. Since the dean has direct influence in hiring, promoting, tenuring, and evaluating faculty as well as allocating funds that directly influence teaching, no one is in a better position to support the institution’s effectiveness in teaching students. Deans who keep up with their own disciplines are in a better position to under-

19 Bowker, “Academic Dean.”
20 Martin, “Preliminary Theory.”
21 Ibid.
23 Dill, “Deanship.”
24 Gould, Academic Deanship, 7.
Deans who keep up with their own disciplines are in a better position to understand and support teaching. This may be done by their continued involvement in teaching, by continued involvement in research activities, or by released time for professional reading, but overloading the dean with administrative duties can sever the connection between teaching and research. Fullerton observes that deans across the country are concerned with their lack of time to pursue their own academic interests.

Although the balancing act between faculty teaching and research is an ever-continuing challenge, deans also have a responsibility to promote faculty research. Research provides a foundation for quality and cutting-edge teaching. Research provides a means to secure disinterested evaluation in the academic discipline of the teacher and the opportunity to stay in touch with a vocational understanding of one’s field. Hough suggests eight ways deans can accomplish these goals: (1) conducting personal research, (2) understanding and interpreting faculty research, (3) allocating time for faculty research, (4) publicizing and honoring significant faculty research, (5) seeking funding for assistance of faculty who are doing research, (6) advocating strong research-library development, (7) establishing external institute research projects, and (8) promoting institutional research. Deans will also guide faculty in balancing personal and professional concerns.

To conclude, the role of deans is complex. If deans were magically transferred to other institutions, their individual duties would probably be different. Deans must make some fundamental decisions about the function of the office they hold. What is the mission of this institution? How can I best serve that mission? The primary responsibility of deans is to oversee the teaching and research functions of their institutions. All the other related roles that fall within the range of duties assumed by deans need to be channeled by this overriding purpose.

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26 Ibid.
27 Bowker notes only half the deans in America expect to teach in the coming year. Those deans who anticipated teaching projected an average of one course per semester. L. H. Bowker, "The Academic Dean: A Descriptive Study," Teaching Sociology 9 (1982): 257-71.
31 Smith, "Response to 'the Dean.'"
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Tim Sensing’s excellent article in this issue provides a framework for assessing Ian Fair as an academic leader within the College of Biblical Studies at Abilene Christian University. His overview of the historical development of the academic dean’s role in university life and his descriptive categories of a dean’s work will serve as touch points for sharing my personal experiences as a professor for nine years under Ian Fair’s leadership. Especially useful are the notions of dean as cultural representative, planner/analyst, and advocate.

Few people I know have excelled in as many roles as Ian Fair, any one of which would be considered a successful career. For example, he was a first-rate mechanical engineer in South Africa, though far more people in that country know him as a church planter and missionary. He is a professor of NT texts and theology, an expert in the theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg, and an engaging classroom teacher. He is a passionate preacher, beloved Bible class teacher, long-time elder, and author. He is an innovator in the use of technology in teaching, especially in the use of the internet. Many know him as a specialist in church leadership who has written an important book on that subject and who now serves as a consultant for numerous churches. His competence and influence in all of these areas are noteworthy, but, arguably, his most profound contribution has been made as an academic dean.

Fair joined the ACU faculty in 1978 and was appointed chair of the Bible Department in 1983. The department became a college in 1985. Fair served as its dean until 1997. His fourteen years as chair and academic dean were years of significant transformation. When he retired from that role, the faculty had changed substantially with new faces, new emphases, and new programs. Baby Boomer students in 1978 soon gave way to Gen Xers with significantly different questions and issues. Churches of Christ experienced profound changes during those years, creating opportunities for Dean Fair to exercise both diplomacy and courage. Moreover, during these years, not only did the university reorganize into colleges, but the Southern Association for Colleges and Schools, the regional accrediting organization for the university, raised its expectations and changed its standards of assessment. In 1989, the Bible faculty, whose offices were scattered around the Hardin Administration Building and across Campus Court...
in the missions house, moved into the newly constructed Biblical Studies Building, a project overseen in detail by Dean Fair.

Sensing indicates that most institutions see the primary responsibility of the chief academic officer as overseeing the teaching and research functions of their institutions. This function is undoubtedly the case for most schools, but it misses the mark regarding Dean Fair for two reasons—first, because of the nature and mission of Christian universities and, second, because of Fair’s passions and commitments. I am not suggesting he was uninterested in teaching and research. On the contrary, he pushed his faculty in these directions. He did not tolerate poorly taught classes or second-rate faculty. He sought and obtained extrabudgetary funding for research. Rather, Fair saw teaching and research more as means than ends. His goal was not merely to encourage excellent teaching and competent research but to produce ministers and missionaries, to help the church become more theologically reflective. During his years as dean, Ian Fair never took his eyes off the larger goal, nor did he allow his faculty to forget what was truly important.

Cultural Representative of the College

Among the qualities of effective academic deans that Sensing mentions are several that are especially characteristic of Dr. Fair. One is the role of cultural representative. When Fair was first appointed chair of the Bible Department, not everyone expected him to function in this way. He was a relatively new faculty member. At the time he was not widely known as a teacher or administrator. There were quiet questions of concern and expressions of disappointment among some. These questions did not linger long, however. Within weeks it was clear that Fair was a whirlwind of ideas, a thinker and a doer. By the end of his first year as chair, the only question was whether the other faculty could stay up with him.

Fair embodied the ideals of the college. He was larger than life—teaching, preaching, writing, consulting, mentoring, managing finances, fundraising, creating new initiatives—all for a clear purpose. He fought publicly for the values of the college. These values include the following.

1. The Bible should be at the center of the curriculum. Dean Fair was unbudging in his commitment to protect the central place of Scripture within the department and, later, the college. However valuable a course or program might be, it must find its place as an outgrowth of biblical study, not as a replacement of it. For Dean Fair, everything begins with a broad grasp of Scripture. This includes facility with the biblical languages and skills in exegesis, but it also means theological sensitivity. A scholar/minister must allow the text to inform out of a theological center.

2. The curriculum should primarily focus on the training of ministers. Dean Fair’s greatest legacy may be the transformation of the department, which had long produced fine scholars and teachers, into a college whose passion is equipping ministers and missionaries. He was able to accomplish these changes
without undermining the importance of research and scholarship. During his fourteen years of leadership, the number of graduates who went on to do doctoral research never decreased. The number of students training for ministry and missions, however, increased more than fivefold. In 1983, the reputation of the Bible Department at ACU was primarily that of excellence in research and scholarship. By 1997, the College of Biblical Studies was the largest training ground for ministers and missionaries within Churches of Christ, with over 550 undergraduate and graduate majors.

As cultural representative of the college, Fair embodied its ideals. He engaged the faculty and students in rethinking ministry. He changed the culture. He challenged our ways of doing things. He fought for things he thought were most important. And he was humble enough to praise others when he did not get his way.

Planner/Analyst

Sensing's research also reveals the role of planner/analyst as common for effective academic deans. Dean Fair was unequaled in this role. He combined the ability to see the big picture with an eye for fine details. He was both visionary and manager, both prophet and priest.

Fair's vision of the college was more expansive than what most of us could imagine. He envisioned a cocurriculum of ministry opportunities, the integration of disciplines, the churches as classrooms, and learning as a lifelong opportunity. He saw multiple departments, not narrow disciplines, and ministry as the locus of theology, history, and praxis. The department he entered would hardly have recognized the college he left behind.

His attention to detail was often seen in the planning of the Biblical Studies Building. At first, the contractors had no idea why this dean came to the construction site with his hard hat, asking questions, making suggestions, and providing critique. They soon discovered that the combination of his training as an engineer and his attention to detail made him a formidable academic overseer in the process of building construction. It is difficult to imagine that any other person could have envisioned how teachers and students would use a building such as this and at the same time talk to electricians, carpenters, and engineers as one of them.

This combination of micro- and macromanager made Dean Fair particularly qualified to serve as leader during these years of change and growth. Most of us who served under him believe he was called by God to this position at this time.

Advocate

As Sensing indicated, faculty and other administrators often discern the role of advocate as of greater value than other supervisory responsibilities. This was clearly the case with the College of Biblical Studies. During a time of significant transition, in the university and within Churches of Christ, faculty and students needed an environment in which to ask questions, explore, think, challenge, and grow. The faculty especially needed someone not only to protect them from
irresponsible critics but to serve as an advocate for the causes we shared. This Dean Fair did with remarkable courage and tenacity.

Occasionally, faculty spoke or wrote things unwisely. Even in the face of substantial criticism, Fair was pointed and strong in their defense. In his early years as department chair, the university faced accusations of teaching evolution in science classes. As the religious right wing attacked the university, Dean Fair served as one of the primary respondents even though the criticism did not target, at least at first, his own faculty or curriculum. His ability to formulate responses, hold critics accountable for their own actions, and articulate the university’s position became the foundation for defense of his own faculty and curriculum in later years.

In the early 1990s, Fair met often with accusers, one-on-one or in preachers’ meetings. He met with elders. He talked on the phone to people all over the world. He never backed away from attacks. He listened, he challenged, he refuted. He reframed the arguments and redefined the issues. He spoke out of a well-studied theology. Anything less than such tenacious advocacy would have led to widely different results.

Fair’s role as college advocate, however, was not confined to “brotherhood politics.” At the academic deans’ table, he was outspoken and passionate. Fair was able to see the needs of the whole university, but he championed the college, fought for increased scholarships, pushed for new programs, and lobbied for increased attention for financial development. He created the position of development officer for the college. He argued successfully for substantial increases in unfunded scholarships to the college, a move that greatly increased the number of majors in a very short time. When university budget figures differed from his, he camped in administration offices arguing his case.

His bulldoggedness did not always win him friends, but it always won him admirers. He knew who he was. He knew what was important. He knew how to get things done. His language was plain when nuancing would only obscure. He carved out a space for expansive ministry preparation, which could come only in the wake of such aggressiveness and tenacity.

Many other stories could be told—his advocacy of missions, his championing of computer-assisted teaching, his promotion of off-campus teaching and learning. All who have known him have their stories to tell. But all would agree, Ian Fair was an extraordinary dean at an extraordinary time. He not only served the mission of the College of Biblical Studies, he largely defined it.

For me, moving into his office as his successor was daunting, but his graciousness and encouragement made my transition a joy. His advice has always been welcome though it has come only when invited. His expertise is helpful, but it is his friendship I cherish most. Along with all those who served with him during his leadership years, I am grateful.
THE FORMATION OF AN ACADEMIC TRADITION IN BIBLICAL STUDIES AT ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

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Michael Casey has shown that the emergence of an academic tradition at Abilene Christian University at the end of the twentieth century was anticipated by developments in the early part of the century.¹ When the institution was in its infancy, President Jesse P. Sewell, with the academic leadership of George Klingman and William Webb Freeman, embarked on the ambitious project of establishing a seminary that reflected developments in theological education in other religious traditions in the United States. Casey described the failure of this project and the resulting change in direction that occurred when Klingman and Freeman left the college. Major developments took place in the period from 1949 to 1970, including the appointment of faculty members who held the terminal degree, the initiation of graduate theological education, and the development of a scholarly journal. In this article I shall describe the reemergence of the academic tradition that occurred in this period. I dedicate this article to Ian Fair, under whose leadership the program in biblical studies made important and lasting progress at a later period.

Developments in the Bible Department, 1924–1950

After the departure of Klingman and Freeman, the college turned away from the ambitious academic program of the Klingman era. From 1924 to 1949, academic credentials played less of a role than it had in the earlier years. The catalog lists no one on the faculty who had a doctorate in religious studies. From 1924 to 1929, the Bible faculty included Batsell Baxter (who also served as president 1924–32), Morgan Higdon Carter, M. V. Showalter, and R. C. Bell. From 1929 to 1935, E. W. McMillan, one of the most respected ministers in Churches of Christ, served as the chairman of the Bible Department. During this

period Homer Hailey and Charles Roberson joined the faculty, and Batsell Baxter returned to the faculty. With the exception of Homer Hailey, who did not earn his M.A. until 1944, these faculty members held the M.A. degree. However, their graduate degrees were in a variety of fields, and several of them taught primarily in disciplines other than biblical studies.

From 1936 to 1951, Charles Roberson served as head of the Bible Department. Roberson completed the A.M. degree at TCU and course work for a Ph.D. in classics at the University of Texas. During this time the faculty included R. C. Bell, Homer Hailey, and James F. Cox. Paul Southern, a student of Roberson, joined the faculty in 1938. Near the end of the Roberson era, JW Roberts and Woodrow Wilson also joined the faculty.

Roberson was the dominating influence during the 1930s and 1940s. His students included the men who later made an impact on the Bible faculty: J. D. Thomas, JW Roberts, Paul Southern, LeMoine Lewis, and Wendell Broom. He also taught Jack P. Lewis, later of Harding University Graduate School of Religion. According to Lewis, Roberson "kindled a fire for study." According to J. D. Thomas, Roberson alone on the faculty was able to read the Bible in the original languages. He was aware of critical scholarship and wrote numerous articles on issues involving higher criticism and the science-religion debate, which he later published in *The Bible vs. Modernism*. He encouraged his students to seek additional education in order to meet the challenges facing the church.

Roberson's tenure also continued the uneasy relationship between the college and its constituency. Because of ACC's pivotal role in the education of ministers, it became the battleground among those who recognized its importance. This uneasy relationship erupted into open conflict in 1940 when Roberson came under attack at the ACC Lectureship for his suspected views on premillennialism. The charges were based on an article in Roberson's *What Jesus Taught*, in which

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2 Roberson had been on the original faculty in 1906, but left the college two years later to establish Southwestern Christian College in Denton, Texas. He later taught at Thorp Spring Christian College (1917–18) and at the Bible Chair at the University of Texas (1919–28). After other attempts to establish a Christian college, Roberson returned to ACC in 1932. See Jim Mankin, “Charles M. Roberson: Teacher and Scholar,” *ResQ* 36 (1994): 25–29. See also John C. Stevens, *No Ordinary University: The History of a City Set on a Hill* (Abilene, Tex.: ACU Press, 1998), 31. Homer Hailey taught from 1930 to 1952.

3 JW was the actual name of Dr. Roberts, hence the letters JW without the period.


6 Jack P. Lewis recalls a visit with Roberson as Lewis was contemplating going east to school: "I mentioned concern about the danger to faith. I told him that if I knew it would destroy my faith, I would not go. His advice was 'I think you can make it.' He was one of two people outside my family who thought my plans were a good idea."
Roberson was heavily dependent on the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. In response to the public charges at an event in Sewell Auditorium, Roberson asked all of the preachers who were his former students in the auditorium to come to the front. They lined up all the way across the front of the auditorium. Roberson said, “These are my jewels,” and immediately sat down. He later said that he had intended to ask the preachers if any had heard premillennialism in his classes, but in the excitement of the moment he had forgotten to ask.\(^7\)

**Accreditation and the Move toward Academic Credentials**

Changes at the end of the Roberson era determined the course of the 1950s and laid the basis for the development of biblical scholarship at ACU. Academic credentials began to play a significant role in the entire college as it sought accreditation in the early 1950s. In the Bible Department, ACC followed the trend among evangelical schools by demonstrating a new concern for academic respectability and pedigree.\(^8\) In 1949 Paul Southern became the first professor at ACC to hold the doctorate since W. W. Freeman.\(^9\) Frank Pack, who earned his Ph.D. in 1948 from the University of Southern California, joined the faculty in 1950. The appointment of Southern to be head of the Bible Department reflected the school’s new interest in academic respectability.\(^10\) Others who joined the faculty at the end of the Roberson era would later earn doctoral degrees in biblical studies and shape the program in the 1950s and 1960s. JW Roberts and Woodrow Wilson joined the faculty in 1946. Roberts enrolled in the Ph.D. program in classics at the University of Texas and completed the degree in 1957. Wilson earned the Th.D. from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1956. LeMoine Lewis joined the faculty in 1949 after earning the S.T.B. from Harvard in that year. J. D. Thomas also joined the faculty in 1949 after

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\(^8\) See Mark Noll, *Between Faith and Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986), 97. According to Noll, the number of young evangelicals who sought academic training at Harvard University began in the 1930s when E. J. Carnell, George Eldon Ladd, and Kenneth Kantzer went there to study for the doctorate.


\(^10\) This new direction was not uniformly welcomed in the ACC community. The appointment of Southern and the move toward academic credentials precipitated the departure of Homer Hailey, Southern’s competitor. According to Harrell (*Churches of Christ in the Twentieth Century*, 270), “Southern’s appointment was symbolic of a change in directions that made Hailey feel increasingly ill at ease.” Hailey joined the faculty of Florida Christian College.
completing his course work for the Ph.D. at the University of Chicago. Thomas completed the Ph.D. in 1957, and Lewis completed his Ph.D. at Harvard in 1959.

The generation of the 1960s was educated during this period. Everett Ferguson, Abraham Malherbe, and Anthony Ash received degrees at ACC in the early 1950s. Those educated in the 1950s who would become influential in American religious scholarship, in addition to Ferguson and Malherbe, were Harold Forshey, Harold Vanderpool, John T. Willis, J. J. M. Roberts, Roy Bowen Ward, and William Martin.

Under Southern’s tenure others with Ph.D. degrees joined the faculty in the 1950s. Neil Lightfoot came in 1958 after completing his doctorate in NT from Duke in that year. Robert L. Johnson, who joined the faculty in 1953, earned his Ph.D. from New York University in 1957.

The Beginning of Graduate Education and Academic Publishing

The new emphasis on academic credentials brought a new dimension to scholarship, classroom instruction, and intellectual leadership for the churches in the 1950s under the leadership of LeMoine Lewis, J. D. Thomas, Frank Pack, and JW Roberts. This generation of scholars demonstrated an appreciation for intellectual activity to a constituency that had been wary of higher education in religion. They made a lasting impact on both the college and the churches. Under their influence two major developments in theological study occurred at ACU.

The first initiative was the development of the master’s degree program in the early 1950s. George Pepperdine College, the Bible Chair at Eastern New Mexico University, and Harding College had preceded ACC in the offering of the master’s degree in 1944, 1950, and 1953, respectively. Abilene Christian awarded its first master’s degree in 1954.

LeMoine Lewis was a significant influence from the time he joined the faculty until his death in 1987. His major contribution was in the classroom. His lectures on church history, one of the most popular courses in the college, opened up a new world for students who had learned early that nothing of importance had happened between the first century and the nineteenth. He demonstrated genuine appreciation for the great Christian thinkers and their legacy of faith. Consequently, he introduced his students to a perspective that was open to the world of scholarship and to the contributions of Christian thinkers of the past and...

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11 Ferguson received both the B. A. and M. A. at ACC. Malherbe received the B. A. at ACU before going to Harvard for graduate work. Ash received the M. A. at ACC after completing the bachelor’s degree at Florida State University.


present. Although he included the history of the American Restoration Movement in his course in church history, he did not reduce the study to an account of the "the falling away and restoration." He also expressed admiration for his teachers at Harvard, encouraging his students to follow him. Those who did so in the 1950s included Pat Harrell, Everett Ferguson, Abraham Malherbe, Roy Bowen Ward, and William Martin. Although Lewis did not contribute to scholarly literature, he educated many students who excelled in both academia and the church. The esteem that the students had for him is evident in the festschrift that former students published in his honor in 1981.14

Frank Pack, similarly, was a gifted lecturer, preacher, and classroom teacher. His training in textual criticism is evident in the articles he published in Restoration Quarterly.15 In the article on textual criticism in the Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, M. M. Parvis describes the significance of Pack's dissertation on the textual work of Origen.16

JW Roberts taught at ACU from 1946 until his death in 1973. His training in classics brought an important dimension to the Bible faculty. He wrote widely in popular journals for the Churches of Christ,17 addressing the major issues of the churches of his day. As a professor of Greek and advanced Bible courses, Roberts used his outstanding philological skills to clarify grammatical and exegetical issues in the biblical text. A regular feature of Restoration Quarterly (see below), which he edited from 1957 until his death, was the section "Exegetical Helps," in which Roberts offered grammatical assistance on difficult texts.18 While he was consistently conservative in his conclusions, he engaged the issues in critical biblical scholarship seriously. Such articles in Restoration Quarterly as "The Interpretation of the Apocalypse: The State of the Question"19 and "The Genuineness of the Pastorals: Some Recent Aspects of the Question"20 mediated international scholarship to the readership of the journal. His article on "Greek Particles" took up one of the significant issues in the Pastoral Epistles. In his

16 M. M. Parvis, "Text, NT," IDB 4.603.
17 The complete bibliography of Roberts's works is included in ResQ 17 (1974): 3–18.
attention to critical biblical scholarship, Roberts introduced readers to the larger world of biblical criticism. Although he published only one article in a journal for international scholarship,²¹ his articles in *Restoration Quarterly* reflected a new era in academic work at ACC.

J. D. Thomas, also a student of Roberson, earned his bachelor’s degree in 1943 at the age of thirty-three. After first studying architecture at the University of Texas and then working as assistant city manager of Lubbock, he returned to ACC to study Bible under Roberson, who, aware of the need of intellectual leadership at ACC, encouraged Thomas to continue his studies and return to ACC. Thomas completed the M.A. at Southern Methodist University in 1944 and then enrolled in the Ph.D. program at the University of Chicago, completing the course work in 1949 before returning to the ACC faculty. His professors included Allen Wikgren, Amos Wilder, and J. C. Rylaarsdam. Thomas completed the degree in 1957 with a dissertation on “The Greek Text of Tobit.”

Thomas, a prolific writer, addressed the major concerns of the Churches of Christ in the 1950s and 1960s, providing intellectual leadership in several areas in that era. He provided intellectual leadership in several areas. In the first place, he addressed the issues that were controversial in Churches of Christ such as hermeneutics, fighting on two fronts. In 1957 he published *We Be Brethren*, a response to the controversy over cooperative efforts among churches to establish orphanages and mission programs such as the radio program *Herald of Truth*.²² In this book Thomas defended these cooperative ministries against attacks from the right. Although he agreed with the opponents of these programs that the Bible offers a blueprint, he employed the pattern to defend the biblical basis for these cooperative works. In 1974, Thomas addressed the issue of hermeneutics once more in *Heaven’s Window: Sequel to “We Be Brethren.”* Whereas Thomas wrote *We Be Brethren* to meet challenges from those who read the pattern principle in a more restrictive manner than did Thomas, the sequel was a response to a new generation of those who challenged the idea of the Bible as a pattern.²³ Here Thomas affirmed that “the Bible is ‘Heaven’s Window’—indeed the only avenue man has to the knowledge of God’s will.”²⁴ In his treatment of biblical hermeneutics, Thomas often employed scriptural texts, but did not attempt to place them in their original context or engage the larger world of biblical scholarship. Thus his hermeneutical discussion was intelligible only within the Churches of Christ.

²⁴ Ibid., 1. Cf. p. 4: “In the same way that a blueprint is a constant reference to a builder and reads the same way to everyone who has the ability to interpret blueprints, the pattern concept of Biblical revelation means that it is a continuing spiritual reference to all logically-capable truth-seekers.”
A second area of Thomas’s writings addressed issues that many had not yet faced: the new intellectual challenges to the traditional understanding of the Bible posed by biblical criticism, science, and contemporary theology. Thomas taught undergraduate and graduate courses and published articles in the *Gospel Advocate* in these areas before publishing the two-volume *Facts and Faith*. He rejected the conclusions of biblical criticism that became a near-consensus in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, insisting on the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, the unity of Isaiah, and the sixth-century dating for Daniel. He also rejected theories of literary dependence among the Synoptic Gospels. Nevertheless, many students first learned about the documentary hypothesis, the Synoptic Problem, and other critical issues through his lectures. Similarly, many students first learned about Barth, Bultmann, Tillich, and Niebuhr from his lectures on these twentieth-century theologians. As with his treatment of the major critical issues, Thomas rejected the liberalism and neo-orthodoxy of these twentieth-century theologians. In pursuing this agenda, Thomas was following the lead of Roberson, who had suggested that the study of these currents in biblical criticism and theology would be necessary for Christian leaders.

One must see the scholars of this generation within their own context. As the first generation to attain advanced degrees, they faced a climate that was anti-intellectual and suspicious of higher education.25 Their areas of specialization concentrated on church history, Greek philology, textual criticism, the history of interpretation, and backgrounds to the NT. No one at this time wrote on biblical studies or systematic theology.26 In their writings they consistently reaffirmed their loyalty to the positions of the Churches of Christ, but often employed their

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25 See Michael Casey, “The First Graduate Theological Education,” 73.

26 Restoration scholars were following the pattern earlier established by evangelical scholars, as noted by Mark Noll, *Between Faith and Criticism*, 98: “Fewer [evangelical scholars] seemed eager to engage the general intellectual values of the modern university or the specific conventions of critical Bible scholarship. Their theses were mostly on historical subjects. When they did specialize in Scripture, they wrote dissertations on textual or extrabiblical subjects.” The dissertations indicate the areas of concentration: LeMoine Gaunce Lewis, “Early Christian Contemporaries, with Special Emphasis on Origen as a Commentator”; Frank Pack, “The Methodology of Origen as a Textual Critic in Arriving at the Text of the New Testament” (USC, 1948); JW Roberts, “The Use of Conditional Sentences in the Greek New Testament as Compared with Homeric, Classical, and Hellenistic Uses” (University of Texas, 1955); Paul Southern, “The New Testament Use of the Preposition kata with Special Reference to Its Distributive Aspects” (Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1948); J. D. Thomas, “The Greek Text of Tobit” (University of Chicago, 1957); Woodrow Wilson, “The Date of the Exodus” (Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1956); Jack P. Lewis, “An Introduction to the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs” (Harvard University, 1953); W. B. West Jr., “An Ante-Nicene Exegesis of Galatians and Romans” (University of Southern California, 1942). Cited from Alex Humphrey Jr., “A List of Some Doctors of Philosophy and Doctors of Theology Dissertations by Members of Churches of Christ,” *ResQ* 2 (1958): 71–72.
scholarship to moderate the more extreme positions held by the polemists within the fellowship. For example, while many argued for six literal days of creation, Thomas took a more flexible view that demonstrated a willingness to engage arguments from geology and biology while maintaining the basic historicity of Genesis. When most of the constituency had never heard the names of the great theologians, Thomas introduced a generation of students to the issues of the rest of the world. These scholars' common insistence on plenary verbal inspiration moderated earlier views of inspiration as dictation. Neil Lightfoot's critical work on the textual basis of the RSV and his popular publication *How We Got the Bible* introduced to lay audiences needed information about the history of the biblical text and opened the way for an appreciation of modern translations at a time when many church leaders were condemning the RSV. The most significant achievement of this group of scholars was that they mediated a knowledge of the world of scholarship and argued forcefully that advanced education was necessary in the modern world. Their students learned about the contributions of the great opinion leaders of the past. This generation introduced advanced education to a people who regarded it as a threat to the church and offered a theological conservatism that was an alternative to the positions commonly held by the constituency.

With their academic training, they were aware of some developments in international scholarship, but they did not write within this context. Their interaction with the guild of biblical scholars was minimal, and their work was rarely acknowledged outside Churches of Christ. Thomas wrote for the Churches of Christ, expressing appreciation for evangelical thinkers, but largely rejecting historical-critical scholarship. Although Roberts's work was addressed to church

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27 See J. D. Thomas, *Facts and Faith* (Abilene: Biblical Research Press, 1965), 1.157–64, for ways of harmonizing Genesis with the facts of science. After surveying various attempts to reconcile geology with Genesis 1–11, Thomas concludes (1.163): "A valid Christian faith does not have to make a decision as to how creation came about before one can accept that it did. With these views or perhaps a combination of them (i.e., 'day' = 'age,' the 'gap' theory), we can see that it is possible to harmonize the statements in Genesis with the known facts of science and that there can be ample time for the earth to have existed as long as need be to fit any scientific fact; that life on earth for both plants and animals may have been for any period of time as far as the book of Genesis demands—especially if 'the days' can be somehow accepted as figurative descriptions of long periods of time (as Genesis 2:4b necessarily demands)."

28 Mark Noll observes that this pattern was common among evangelical scholars. "In its early stages, however, evangelical application to mainstream scholarship seems to have had little impact on evangelical methods or convictions. Certification rather than confrontation was the goal. Evangelical leaders wanted their institutions to be respectable." Noll notes that "only a few in this generation of evangelical scholars published for the academic world at large. Much more common was a pattern in which after beginning a teaching career, the scholar would set aside the dissertation and its technical concerns in order to pursue popular publications for evangelicals" (68).
leaders in Churches of Christ, his articles in *Restoration Quarterly* on grammatical issues were genuine contributions to exegetical studies and useful for biblical scholars everywhere. Lewis taught his students the value of, and modeled an appreciation for, education. In his speech at the 1964 Lectureship, Lewis articulated a view that was new in Churches of Christ.

It is shocking . . . that we still have a lot of people who really do not believe that a preacher needs training. We have many elders and congregations who show little or no interest in a preacher’s training. . . . In recent years a mood has swept across a large part of the church that holds that education is dangerous. It is not uncommon to hear a preacher with little training say that the greatest danger facing the church is too much training. . . . What we have to fear is ignorance and incompetence—not education or training. 29

Later in the speech, Lewis added:

The function that distinguishes the calling of the preacher from all other callings is the public proclamation of the word. He has no business in the pulpit unless his scholarship in the word surpasses that of those who sit in the pew. The preacher’s scholarship should command respect and inspire confidence. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew and Aramaic and the New Testament in Greek. Every week the preacher needs to wrestle with the originals to make sure it is the word of God he proclaims. 30

He added, “What the law school is to the lawyer, and what the medical school is to the doctor, the seminary course is to the preacher.” 31

The second development was the founding of *Restoration Quarterly* in 1957 by Pat E. Harrell and Abraham J. Malherbe, recent graduates of ACC. Harrell was a graduate student in historical theology at Boston University and minister of the Church of Christ in Natick, Massachusetts. Malherbe was a graduate student at Harvard and minister at the Church of Christ in Lexington, Massachusetts. Faculty members of Abilene Christian College joined these recent alumni as writers for the journal. After two issues of publication under the board, ACC faculty member JW Roberts became editor, serving in that position until his death in 1973.

The journal, billed as “Studies in Christian Scholarship,” was the first academic journal in Churches of Christ. It attempted to contribute to discussions in theological scholarship and was soon indexed and read in libraries throughout the United States. For a movement that had a small pool of potential readers and writers for this level of scholarship, the journal was an ambitious undertaking. The early issues reflected the transitional situation of scholarship within Churches of Christ. Although some articles took the polemical stance familiar to readers of

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29 LeMoine Lewis, “Training Young Men to Preach,” ACC Lectures 1964, 86.
30 Ibid., 88–89.
31 Ibid., 93.
such popular journals as the *Gospel Advocate* and the *Firm Foundation*, many articles in biblical studies and restoration history were genuine contributions to the academy, offering a level of scholarship previously unknown in the Churches of Christ. Abraham Malherbe’s “An Introduction: The Task and Method of Exegesis” became standard reading in graduate exegesis courses in numerous institutions. His “Through the Eye of the Needle: ‘The Doctrine of Christ’” and Roy Bowen Ward’s “The Restoration Principle: A Critical Analysis” offered critiques of positions widely held among Churches of Christ. Pat Harrell’s “Almost Persuaded’ Now to Believe” offered exegetical insights that questioned the use of a favorite prooftext in the preaching of that era.

New Developments in the 1960s

Roberson’s students introduced changes that increased in momentum in the 1960s when students from the 1950s joined the faculty. Everett Ferguson returned from Harvard in 1962 with a Ph.D. in church history. In 1963 after earning the Th.D. in NT from Harvard, Abraham Malherbe came to ACU to replace Frank Pack, who had moved to Pepperdine University in that year. The generation of the 1950s remained, but the new generation assumed the leadership of the graduate program. The younger faculty members brought a new dimension to scholarship in the Churches of Christ. While they joined their colleagues in writing for their fellowship and articulating theology within the restoration tradition, they also interacted with critical theological scholarship outside the Churches of Christ. Ferguson and Malherbe were participants in the Seminar on Catholic Christianity, a study group founded by Albert Outler and composed of...

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34 *ResQ* 6 (1962): 12–18. By placing 2 John 9 in its historical context, pointing out that the author’s concern in the phrase “the doctrine of Christ” is the Christology of the opponents, Malherbe challenged the common polemical use of the passage within Churches of Christ, according to which the “doctrine of Christ” was understood as a subjective genitive that could be applied to a wide range of doctrinal errors.


scholars from institutions in the Southwest, and they were active in the academic professional societies. Despite heavy teaching loads, they engaged scholarship at the international level. In addition to their frequent articles in Restoration Quarterly, they published in such journals as the Harvard Theological Review, Journal of Biblical Literature, and Journal of Ecclesiastical History during the 1960s and early 1970s. Both Ferguson and Malherbe went on to distinguished academic careers and gained an international reputation. Ferguson taught at ACU until his retirement in 1992. Malherbe left ACU in 1969. After one year at Dartmouth College, he went to Yale, where he taught until his retirement in 1994.

Thomas Olbricht, who joined the faculty in 1967 and became editor of Restoration Quarterly in 1973, taught at ACU until 1986. Having earned his Ph.D. in communications (University of Iowa, 1959) and the S.T.B. (Harvard, 1962), he remained active in both disciplines. During his tenure at ACU, he served terms as president of the Southwest Commission on Religious Studies (1978–79) and of the Southwest region of the American Academy of Religion (1976–77), and he founded and directed the Christian Scholars Conference (1981–97). The most notable feature of Olbricht’s scholarship was the wide range of disciplines that he covered. At ACU, he taught courses in systematic theology, philosophy, and biblical studies. Throughout his academic career, he published major articles in communications, restoration history, and biblical studies. When the rhetorical criticism of biblical texts was introduced in the 1980s, Olbricht’s background in rhetoric and biblical studies made him an international leader in the developing discipline.

During the late 1960s, the school moved toward establishing a seminary program comparable to the Bachelor of Divinity offered at other institutions. The faculty and administration faced a problem in providing the proper nomenclature for the degree inasmuch as the terms “divinity” and “theology” were largely unacceptable to the constituency of Churches of Christ. After considerable debate, the administration decided to follow the Harvard nomenclature for the degree, awarding the S.T.B. (Scientiae Theologicae Baccalaureus). However, whereas the normal translation of the Latin at Harvard was “Bachelor of Theological Knowledge,” the translation provided at ACU was “Bachelor of Sacred Knowledge” (the genitive theologicae was rendered “sacred” rather than “theological” to avoid the use of the latter term). Although words such as “theology” had been used in an earlier era, this nomenclature was now unacceptable to many in Churches of Christ. Nevertheless, the standard seminary degree was first awarded in 1967, and the standard designation “Master of Divinity” was adopted in 1975.

37 During the 1970s most institutions changed the name of the degree to Master of Divinity.
38 The 1924 catalog lists Jesse P. Sewell as president with a teaching field of “theology and homiletics.” The catalog lists a “theology” division within the curriculum.
During the late 1960s ACU faculty were instrumental in writing the Living Word Commentary series, the first attempt to write a commentary of this scope since the Gospel Advocate Commentary series. The Living Word Commentary, published by Sweet Company, reflected the work of the new generation of scholars at ACU and other institutions. Under the editorial guidance of Everett Ferguson and Abraham Malherbe, authors included many ACU faculty members and recent alumni of the graduate program, including Earle McMillan, Anthony Ash, Robert Johnson, JW Roberts, Carl Spain, Carl Holladay, Pat Harrell, Michael Weed, and James W. Thompson. Although it was intended for lay readers and the conclusions on major critical issues were conservative, the series demonstrated an awareness of biblical scholarship and used the tools of historical criticism in order to describe the original meaning of the passage. For the first time in the noninstrumental Churches of Christ, a team of scholars from academic institutions collaborated for the production of a commentary series.

The rapid changes created a backlash in the late 1960s. Numerous preacher schools were founded to offer an alternative to a university education that was no longer insulated from the larger world of scholarship. Writers in the Firm Foundation expressed alarm and dissatisfaction with the changes and questioned the orthodoxy of the professors at ACU. In an article in Firm Foundation, Glenn Wallace suggested that the presence of the preacher schools presented a clear signal to colleges that the brotherhood was not satisfied with the kind of preachers being turned out by the colleges. He also took aim at the Living Word Commentary series, arguing that the writers were too young and too inexperienced for the job. Reuel Lemmons agreed:

Take a good look at the colleges among us. There is almost total dearth of fervent evangelists on their faculties. . . . Colleges seem to be no longer interested in producing Bible preachers; all they want to produce is “scholars.” Unless we return to a church trained, rather than college trained, ministry, the evangelistic spirit upon which the church grew may disappear.

Lemmons expressed further concern about the colleges in 1968:

One thing that bugs us is that some teachers relieved of their duties at one college because of unsoundness have been hired by others of our colleges whose administrations knew that they had been dismissed because of error in their teaching. Others have been retained for years on faculties when their unsoundness was fully known.

Wallace and Lemmons had expressed concern about the liberal tendencies of the new journal Mission and the Living Word Commentary. In 1968, JW Roberts wrote to defend ACC and his own participation in both endeavors. He reassured his readers that these projects should not reflect on Abilene Christian

College since ACC had no connection with them. “I value President Don Morris’s judgment, and I feel sure that if the charges being circulated should be proved, and if in his judgment the connection of those of us on either of these two projects who are employed by ACC should become detrimental to the college and the cause of Christ, that the situation would be dealt with in an appropriate manner.”

Roberts’s defense of his role in these new ventures reflected the growing antagonism between ACC and some of its constituency in Churches of Christ. As with the era of Klingman, the administration of Abilene Christian College feared the impact of critics during the late 1960s. As a result, new developments signaled the end of new initiatives in academic scholarship and the administration’s response to frequent attacks. Ian Fair recalls that he, as an older student, was invited to the president’s office in 1968 to discuss charges that were circulating against two of the faculty members. In the presence of two ministers who had brought their concerns about the Bible faculty, Fair was asked to report to the president whether he had heard any comments from two faculty members that might be construed as liberal or contrary to ACC’s historic positions. He was asked to report on what he had heard in the classes that might be disturbing. He responded negatively, indicating that the two classes and professors under discussion were two of his favorite classes and professors.

The college ultimately responded to the concerns about the content of the instruction and faculty participation on the board of Mission. President John Stevens encouraged faculty members to resign from the magazine’s board. Of the four ACU faculty members who were on the board of Mission, only JW Roberts refused to resign. Some faculty members circulated a statement of beliefs in order to assure the constituency of their soundness. One faculty member, Robert Johnson, rejected the creedal statement and resigned as a consequence. Abraham Malherbe, who was on leave when the creedal statement was initiated, left ACC in 1969 to join the faculty of Dartmouth College.

The 1960s marked a turbulent period throughout the United States. The developments in the Bible Department at Abilene Christian College reflected this time of change. Just as the Freeman era had ended with a period of stabilization, the end of the 1960s also brought a period of consolidation in which the college’s administration attempted to reassure its constituency in Churches of Christ. At the end of the decade, Paul Southern retired and was replaced by J. D. Thomas, who served as head of the department until 1978. The end of the 1960s —and of the chairmanship of Paul Southern—marked the end of the era of major initiatives.

43 See Thomas Olbricht, Hearing God’s Voice: My Life with Scripture in the Churches of Christ (Abilene, Texas: ACU Press, 1996), 335. Olbricht comments, “It would have been interesting to have seen how this conflict played itself out. Unfortunately, Roberts died of a heart attack in April 1973.”
In the following decades, most of the initiatives of the 1950s and 1960s remained in place. Under the influence of Professors Thomas Olbricht, John Willis, and Everett Ferguson, Abilene Christian University continued to educate ministers for the Churches of Christ and prepare students for doctoral work in biblical studies. Some of these students have had a major influence on international scholarship. Their story remains to be told.
Heirs of the biblical tradition have long attempted to derive from it principles of government transferable to the ever-changing realities of the political world. Accordingly, believers have used the Bible to defend everything from absolute monarchy to socialist utopias. “Thomas Hobbes, meet Norman Gottwald!” Since the Bible, if it is internally coherent, can hardly espouse all these forms of government (or the equally alien capitalist democracies), we must discover just how its various constituent texts do conceive of sovereignty.

This brief essay, dedicated to the estimable Ian Fair, examines one ancient Israelite discussion of sovereignty, namely, the kaleidoscope of images of kingship in the book of Job. The book’s attention to the issue has received less attention than it merits. While Job does not reflect discursively on kingship—no Israelite or Jewish text does before the Letter of Aristeas,1 which was under the influence of Hellenistic political philosophy—it does bear witness to the ongoing Israelite discussions of the nature and function of kingship, traces of which appear in biblical narrative (e.g., 1 Samuel 8–12), law (e.g., Deut 17:14–20), prophecy (many texts), and liturgy (e.g., Psalms 2, 20, 21, 45, 72, 101, 110, 132, and 144). The attitudes of these texts toward kingship, thus toward leaders in general, range from strident criticism in the prophets to unstinting adoration in some of the royal psalms. Most, however, accept the inevitability of monarchy and seek to check its excesses, both through law and through the valorization of competing loci of power, such as the priesthood (e.g., Deut 17:14–20).2 Like

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other ancient Near Eastern cultures, Israel experienced all types of royal behaviors, and its literature responds with comparable variety.

On this as on so many issues, Job fits no neat ideological category, though the book does dialogue with several voices within the Israelite tradition and indeed sits within the wisdom-oriented part of it. For the book’s author, kingship exposes the unsettledness of the human condition and thus signals the nature of divine sovereignty in a world in which humans play a small role. While for the creators of such texts as 2 Samuel 7 (and Psalm 89 *mutatis mutandis*) the stability of a monarchy (David’s) conclusively proves God’s care for the world, for the author of Job, the transience of kings and their creations proves the uncanny nature of providence. In the end, the book’s mercurial views of kingship serve a larger theological agenda. A number of scholars have pointed out that Job 29, in particular, uses royal imagery extensively, although no one, as far as I can tell, has attempted to explain how the book as a whole understands kingship or how that understanding might serve the book’s theological program. This study attempts to fill that gap.

**Kingship in Israelite and Ancient Near Eastern Wisdom**

To appreciate the achievement of the author of Job, one must first consider ancient Near Eastern collections of proverbs and admonitions, which frequently mention monarchs. Whether this reflects the *Sitz im Leben* of such wisdom or merely the ubiquity of governmental supervision and taxation remains unknown, although both the book of Proverbs and the roughly contemporaneous Aramaic text *Ahiqar*, which some Jews/Israelites (at least on Elephantine) read around the time of the writing of Job, may have served as guidebooks for prospective

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courtiers. These books offer practical advice to such persons (e.g., Prov 25:6-7; Ahiqar 100-103), or delicious send-ups of courtly pretensions (e.g., Prov 25:2), or critiques of royal abuse of power (Prov 16:12-14; cf. Psalm 101).

The range of sayings mirrors the complexities of power and the paradoxes it creates in the lives of those who enjoy it—or suffer under it. Lord Acton’s dictum, “Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely,” would not surprise the ancient sages. Like their counterparts among the prophets, the creators of proverbs knew well the risks and opportunities that kings (and leaders in general) pose to a society. They sought to equip their audience with the ability to understand and respond to royal actions and thereby to insure their own survival.

Kingship in MT Job

It is thus no surprise that the book of Job, steeped in Wisdom as it is, betrays a nuanced attitude toward kingship. However, the author achieves an unprecedented level of theoretical generalization when he abandons the task of giving advice to courtiers and tries to consider kingship in general. Moreover, the book’s shifting portrayal of monarchs is not random (as it apparently is in Proverbs). Rather, a subtle theological play of ideas takes place in which the author first decenters the readers’ confidence in kings and then reorients us to a new, more uneasy perspective.

In the MT of Job, the noun  nuru (“king”) appears eight times and the verb  naru (“to reign, become king”) once. Kings appear in the roles of builders (3:14) and warriors (15:24; 29:25), and as subjects of divine judgment (34:18).
and protection (36:7), all themes common to ancient Near Eastern treatments of monarchs. In cultures in Israel’s environment, kings acted in culturally prescribed ways that could be sanctioned by religious language. For example, a king built a temple in honor of a deity, who was thought to have commanded the construction. Or, conversely, a king who had gone to war with the blessing of a deity, obtained via divination, might lose the war, allegedly through the intervention of another, more powerful god. Cultures passed judgment on kings, theirs or others’, on the basis of a complex network of ideas and values, individual aspects of which a writer could deploy as needed. That is, the word “king” triggered for ancient persons a range of associations that a skilled author could manipulate in various ways. Thus “king as warrior” could imply “victor,” “triumph,” “booty,” “national prosperity,” and so on. It could also evoke images of “risk,” “defeat,” “subjugation,” and the whole range of negative experiences arising from warfare.

An author as incomparably gifted as the poet of the book of Job could manipulate these associations to great effect. Thus while the monarchs appear in the book in roles common to ancient Near Eastern depictions of them, the treatment of these roles in its theological reflection gives evidence of poetic and theological virtuosity. The pattern of usage follows the book’s general pattern, in which Job adumbrates one viewpoint, his friends the opposite, and Yahweh (apparently virtually equivalent to the voice of the narrator) a third. Let us examine each perspective in turn.

Job and the Endangered King

The speeches of the character Job depict kings in states of danger or failure, a portrayal that befits those speeches’ (but not those of the friends!) consistent use of the language of siege and warfare to describe the threat to Job, the innocent sufferer. That is, the Job speeches paradoxically present state power as a threat, and kings, not as the instruments of power, but as its victims.

The lament in Job 3:11–26, to begin, lists a series of persons disconnected from society, including stillborn infants and prisoners. Surprisingly, the first part


9 On the themes of warfare and siege in the speeches of Job (and the Psalms), see Peter Riede, Im Netz des Jägers: Studien der Feindmetaphorik der Individualpsalms (WMANT 85; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchen, 2000), esp. 59–63, 66–74.
of the list associates Job "with kings and counselors of the earth, the builders of ruins (יִשָּׁרֶהְנ)" for themselves." While ancient Near Eastern monarchs, like most other rulers, took pride in their construction activities (cf. Jer 22:14–16; the architecture of capitals such as Samaria and Jerusalem; the palace at Ramat Rahel), Job recognizes the futility of their work. If, as is likely, the book of Job comes from the period of the Persian Empire (539–332 B.C.E.), the book may have in mind this period's rebuilding of cities destroyed by the Babylonians in Palestine. A major feature of royal self-display in antiquity, represented by hundreds of inscriptions in all the major languages of the Near East, thus stands exposed as an exercise in futility. Not palaces do they build, but "ruins." These kings, far from projecting their desired image as guarantors of social and economic order, thus as recipients of divine favor, fall victim to the disorder that threatens all other human beings.

Paradoxically, however, Job contrasts his situation unfavorably to that of the disappointed kings, who at least no longer experience the hostility of an angry deity. While he does not necessarily see death (of kings or anyone else) as a positive good, a relief, the futility of the monarchs' building projects seems enviable in contrast to his own loss. Indeed, as Bruce Zuckerman puts it, chapter 3 is "Job's opening battle cry [is] ... his means of serving notice on God that this Righteous Sufferer has had enough." The mention of the kings fits into this cry because the author portrays Job as a near king (29:25) who has built for naught.

This theme of failure continues in the second Joban mention of kings in 12:18:

The discipline (יִשָּׁרֶהְנ) of kings he loosens (יְבִשֵּׂם), the loincloth (רָזוֹא) from their waists.

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10 For a defense of this reading, see David J. A. Clines, Job 1–20 (WBC 17; Dallas: Word, 1989), 72. Clines points out that Mesopotamian kings took pride in reconstructing ancient ruins. This would argue for understanding Job 3:14 as a double entendre: "kings seek to rebuild ruins, but they only fall into ruin again."

11 Israelite and Judahite kings during the Iron Age built monumental structures, by means of which they apparently sought to project their power and glory. For a recent summary of royal building activities in the Israelite kingdoms, see Rüdiger Schmitt, Bildhafte Herrschaftsrepräsentation im eisenzeitlichen Israel (AOAT 283; Münster: Ugarit, 2001), 139–57.


13 I cannot agree with the reading of William P. Brown, for whom Job envisions death as a "different form of existence, one without trouble and fear, as inclusive as it is liberating." This viewpoint seems anachronistic. (William P. Brown, The Ethos of the Cosmos: The Genesis of Moral Imagination in the Bible [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999], 323).

Chapter 12 as a whole mocks the friends’ theology, with verses 16–21 in particular focusing upon divine deportation of conquered magnates, thus on the ultimate divine rule over human history. Drawing on the experience of foreign conquest, particularly by the Assyrians and Babylonians, and perhaps the prophetic predictions of the demise of kings (e.g., Isa 14:3–23; Jer 22:10–30), the text again emphasizes the vulnerability of kings and their subordinates.

The translation of this verse is problematic. Commentators, uncomfortable with the MT’s מַסְרוֹ ("discipline, instruction") often repoint it as מָלַק ("fetter, band"). How can God strip moral formation or discipline off a king as one would a garment? Indeed, the noun “fetter, band” is used with the Piel of מָלַק in Ps 116:16 and Job 39:5. However, this translation would be surprising in Job 12:18 because the surrounding verses all speak of divine punishment of notables, not just of reversal of fortune, as the standard English translations and most commentators assume. These translations seem pedestrian in comparison to MT. “Loosing fetters” makes poorer poetry than “loosing discipline.” Moreover, the idea of being “clothed” with virtues or vices appears frequently in the Hebrew Bible. For example, one may wear מַעַלְתָּה ("shame"; Job 8:22), "righteousness, loyalty" (נָדָא; Job 29:14), and “glory” (נְבֵי; Job 40:10), to take only a few examples. It would thus not be too surprising to find a king wearing “discipline” or having it stripped off him as the deity removes him from power.

The third appearance of kings in the Joban speeches occurs in 29:25. Concluding a summary of his past behavior as protector of the weak, a kingly role according to Psalm 101, Job speaks of himself presiding as king over מַעַלְתָּה ("head") (Ps 101:8). Like the king who harries the wicked out of the land in Ps 101:8, Job threatens evildoers.

Yet, as chapter 30 makes clear, this situation has been reversed. Dangerous Job (as the wicked formerly knew him) is now endangered, having lost all status and thus the support of his retainers. Although he has fulfilled the obligations that monarchs owe their vulnerable subjects, he has received no commensurate blessings. Indeed, the wicked have returned to power and now mock him. His times are out of joint, his confidence in the basic justice of the cosmos shaken.

To summarize, then, the speeches of the character Job play on basic features of ancient Near Eastern kingship—the king as builder, sage, and protector of the...
poor—to highlight his decline and, therefore, the basic absurdity of the cosmos and all human activities within it. While only 29:25 calls Job a king, the other pericopes under consideration hint at his regal status. But if he is a sort of king, he is only one that has received divine punishment, however unjustly.

**The Friends and the Dangerous King**

In contrast to this view both of the character Job and of kings—thus of the cosmos itself as a place of chaos—the speeches of the friends construct a world in which justice reigns and those reigning are just. Often the speeches of the other characters in the book of Job play with the same motifs as those of the book’s hero, now trying one viewpoint, now another. Thus they offer alternative views of kingship as well.

In Job 15:24, Eliphaz describes the fate of the wicked who has “stretched out his hand against El, tried to be a hero against Shaddai” (v. 25). “Distress and calamity” (יהב תַּנָּבָה) beset him as if they were a king “ready for battle.” In an offhanded way, though not a “strange” one as Clines claims, Job’s friend thus evokes the function of the king to punish the wicked. The king appears, briefly, in a powerful role. Moreover, Eliphaz reminds Job that kings can reduce cities to ruin (v. 28), echoing the earlier depiction of the king as builder (as in 3:14), but with a new twist. The king who protects order demolishes the settlements of the wicked, thus eliminating their threat to the sovereignty of justice and order in the cosmos.

Bildad extends this view of royal prosecution of the wicked in 18:14: “He [the wicked] is dragged from his tent, his shelter; they march him off to the king of terrors.” While the precise referent and background of the possibly mythological “king of terrors” (יהָוָה בָּטֵן), if indeed that is the correct translation, remain elusive, the idea that a monarch menaces the wicked is clear enough. Indeed, this is a king’s basic job (see Psalm 101). For Bildad, as for Eliphaz, monarchs guarantee order and the basic justice of human life.

**Elihu and the Endangered King**

The last introduced friend of the book, Elihu, offers a more complex view still. He agrees with the other friends that God’s justice operates in a system of rewards and punishments and that glitches in the system, if they are not illusions, demonstrate the inscrutability of the divine will, not flaws in humans’ basic understanding of it. At the same time, he concedes the vulnerability of kings to God’s judgment, but sees this not as evidence of the absurdity of the cosmos (as Job does in 3:14 and 12:18) but as testimony to the deity’s basic fairness. Thus

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18 Clines, Job 1–20, 343.
19 Or “terrors march him off to the king.” On the translation of 14b, see ibid., 406, and references there.
34:18—"He calls a king 'villain'/he indicts princes"—functions as part of a defense of El's sovereignty against Job's charges of malfeasance in chapter 12. This sovereignty allows God to unmake bad kings (34:30). Moreover, he can seat the righteous next to kings (36:7). Monarchy thus becomes a sign of God's beneficence, not of divine threat to the wicked.

Behind their verbosity and simplistic theology, the Elihu speeches serve an important purpose in the final form of Job. They allow the author to nuance the views of both Job and his so-called friends, underlining the flexibility with which one may interpret kingship and its place in the larger governance of the world. They highlight Yahweh's ultimate sovereignty and seek to vindicate the deity of charges of injustice. While they do not precisely anticipate Yahweh's reflections on kingship, they do hint at the wider vision of chapter 41.

_Leviathan as King_

The larger vista at which Elihu hints opens wide with the final appearance of a king in the book. Job 41:26 concludes Yahweh's portrait of Leviathan with, "He scans everything high/he is king over all the sons of pride (יִרְשׁוֹת הַנְּצָר)." Job 28:8 had earlier introduced this brood of creatures as one famous for its ability to traverse hard roads but inability to tread the hardest one, the one leading to wisdom. This gaggle of animals is apparently identical to the menagerie that Yahweh introduces in chapters 38-41 as proof both of his benevolent care for the world beyond humankind and of the utter smallness of Job and his fellow human beings. The animals are both vulnerable and religious—the ravens' young pray to God for food in Job 38:41—thus like Job himself. As William Brown puts it,

> Yahweh's presentation of zoological exotica is intended to earn Job's respect. . . . He sees himself "small" before these untamable creatures, yet at the same time finds confirmation in his own struggle and role within the arena of culture and community.21

If humankind in its struggle to make sense of suffering and joy shares this task with the animal kingdom, as Yahweh's speeches in Job 38-41 imply, then it is altogether fitting that Leviathan, the sea monster exemplifying the fierce beauty of the world, "red in tooth and claw," should haunt the author of Job. Not only does his hero curse himself by summoning "those who rouse Leviathan" (Job 3:8), but he contrasts himself with the related sea monster קֶלֶת in Job 7:12 (this beast occupies the same genus as Leviathan in Ps 74:13-14 and Isa 27:1). Yahweh, he believes, treats him as though he were the cosmogonic monster who must be defeated at all costs.22 The divine hunter, one who plays the role of a

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20 With the versions, read אֲלָכָה; MT's he interrogative makes little sense here.
21 Brown, _Ethos of the Cosmos_, 375.
22 Indeed, this is part of a leitmotif in the Joban speeches: God the (royal) lion hunter stalks Job (Job 10:16). This latter text plays off a common ancient Near Eastern notion of lion hunting as a sign of royal prowess and fitness for rule. Again, the reflection on
king, appears here, ironically anticipating Yahweh’s comparison of his abilities as a hunter (thus defender of cosmic order) with those of Job in chapter 41. Leviathan, in short, is Job’s opposite number and a proof of his marginality in the structure of the cosmos. The taming of Leviathan demonstrates Yahweh’s sovereignty and beneficence, since without such domestication, no life could exist. 23

At the same time, Leviathan exists as a proof of the triviality of the achievements of human kings. Ancient Near Eastern kings liked to portray themselves as hunters, builders, warriors, and priests. Yet no one can hunt Leviathan or conquer him. No one built the world that he rules (except God). His worship (assuming that, like the ravens of Job 38:41, he prays) depends on no human. Leviathan is thus king and antiking, and his story marks, as Leo Perdue puts it, “the deconstruction of the metaphor of ruler.” 24

Conclusion: Job’s Theology of Sovereignty

What, then, does the author of Job think about the nature and limits of human sovereignty? This brief survey of the book’s use of the single root מנה has uncovered an intricate network of perspectives on humans’ paramount rulers, kings. The character Job emphasizes their vulnerability as proof of Yahweh’s tyrannical grip on the world. The friends understand kings as harmonizers of the divine and human worlds. The Yahweh speeches, on this as on every other issue they address, reframe the question set by the human characters’ discussions. “Let us speak,” God says from the whirlwind, “of the uncanny king whose very existence makes human sovereignty a mockery.”

In other words, the book’s discussion of human kingship is really about something else, divine kingship, God’s governance of the world. As so often in the book, the surface level of the discourse points to another, higher level of discourse. The conversation on divine kingship—though Yahweh is never called מנה!—first appears in the interview with the Satan in chapters 1–2 and concludes with the restitution that God makes to Job in chapter 42. The question with which Job toys is, “Is God a tyrant?” This charge takes various forms and cites as evidence not only Job’s misery (which chapters 1–2 would have us believe God caused since the Satan is merely an instrument of divine testing) but also the nobles’ abuse of the poor and the (causally linked?) success of the wicked (chap. 24). Yahweh defends himself of these charges—though without denying them—by pointing to his care for the nonhuman world and suppression sovereignty, human and divine, takes a new turn.


of the forces of Chaos, thus implying either that the present suffering of humans
serves some unspecified cosmic purpose or, more likely, is simply beyond divine
control at the moment.

Either way, Job, like the book of Lamentations or Psalm 89 or Jer 20:7–18,
among many other biblical texts, views divine sovereignty as an unalterable fact
that is nevertheless not unproblematic for human beings. Yahweh’s universe
does not operate according to human moral norms, yet humans are called to be
moral and responsible. Piety does not insure so much as physical safety, much
less status and wealth, yet piety is an operating principle of all the creation (even
the ravens!), hence Job’s sacrifice for his friends at the end of the book. Perhaps,
as Melanie Köhlmoos has argued, the divine speeches allow Job to embrace
Yahweh and the creation simultaneously as things that concern him. Still, this
remains difficult. True piety demands that we recognize that human suffering
and prosperity are undeserved, yet are the result of divine action, action that
cannot always easily be described as “grace.”

All of this speaks to Israelite notions of human leadership as well. Like the
Deuteronomi(sti)c circles with whom it is often contrasted, the book of Job holds
no illusions about the capacities of leaders to work disinterestedly for the
common weal. Yet the book does offer room for a provisional respect for such
leaders and summon them to be pious and, like Job, to care for the poor and
vulnerable (chapter 31), as all humans must do. The book, then, is one for an
Israel come of age, shorn of its delusions, but living in hope.

Finally, one wonders why the book of Job was worried about kings, even
granted that its ultimate subject is Yahweh. If the book comes, as most scholars
assume, from the Achaemenid period, it is tempting to try to connect it with the
failure of the Israelite/Jewish community to find a solution to political depen­
dence. One thinks of the apparent disappointment of Zerubbabel’s messianic
aspirations (see Hag 2:20–23), or of the silence of the era’s great historiographic
works (the Deuteronomistic History, finished just prior to the Persian Empire,
and the Chronicler’s History, finished perhaps near the end of the Persian period)
on the restoration of monarchy, or of Ezekiel’s demotion of the monarch to the
rank of “prince” (Ezek 44:3). The author of Job holds no brief for kings, human
or divine, believing that his is the era of Leviathan. Thomas Hobbes would feel
at home.

25 Melanie Köhlmoos, Das Auge Gottes: Textstrategie im Hiobbuch (Forschungen
zum Alten Testament 25; Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1999), esp. 352.
26 On which, see Mayer Gruber, “Human and Divine Wisdom in the Book of Job,”
in Boundaries of the Ancient Near Eastern World: A Tribute to Cyrus Gordon (eds. Meir
Lubetski, Claire Gottlieb, and Sharon Keller; JSOTSS 273; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic
Appendix: βασιλεύς, "King," in LXX Job

While the MT of Job uses royal behavior as a window into the complexity of the divine governance of the cosmos, the LXX significantly reconfigures the presentation of monarchs. The differences between the two texts present a problem, not for textual criticism, but for literary (higher) criticism. In general, the LXX of Job is a markedly abbreviated, perhaps bowdlerized version of the Hebrew. Several lines that include διονυσία appear in the Greek tradition in the asterisked materials (Job 29:25; 36:7), and the same is true of Job 34:30’s βασιλεύς (“to be king”) = βασιλεύς. Job 15:24 reads in Greek στρατηγός (“general”) instead of βασιλεύς. In other words, the Old Greek unravels the complex tapestry of signification that the MT presents. Later recensions of the LXX correct towards (Proto-) MT in ways that are too complex to discuss here. In Greek, the three friends do not counter Job’s view of kingship (except perhaps in Job 18:14, a verse presenting its own problems).

On the other hand, the Septuagint translation tradition does recast the book’s principle characters as monarchs. Additions to 2:11 and 42:17 make Eliphas basileus of the Temanites, Baldad tyrannos of the Sauchaeans, and Sophar basileus of the Minaeans. Even more dramatically, Job LXX adds after 42:17 the following notice:

This is translated ἐξηγεμόταξα out of the Aramaic book: In the land of the inhabitants of Ausitis in the regions of Idumaea and Arabia, a certain person named Jobab reigned. Taking an Arab wife, he engendered a son named Ennon, and his father was Zare, grandson of Esau; and his mother was Bosorras, so he was five generations removed (πέμπτον) from Abraham.

The text then inserts Gen 36:31–35, the list of Edomite kings including this Jobab, with the modification, after Balak [the MT adds Bela, perhaps the second-millennium Transjordanian ruler Balu’a known from archaeology] was Jobab, the one called Job.”

This expansion of the Hebrew text is the result of several interpretive moves, notably the equating of two biblical characters with similar-sounding names, especially in Greek. The creator of the LXX Job, perhaps drawing on earlier

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28 For a discussion of the relationship between OG and R, see Gentry, Asterisked Material, 382–493.

tradition ("the Aramaic book"), wrestled with the question, later widespread, of why a non-Israelite merited a biblical book. The proffered solution is that Job was a descendant of Abraham, thus a near-Israelite. This reading would be compelling during the second and first centuries B.C.E., the time of the Old Greek translation of Job, an era when Idumaeans were converting to Judaism en masse (as, most famously, with the case of the family of Antipater, father of Herod the Great), though not without opposition (see Sir 50:26). This reading also dates Job, thus staking out a position in a larger intra-Jewish debate on the correct chronological placement of the book. (Indeed, the LXX tradition sometimes updates the Hebrew text to account for religious or even political developments, an indication that in the two or three centuries before Christ, biblical texts remained fluid.) More to the point, it locates Job firmly within the Israelite, monotheistic tradition without serious distortion of the plain sense of that book or the rest of the emerging biblical canon.

The LXX's metamorphosis of Job into a monarch results from an interpretation of certain features of the Hebrew text, perhaps most obviously the royal language in chapter 29. Without exploring the far-reaching implications of this interpretive move in later ancient and medieval treatments of the book, we should consider the possible effects of the move on a community reading the LXX version of Job. That study, alas, must await another occasion.

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30 See the opening chapters of Peter Richardson, *Herod: King of the Jews and Friend of the Romans* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999).

31 A very late crystallization of the debate (though with much earlier texts included) appears in *b.Baba Bathra* 15a.

32 For an interesting case, the modification of the oracle against Tyre in Isaiah 23 LXX to include the Roman destruction of Carthage in 146 BCE, see Arie van der Kooij, *The Oracle at Tyre: The Septuagint of Isaiah XXIII as Version and Vision* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), esp. 186–87.

33 See n. 3 above.

THE USE OF PSALMS IN THE SHAPING OF A TEXT: PSALM 2:7 AND PSALM 110:1 IN HEBREWS 1

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In both obvious and unobtrusive ways, the Jewish Scriptures contributed to the literary and theological shaping of the NT. Whether by an explicit quotation or by a faint allusion, early Christians found valuable the communication of their faith through creative appeal to the Scriptures of ancient Israel.¹

Among the writings of the Hebrew canon exerting the most influence on the NT are the Psalms.² The ubiquitous citations, allusions, and echoes from the Psalms suggest the observation that finds near consensus among those who study the phenomenon of the NT's use of the Hebrew Bible: The Psalms have influenced the NT more than any other book of the Hebrew canon.³

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¹ The terms “Old Testament,” “Hebrew Scriptures,” and “Hebrew canon” refer to ancient Israel’s Scripture. NT writers, of course, did not regard their scriptural heritage from ancient Israel as an “Old Testament.” Nor is reference to the “Hebrew Scriptures” a fully appropriate designation since for textual reasons it is more accurate to say that early Christians’ use of Scripture was often “septuagintal.” However, these designations and others will be employed to refer to ancient Israel’s Scripture.

² Listings of Psalm usage in the NT appear in Kurt Aland et al., eds., The Greek New Testament (United Bible Societies, 3d ed. [corrected]; Stuttgart, 1983), 897–911. Quotations from at least forty psalms appear in the NT with some eighty-four different verses cited. Added to these numerous citations are hundreds of NT allusions and verbal parallels to characteristic psalmic words or phrases. Some disagreement arises in delineating between a citation and an allusion. Generally, a citation is identified by an introductory formula or by parallels in diction and form that by reason indicate that the phrases cannot be considered merely an allusion.

³ Henry Shires, for example, finds at least seventy cases in the NT where a portion of a psalm is quoted with an introductory formula, sixty more quotations with no introduction, and an additional two hundred twenty instances of an identifiable reference to a psalm. Shires concludes: “The New Testament has been influenced by Psalms more than any other book of the OT.” Henry Shires, Finding the Old Testament in the New (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), 126.
The Psalms manifest this pervasive impression upon the NT in at least two unmistakable ways. First, they exert a strong imprint upon the literary forms of the NT. Psalmic forms were adapted and imitated as they became congenial to incipient Christian expression. This literary influence undoubtedly shapes some of the hymnic, doxological, and liturgical forms of the NT. The spontaneous and direct use of characteristic phraseology, idioms, and concepts from the Psalms in the NT is particularly evident in the hymns of Luke or the doxologies in the Pauline writings. The book of Revelation, which has no formal citations from Psalms, literally abounds with characteristic psalmic phraseology.

Second, the NT writers employed the Psalms for theological purposes. Theological affirmations made in the Psalms were contemporized in the NT to support its proclamation. The Psalms provided a conceptual and theological framework that aided the task of communicating the Christian message in a language and an exegetical style familiar to its audience. Some of the Psalms were of particular importance for the proclamation of the early church and the creation of a new Christian literature.\(^4\) H. J. Kraus expressed it well in his seminal work on the *Theology of the Psalms*, “Anyone who explores the nuances of the ways in which the OT Psalms are used in the NT will be amazed at the ways in which Israel’s songs of prayer and praise were alive and present in the early church.”\(^5\)

Of the Psalms the NT used for theological purposes, two of the most prominent were Psalm 2 and Psalm 110. As royal psalms, both coronation hymns were employed in the Christian community to reflect on the identity of Jesus, to affirm the relative status of Jesus as the Davidic king, and to exalt Jesus as the very Son of God.

Both psalms originally sounded the theme of triumph over the nations and their rulers by God’s anointed king. As a “son,” the king was portrayed as the heir of God. The two psalms depict potential threats against God’s anointed, the futility of such proposed rebellion, and the defeat of the hostile nations. The NT writers claimed and contemporized these conceptions to describe the work of Jesus and, especially, to formulate language celebrating Christ’s exaltation.

Specifically, Psalm 2 ascribes divine sonship to the Davidic king, makes extensive use of the theology of kingship, and issues the cry of defiance against those who would dare to rebel against Yahweh’s King. The psalm is cited in both Acts and Hebrews (Acts 4:25–26; 13:33, Heb 1:3; 5:5) and is extensively echoed elsewhere in the NT.

Psalm 110 is one of the references in the OT most frequently used by the NT. The two phrases from Psalm 110 most theologically provocative for NT

\(^4\) The Psalms most frequently applied in the NT are 2, 8, 22, 34, 69, 78, 89, 110, and 118.

writings are verse 1, referring to a session at the right hand of God, and verse 4, which mentions the priesthood of Melchizedek. Psalm 110 is generally regarded as the only literary source from the pre-Christian period that articulates either conception. Citations are found in the Synoptics (Matt 22:44; 26:64; Mark 12:36; 14:62; Luke 20:42-43; 22:69), Acts (2:34-35), and Hebrews (1:13; 5:6; 7:17, 21), while allusions to the psalm are numerous.

Of the NT writings employing Psalms 2 and 110, the book of Hebrews is conspicuous for its reliance on both. As a “word of exhortation” (13:22), Hebrews consists of a series of reflections on a variety of OT texts. Although the writer of Hebrews also draws heavily from the Pentateuch, primary support for the Christology of Hebrews comes almost entirely from the Psalms, with Psalms 2 and 110 in the forefront.

The first chapter of Hebrews is an exceptional example of the literary and theological significance of both Psalms 2 and 110 for the entire document. As a prelude anticipating the message of exhortation that follows and that argues for the relative superiority of the work of Christ, Hebrews 1 encapsulates many of the themes emerging later in the book.

As invariably acknowledged, this first chapter contains two literary constituents. The first textual unit, commonly designated by a term used in classical oration, “exordium,” consists of verses 1-4 and gives expression to a cluster of christological conceptions. This prologue, or overture, precedes a second textual unit in verses 5-13 consisting of a string of citations from the OT, extensively but not exclusively emanating from the Psalms. This textual unit, often identified as a “catena,” or series of citations, functions to contrast the transcendent dignity of the enthroned son with the subordinate status of angels.

In analyzing the shape and the connection between these two literary units, the exordium and catena of Hebrews 1, interpreters commonly observe that Ps 110:1 assumes the major thematic and connecting role. George W. Buchanan’s commentary, for example, is well known for persuasively advocating this view, suggesting that Psalm 110 was the primary text for Hebrews and that the allusion in 1:3 “sets the stage for the rest of the document,” while the citation in 1:13 “echoes the ‘punch line’ of the introductory section.” Even interpreters who

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6 Quotations from the Pentateuch include some eleven citations from ten different passages and forty-one other allusions.

7 See Richard Longenecker (Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975], 158–85) for a discussion of the phenomenon of OT quotations in Hebrews as well as the exegetical presuppositions employed. Eighteen quotations from eleven different passages in the Psalms appear in Hebrews. With the exception of references to 2 Sam 7:14, Deut 32:43, Isa 8:17–18, and Jer 31:31–34, christological explanations in Hebrews are drawn entirely from the Psalms.

8 George Wesley Buchanan, To the Hebrews: Translation, Comments, and Conclusions (AB; Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1972), 8, 23.
moderate this view describe Ps 110:1 as the rhetorical frame of Hebrews 1, with allusion and citation forming an inclusio in 1:3, 13.9

While the prominence of Ps 110:1 in Hebrews 1 is undeniable, this analysis will suggest that Psalm 2:7 shares an equally conspicuous role in the literary and theological framing of the chapter. Moreover, as used in the first chapter of Hebrews, both Psalm 2 and Psalm 110 serve as precursors for the central theological themes in the epistle as a whole.

The Exordium of Hebrews 1:1–4

The consummate rhetorical style of the opening four verses of Hebrews is hard to miss, as the term “exordium” would indicate.10 Verbal allusions to Psalms 2 and 110 appear in a series of skillfully arranged affirmations concerning Christ. Contemplation of Psalms 2 and 110 prompt the framing of the core of the passage and much of the imagery of the exordium.

The christological reflection in the exordium begins in verse 2a as the writer contrasts the relationship of God’s word in the past to his revelation in the “last days” revealed “in a son.” The appearance of the term “son”11 in 1:2a is pivotal and provides a major grammatical and theological pause in the passage as it introduces a series of christological affirmations concerning the son that continue throughout the exordium.12 Scholars differ in itemizing these affirmations, divided principally on the issue of whether 1:4 is a continuation of the string of affirmations or whether it is a transition statement leading to the comparison between Jesus and angels depicted in the catena.13 Although 1:4 terminates the


10 William L. Lane, Hebrews 1-8 (WBC 47a; Dallas: Word, 1991), 5–6; Harold W. Attridge (The Epistle to the Hebrews [Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989], 36) even suggests that the rhetorical artistry of the exordium “surpasses that of any other portion of the New Testament.”

11 The anarthrous use of “huios” also appears in 1:5b in allusion to 2 Sam 7:14 following citation of Psalm 2:7. “A son” also occurs in 3:6, 5:8, and 7:28.

12 J. P. Meier, “Structure and Theology of Hebrews 1:1–14,” Biblica 66 (1985): 171, has noted the change of focus beginning in 1:2a on “son,” which is followed by a carefully ordered list of christological designations. He observes that a caesura, both christological and rhetorical in nature, belongs at the end of 1:2a.

13 Meier finds seven statements concerning Christ, beginning with 1:2a and including 1:4, although he must encapsulate phrases in both 1:3a and 1:4, describing them as one thought. He strains to find a sevenfold symmetry in 1:1–4 that corresponds to the sevenfold citation of the catena (ibid., 171–87). Both F. F. Bruce (The Epistle to the Hebrews [NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964], 3–9) and J. H. Davies (A Letter to Hebrews [CBC; London: Cambridge University Press, 1967], 19–20) restrict the
exordium, it returns to the introductory thought of 1:1–2a by repeating the relative superiority of God’s word in a son. The shift from prophets (1:1) to angels (1:4) and the ensuing concern to show the superiority of the Son over the angels in the catena following verse 4 argue for understanding 1:4 as transitional in character. If so, the sequence of christological affirmations defining the “son” ends with 1:3 and the exaltation of Jesus at the “right hand of majesty on high,” a statement alluding to Psalm 110:1.

Therefore, the literary unit of Hebrews 1:1–4 includes the following structural elements: first, the initial affirmation that God, who has spoken formerly in the prophets, lastly has spoken in a “son” (1:1–2a); second, the series of affirmations demonstrating the exalted status of this son and final agent (1:2b–3); and third, the transitional affirmation introducing the superiority of this “son” over angels (1:4).

The middle segment, or christological core, of the exordium is structurally framed by allusions to Psalms 2:7 and 110:1. Although the latter allusion to Psalm 110:1 is widely accepted, the initial echo of Psalm 2:7 is not commonly observed. However, certain clues indicate the presence of an echo of Psalm 2:7 as the term “son” introduces the core of the exordium.

First is the obvious semantic connection to Ps 2:7 found in the term “son,” although this word alone might not warrant hearing an echo if other evidence proved meager. However, several additional parallels to Psalm 2 resonate in this text. The “appointment” of the son in 1:2b corresponds with the nature of the “decree” in Ps 2:7a as God announces the investiture of royal sonship on the king. This “appointment” corresponds to the protocol bestowing authority on a new king in Psalm 2. Further, the appointment of the Son as the “heir of all things” in 1:2b connects with the same image from Ps 2:8 as the king’s universal dominion is declared. While the inheritance of Psalm 2 involves all nations and “the ends of the earth,” the writer of Hebrews adapts the conception, applying it to the son who is appointed universal heir of all creation.

The case for seeing “son” in Heb 1:2a as an allusion to Psalm 2:7 finds additional support from the wider context of Hebrews 1, which places Psalm 2:7 first in the chain of references following the exordium. Further, the distinctive influence of Ps 2:7 throughout the document would suggest that it is echoed in 1:2a to introduce a core christological affirmation in Hebrews—Jesus as “son.”

The linkage of Ps 110:1 with the end of this sequence (1:3) as Jesus is seated “at the right hand of the Majesty on high” is manifestly recognized. Although the affirmations to 1:2a–3, with 1:4 serving as a transitional verse.

14 Compare the same motif from Psalm 2 as employed in the parable of the husbandmen in the Synoptics (Mark 12:1–12 and parallels), where the “son” is also identified as “heir.” In the parable, the son is contrasted to “servants.” Hebrews contrasts the son with angels, who are identified as “ministering servants” (1:14).
detection of an allusion is warranted, actually less commends this echo than hearing Ps 2:7 earlier in the exordium. The justification for identifying an allusion to Ps 110:1 depends on several factors: the similarity of language in describing a session at God’s right hand, the citation and allusion to the psalm elsewhere in Hebrews (1:13; 8:1; 10:12; and 12:2), and early Christian tradition in general. Both Heb 1:2a with its association to Ps 2:7 and Heb 1:3d with its association to Ps 110:1 employ the language of exaltation, frequently in view in early Christian uses of these psalmic references.\footnote{Lane, Hebrews, 11–12, suggests that the reference to “son” in 1:2b alludes to the royal son of Psalm 2, while the echo of Psalm 110 in 1:3c alludes to the royal priest of Psalm 110, based on the phrase preceding the session at the right hand, “he made purification for sins.” The connection of Psalm 110 to the priesthood of Jesus becomes apparent in Hebrews 5–7, and the emphasis on Psalm 110 may prepare the reader for acceptance of Christ’s eternal priesthood based on appeal to the psalm. The allusion to Psalm 110 in Heb 1:3, however, is clearly to Ps 110:1, not 110:4.}

The allusion to Ps 110:1 in Heb 1:3 entices the interpreter to identify the “more excellent name” of 1:4 as pointing to the designation “Lord.” Ps 110:1 is widely recognized as a vehicle through which early Christians could call Jesus “Lord,” and probably the use of the christological title “Lord” is associated with the popularity of Psalm 110.

However, Hebrews does not appeal to Psalm 110 for the designation of Jesus as “Lord,” although the connection is implicit. Further, the transitional nature of verse 4 introducing the superiority of the “son” over angels makes it likely that the more excellent “name” is to be understood as “son.”\footnote{So Attridge, Hebrews, 47; Lane, Hebrews, 17; Buchanan, To the Hebrews, 6.} This is the designation that has been emphatically introduced in 1:2a, emphasized by the citation in 1:5, and featured in the comparison to angels that follows. Moreover, the name has been “inherited”\footnote{Compare the cognate noun and verb in 1:2, 4: “heir (klérōnomen) of all things” with “the name he has obtained” (kekleronomeken).} just as all things have been inherited by the “son” in 1:2.”\footnote{So Attridge, Hebrews, 47; Lane, Hebrews, 17; Buchanan, To the Hebrews, 6.}

If the core of the exordium is framed by echoes to Psalms 2 and 110 as this analysis proposes, what impetus might have prompted this formulation? Perhaps Heb 1:2–3 introduced a fragment of an early confession\footnote{So J. T. Sanders, The New Testament Christological Hymns, SNTSMS 15 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 19–20.} or liturgical tradition,\footnote{So J. T. Sanders, The New Testament Christological Hymns, SNTSMS 15 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 19–20.} although these suggestions seem to have found only limited support. A liturgical connection may be implied by the grammar of the allusion to Ps 110:1 in 1:3,
which does not parallel the citation of the same passage in 1:13. Although the evidence is not conclusive, the passage surely indicates the kinds of christological conclusions the community may have confessed and also evidence of the probable influence of the royal psalms upon liturgy, especially that part of the liturgy focusing on the exaltation of Jesus.

Whatever the origin of the affirmations in the exordium, the literary shaping seems to reflect a high degree of rhetorical creativity. A writer as skilled as the author of Hebrews could easily have shaped from his own reflection this treatment of the two psalms, which assumes such a central role in the document. Both echoes in the exordium of Heb 1:1–4 to Psalms 2 and 110 may be carefully intended thematic precursors for the use of the two psalms in the catena that follows and to the christological conclusions concerning “son” and “priest” based on the same two psalms later in the document (chap. 5–7).

Whether the language of 1:2a–3 derives from liturgy or the writer’s own rhetorical skill, the writer frames the description of the “son” with references beginning with allusion to Ps 2:7 and ending with allusion to Ps 110:1. Both psalms are employed in accord with the stream of tradition that uses the royal psalms to exalt the son whom God appointed.

In addition to the literary framing, these two psalms also function prominently in the theological formulation of the exordium. In christological terms, the core of the exordium begins and ends with the language of exaltation by means of allusion to these two royal psalms. The affirmations intervening, perhaps connected to Jewish traditions that celebrated Wisdom as God’s agent of creation, glory, and reconciliation, are a series of statements that encapsulate the entire Christ event. The high christology in the affirmations announce the son’s role in creation, eternal nature and glory, and secure role as redeemer.

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21 David M. Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1973), 35–41, affirms the liturgical connection by noting the use of the dative *ek deksia* in Heb 1:3 in contrast to the use of the genitive “*ek deksion*” as Ps 110:1 is quoted from the Old Greek version in Heb 1:13. Further, all other allusions to Ps 110:1 in Hebrews (8:1; 10:12; 12:2) use the dative, which may suggest that all the allusions are based on a liturgical confession rather than the Greek text of the psalm. However, the formal criteria for recognizing liturgical fragments are inconclusive; thus caution may be warranted in classifying the passage as liturgical.


23 Meier, “Structure and Theology of Hebrews 1:1–14,” 176–88. As noted earlier, Meier does include 1:4 in the sequence of christological designations, the fourth verse being “the result of the exaltation.” However, his theological “ring structure” beginning and ending with exaltation could be described as complete at 1:3 with the reference to Christ enthroned at the right hand of God. Meier has argued convincingly that the theology of 1:2–4 moves from the exaltation as the starting point (through explication of Ps 2:7–8), is followed by the christological affirmations involving creation, eternal existence, death and purification of sins, and then ends with exaltation as the goal (with
Thus the influence of Psalm 2 and Psalm 110 within the exordium of Heb 1:1–4 and particularly the christological core of verse 2a–3 is conspicuous. The allusions provide a literary frame surrounding the affirmations concerning “a son.” Additionally, they provide theological framing for the christology of the exordium as it begins and ends with the exaltation of the Son, appointed heir of all things, seated at the right hand of God.

The Catena of Hebrews 1:5–13

The use of Ps 2:7 and Ps 110:1 also is apparent in the catena24 of Heb 1:5–13, a chain of seven citations listed to demonstrate the superiority of Christ over angels. The scriptural citations in the catena stem from a Greek version closely resembling the Septuagint. The citations include five texts from the Psalms as well as two others from 2 Sam 7:14 and Deut 32:43.25 The final verse of the chapter (1:14) is not considered a part of the catena as it makes an exegetical comment on Ps 104:4, quoted in 1:7, and provides transition to the warning issued in 2:1–4.

The form of this material resembles the florilegium, or chains of Scripture found at Qumran,26 and may indicate that the author used a similar traditional collection here.27 Although evidence is meager to substantiate the existence of a testimonia hypothesis as advanced by Rendall Harris, the Qumran florilegium (anthology) indicates that collections of textual extracts were familiar in the religious milieu of the time. The prospect that early Christians also produced works of this genre seems possible and even likely. If relying on such testimonia, the writer does not seem to have replicated the list without modification and perhaps adaptation to christological concerns.

What is most glaring about the structural ordering of the citations is that they begin with Ps 2:7 and end with Ps 110:1, the same two texts that dominate the exordium. The literary shaping of the exordium is duplicated in the catena by the parallelism of the tandem references to Ps 2:7 and Ps 110:1 beginning and ending both literary units. The two allusions framing the core of the exordium also function through their citation as the borders of the catena. The fact that

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Ps 110:1 as background.)

24 The term “catena” can refer technically to “chains” of commentary that accompany the biblical text. However, the term is used generally to refer to a series of quotations or sayings, as it is employed here to refer to the list of quotations in Heb 1:5–13.

25 In order, the passage quotes from Ps 2:7; 2 Samuel 7:14 (v. 5); Deut 32:43 (v. 6); Ps 104:4 (v. 7); Ps 45:6, 7 (v. 8–9); Ps 102:25–27 (v. 10–12); and Ps 110:1 (v. 13).

26 4QFlor and 4QTestim.

27 Attridge, Hebrews, 50.
both 1:5 and 1:13 begin with the same rhetorical question, “to what angel did God ever say,” suggests that an inclusio is intended.  

From a theological perspective, the chain of OT citations in Heb 1:5–13 provides support for the relative superiority of the son over angels, as introduced by the transitional verse (1:4). Whatever may have prompted the immediate concern about angels in Hebrews 1, Christ’s preeminence over them is affirmed. A contrast is drawn to show the eminence of the “son” over all beings, especially angels since they were connected with the mediation of God’s word “in the past.”

Although some have attempted to find an exact sevenfold symmetry between the seven citations and the christological affirmations in the exordium, this approach strains to find parallels in the exordium and must resort to phrases outside its core. However, a general symmetry is apparent as the Scriptures cited in the catena at least approximate the christological affirmations of the exordium. The appointment of Jesus as son and royal heir (vv. 5–9) is followed by the description of the son as mediator of the creation (v. 10), the son’s eternal nature and glory (vv. 11–12), and the exaltation of the son to God’s right hand (v. 13).

The framing of the catena with Pss 2:7 and 110:1, showing the consistent application of both psalms to the exaltation of Jesus, suggests the central christological purpose of the catena. Labeled aptly as a “meditation on the exal-

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28 Buchanan (To the Hebrews, 8, 23) insists that Psalm 110 was the primary text with an inclusio formed in Heb 1:3 and 1:13. Similarly, Thompson, in his seminal treatment on the catena (The Beginnings of Christian Philosophy, 129), has suggested that Ps 110:1 provides the framework of the catena in that the allusion in 1:3 provides the starting point for the reflections contained in the catena and that the citation of Ps 110:1 concludes the catena at 1:13. In contrast, this analysis suggests that the allusion to Ps 2:7 in 1:2a provides the starting point and framework for both the exordium and the catena.

29 The source of this interest in angels has been the subject of much speculation, ranging from possible involvement of the community in the worship of angels (cf. Col 2:18), to a development of an angel Christology, or to some other angelological tradition. See Robert Jewett, Letter to Pilgrims: A Commentary on the Epistle of the Hebrews (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1981), 5-13; Neil Lightfoot, Jesus Christ Today: A Commentary on the Book of Hebrews (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1976), 57–58.


31 Scholars consistently recognize the general sequential parallelism between the christological core of the exordium (1:2a–3) and the theological purpose of the catena:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exordium (1:2a–3)</th>
<th>Catena (1:5–13)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appointment as son and royal heir (2ab)</td>
<td>Appointment as royal son and heir (5–9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediator of the creation (2c)</td>
<td>Mediator of the creation (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eternal nature, pre-existent glory (3ab)</td>
<td>Unchanging, eternal nature (11–12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exaltation to God’s right hand (3c)</td>
<td>Exaltation to God’s right hand (13)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Lane, Hebrews, 22.
The proclamations framing the catena accord to the traditional royal imagery of
coronation establishing enthronement, power, and universal dominion. Hebrews
follows Christian tradition in identifying this lofty status of Jesus as attained at
the resurrection or exaltation, which Hebrews does not consider as separate
events. In the language of the Psalms, Jesus has been exalted to an incomparable
position “at the right hand of God,” having been given status far above angels as
the very “son of God.”

The implications of the exaltation of Christ develop in the remainder of the
epistle. With Hebrews 1 serving as a precursor, or overture, not surprisingly the
two psalms, which have functioned so prominently in the literary and theological
shaping of the first chapter, remain at the center of this “word of exhortation.”
The same texts inform chapters 5–7. In this central section of Hebrews, the twin
themes of sonship and priesthood find expression through the coalescence of
language from Psalms 2 and 110. Old songs were finding new melodies as early
Christians reflected on the exaltation of Jesus.

In summary, Psalm 110:1 has been recognized traditionally as the sole
rhetorical frame of Hebrews 1 with echo and citation forming an inclusio in 1:3,
13. However, the allusion to Ps 2:7 in Heb 1:2a suggests that both the exordium
of 1:1–4 and the catena of 1:5–13 share literary parallelism as Pss 2:7 and 110:1
frame the two literary units. This parallel rhetorical ordering of the exordium and
the catena, with Pss 2:7 and 110:1 functioning as borders, also accentuates the
parallel theological cores of the texts since phrases from these royal psalms serve
to set forth the exaltation of Christ. With an exceptional sense of rhetorical crea­
tivity and theological skill, the writer employs Pss 2:7 and 110:1 to shape the
literary structure and the theological core of Hebrews 1. The chapter stands as
a major contribution to the tradition of christological interpretation from the
Psalms and to the christological conclusion that the son has been exalted to the
right hand of God as Messiah and Lord.

32 Thompson, Beginnings of Christian Philosophy, 140.
33 The citation of Ps 8:4–6 in Heb 2:7–8 may indicate that it was also a part of a
traditional listing of Scriptures on which the writer of Hebrews drew. If so, further
evidence of adaptation in the collection is evident. Psalm 8 accompanies Psalm 110 in 1
Cor 15:25–27 and Eph 1:20–22.
Among the courses I took from Ian Fair, his course on Revelation illustrates the various ways that he impacted my future studies. Broadly speaking, I have applied myself to the field of NT studies. More narrowly, social historical questions, often answered through the use of Greek, dominate my interests. Thus with gratitude and congratulations I offer this study on Revelation to Ian Fair.

Scholars disagree about the importance of the emperor cult for the interpretation of Revelation. On the one hand, G. E. M. Ste. Croix can say, "In fact, emperor-worship is a factor of almost no independent importance in the persecutions of the Christians."¹ On the other hand, Donald L. Jones argues for the significance of the emperor cult and the spread of persecutions connected to it:

Deification of the emperor was now obligatory and used as a test to identity Christians. Offerings of incense, prayers, and vows were expressions of loyalty to the state, and nonconformists were considered disloyal and punished. The Domitianic persecution extended into Asia Minor, including several cities mentioned in Revelation 1–3 which were, at this time, important centers of emperor worship.²

Which of these views better describes the role of the emperor cult? This investigation proceeds in three stages: (1) the evidence for the emperor cult, (2) the nature of the emperor cult, and (3) the exegetical significance of the emperor cult for the interpretation of Revelation.

The Evidence for the Emperor Cult

Before exploring how the text of Revelation can be illuminated by social-historical research, we will first examine the data for the emperor cult in the cities of the Apocalypse and then detail what can be said about the actual practices in

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¹ G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, "Why Were the Early Christians Persecuted?" in *Studies in Ancient Society* (ed. M. I. Finley; Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), 216. Ste. Croix puts "no weight" on the theory that under Domitian "emperor worship was enforced in Asia Minor, and that the Christian sect was proscribed when Christians refused to take part in it, the charge being really political disloyalty."

² Donald L. Jones, “Christianity and the Roman Imperial Cult,” *ANRW* 2.23.2 (1034).
the emperor cult. According to S. R. F. Price, evidence exists for the emperor cult during or before the reign of Domitian in four of the seven cites mentioned in Revelation 2–3 (viz., Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, and Laodicea). This section presents and evaluates the evidence for this claim.

Ephesus

In many respects, the evidence regarding Ephesus provides the best point of departure. The sources are varied, from archeological and epigraphic evidence to literary texts. In addition, up to five temples are represented.

The temple of Roma and Julius Caesar is one of the few temples attested by literary evidence. Dio Cassius (fl. ca. A.D. 200) describes the honors Octavian granted Julius Caesar and Roma in 29 B.C.:

Caesar (i.e., Octavian), meanwhile, besides attending to the general business, gave permission for the dedication of sacred precincts (τεμενη) in Ephesus and in Nicaea to Rome [i.e., Roma] and to Caesar, his father, whom he named the hero Julius. These cities had at that time attained chief place in Asia and in Bithynia respectively. He commanded that the Romans resident in these cities should pay honour to these two divinities (παρ' αυτοις ... τιμαν); but he permitted the aliens, whom he styled Hellenes, to consecrate precincts (τεμενισμοι) to himself, the Asians to have theirs in Pergamum and the Bithynians theirs in Nicomedia. This practice, beginning under him, has been continued under other emperors, not only in the case of the Hellenic nations but also in that of all the others, in so far as they are subject to the Romans. For in the capital itself and in Italy generally no emperor, however worthy of renown he has been, has dared to do this; still, even there various divine honours are bestowed (ἐκλατε τις ισοθεις τιμα διδονται) after their death upon such emperors as have ruled uprightly, and, in fact, shrines are built to them (ηρωα ποιεται).

A number of salient details require discussion. First, one notices the mention of “sacred precincts” to Roma and Julius Caesar in Ephesus. The presence of these “sacred precincts” is supported by archeological data: “This podium, formerly known as the state altar, has now been identified as a podium with two small prostyle temples built by Augustus in 29 B.C. for the Divus Iulius and Dea Roma; it was destroyed in the fourth century A.D.”

Second, Octavian consecrates “precincts to himself” in Pergamum and Nicomedia, a practice that “has been continued under other emperors.” However, Dio indicates that such a practice has not occurred “in the capital itself and in Italy generally.” This information suggests that the existence of multiple imperial

5 V. Mitsopoulou-Leon, “Ephesos,” Princeton Encyclopedia of Classical Sites, 307. For the location of the temple area, see #9 on the map between 760 and 761 (for discussion, see 815–16) in “Ephesos vom Beginn der römischen Herrschaft in Kleinasien bis zum Ende der Principatszeit” (Dieter Knibbe and Wilhelm Alzinger, ANRW 2.7.2).
temples in Asia Minor is likely. Third, Dio’s testimony also informs us that the bestowal of “divine honours” came from Rome (i.e., the Senate) and occurred after the death of the emperor. The reliability of all this information from Dio is another question. Although Dio is variously regarded as a historian, the existence of the temple to Roma and Julius Caesar in Ephesus seems relatively certain, given the dual attestation (literary and archaeological) of the evidence.

The second temple associated with Ephesus is the temple of Augustus at the Artemision. An inscription in the British Museum (#522) records “the rebuilding of the peribolos of the Artemision by order of Augustus, B.C. 6.”

The Emperor, Caesar, Son of God, Augustus; (in) the 12th consulate, the 18th tribunate power; from the revenues of the god was provided to build a wall for the temple and the Sebasteion; in the proconsulship of Gaius Asinius Gallus, in the care of Sextus Lartidius, ambassador [trans. mine].

A debate exists whether the Artemision and the Sebasteion shared the same precincts. Whatever the case, the inscription describes the building of a wall that served both the Artemision and the Sebasteion. More importantly, the inscription provides evidence of an imperial temple for Augustus while he was still alive.

The temple of Augustus in Ephesus, the third imperial temple, is attested by an inscription. The inscription (#902) is primarily a list of names, perhaps the names of priests. Thus only the first five lines are significant for our purposes.

Apollonius, son of Herakleidos,
son of Passalas, who provided for the foundation of Augustus

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6 In OCD (s. v. “Dio Cassius,” 345), Alexander McDonald writes, “Unreliable about republican institutions and conditions, from Caesar onwards he used his constitutional experience, at first colouring events with his ideas of imperial absolutism, but later handling his material with full knowledge.” A similar sentiment is echoed by H. Koester, “The value and reliability of this work (Dio’s Roman History) is debated. Dio Cassius was largely dependent upon Latin annalists, inserted numerous long speeches, and showed independent judgment only in the treatment of his own period” (History, Culture, and Religion of the Hellenistic Age, [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982], 350).


8 A. D. Nock argues, “it should be remembered that two distinct τεμεύνη, or precincts, can have a common wall and make a sacred enclosure like the Acropolis of Athens. This is not temple-sharing” (Essays on Religion and the Ancient World [ed. Zeph Stewart; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972], 225). According to Price (Rituals, 254), Jobst (“Zur Lokalisierung des Sebasteion-Augusteum in Ephesos,” Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Istanbul 30 [1980]: 241–60) argues that the Sebasteion was not in the Artemision because the inscription was not found there.

and the dedication
of the precincts [trans. mine].

Although this temple and the second temple could be the same temple, no one makes this claim. Thus this inscription appears to point to a third imperial temple in Ephesus. A fourth piece of evidence is a fragmentary inscription (12 pieces) that reportedly attests the existence of a “royal portico” (βασιλι [κήν στοάν] dedicated in part to the emperor. Further evidence for imperial nature of the stoa are the statues of Augustus and Livia found in situ. However, neither the stoa nor the statues prove the presence of an imperial cult temple.

Perhaps one of the most interesting pieces of evidence for the interpretation of Revelation is the existence of the temple of Domitian. Mitsopoulou-Leon indicates, “The temple was originally dedicated to Domitian by the Province of Asia (the first Neokorie of Ephesos) and after his damnatio memoriae rededicated to his father Vespasian.” As the first imperial neocorate of Ephesos, the temple dates A.D. 82–84. A number of inscriptions support the identification of this temple as the temple of Domitian. Many of the inscriptions have the name of Domitian partially erased, an erasure connected with the damnatio memoriae. The archaeological evidence also supports the presence of the temple. In sum, we have evidence of the presence of a temple to Domitian in Ephesos dating from the early eighties.

Smyrna

In Smyrna is a temple dedicated to Tiberius, Livia, and the Senate. Tacitus recounts the origins of this temple in his Annals:

10 According to Price (Rituals, 254), one likely location is “in the centre of the upper square.”


13 V. Mitsopoulou-Leon, “Ephesos,” 308. For the location of the temple, see #15 on the map in ANRW 2.7.2 (760).


15 There are at least fourteen inscriptions for the temple of Domitian. See Die Inschriften von Ephesos, Teil II, #232–42; Teil V, #1498; Teil VI, #2048.

The case [against Lucius Capito, the procurator of Asia] was accordingly tried and the defendant condemned. In return for this act of retribution, as well as for the punishment meted out to Gaius Silanus the year before, the Asiatic cities decreed a temple to Tiberius, his mother [Livia], and the senate. Leave to build was granted. However, after three years the cities of Asia were still arguing which city should receive the temple. The Senate convened to hear the claims of eleven cities.

With no great variety each pleaded national antiquity, and zeal for the Roman cause in the wars. But Hypaepa and Tralles, together with Laodicea and Magnesia, were passed over as inadequate to the task. The Pergamenes (see “Pergamum” below) were refuted by their main argument: they had already a sanctuary of Augustus, and the distinction was thought ample. The state-worship in Ephesus and Miletus was considered to be already centred on the cults of Diana and Apollo respectively: the deliberations turned, therefore, on Sardis and Smyrna. The Senate chose Smyrna as the location for the temple and selected a legate, Valerius Naso, to oversee the task (Annals, 4.56). Rounding out the literary evidence are various coins indicating the presence of a temple dedicated to Tiberius as well as to Livia and the Senate.

**Pergamum**

The imperial temple in Pergamum played a significant role in the life of the citizens in the province of Asia. As already noted in the citation from Dio, a temple to Octavian was established in Pergamum in 29 B.C. The temple is important not only because it “became the center of the imperial cult in the province of Asia,” but also because it “became the religious and political center of the Koinon of Asia—the organization of the cities of Asia.” As the meeting place of the Koinon of Asia, Pergamum sponsored annual games, the Romaia Sebasta, when the Koinon assembled. In addition, the temple precincts “served as a repository for decrees of the Koinon, letters from Rome, and decrees honoring provincial priests or other officials of the Koinon, with stelai set up on the temenos or even in the temple itself.” Unfortunately, no archaeological evidence of the temple has been unearthed. Despite the absence of archaeological evidence, the confluence of the literary evidence from Dio and Tacitus with the

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19 Note the numerous coins mentioned in Steven J. Friesen, *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John: Reading Revelation in the Ruins* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 38; and in Price (Rituals, 258 nn. 45–46).
21 Mellor, *Roma*, 81, 141.
numismatic evidence render the existence of the temple in Pergamum virtually certain.

Laodicea

The evidence for an imperial temple in Laodicea is entirely numismatic. For instance, F. Imhoof-Blumer describes one of the coins found at Laodicea:

Obverse: ΔΟΜΙΤΑΝΟC KAICAP CEBACTOC ΓΕΡΜΑΝΙΚΟC in a circular legend and in the field ΔΟΜΙΤΙΑ CEBACTH. Facing busts of Domitian victorious and breast-plated on the right and Domitia in draped clothing on the left.

Reverse: ΑΙΑ ΚΟΠ. ΔΙΟΣΚΟΥΡΙΔΟΥΛΑ—ΟΔΙΚΕΩΝ. Temple with four columns, of which the frieze carries the inscription ΕΠΙΝΕΙΚΙΟC; inside Domitian stands on the left in military dress; Domitia stands on the right; each one is supported by a scepter and extends his/her hand [trans. mine].

Imhoof-Blumer notes that the first phrase on the reverse probably indicates the magistrate in whose reign the coin was stamped. More important is the inscription on the temple frieze. Imhoof-Blumer gives the following interpretation:

The adjective ΕΠΙΝΕΙΚΙΟC seems to refer to the temple (νεικιον) which the frieze decorates. Since the emperor represents himself in military costume, carrying a trophy, between the columns of the building, it is permissible to believe that the temple had been erected or consecrated to Domitian, in honor of his victories which made him triumph and take the title of Germanicus, in 84 A.D. [trans. mine].

Other coins give similar information for a temple to Domitian in Laodicea circa 84 A.D.

In summary, each of these four cities had imperial temples. At least two of them (Ephesus and Laodicea) erected a temple to Domitian in the early to mid eighties. Another, namely Pergamum, functioned as the Koinon for the province of Asia. However, this information gives only half the story. What happened in these imperial temples? What was the nature of the cult in these temples? Is there any evidence of forced sacrifice?

The Nature of the Emperor Cult

This section focuses on the practices of the emperor cult. Unfortunately, the sources for reconstructing this aspect are not as extensive as one might like. In

24 F. Imhoof-Blumer, *Monnaies grecques* (Amsterdam: Johannes Müller, 1883), 404–5. The episilons are lunate, which I have approximated by enlarging a small-case epsilon. Also, the KOP is a monogram.
27 Friesen (*Imperial Cults*, 61–62) understands this temple as a municipal imperial temple rather than a provincial imperial temple.
fact, Price states, “there is no extended contemporary discussion of imperial ritual in the provinces.” 28 Probably most germane to the interpretation of Revelation is the description of sacrifices in the emperor cult. The most extensive literary description of the emperor cult comes from Nicolaus of Damascus (fl. 20 B.C.). His *Universal History* contains the following citation:

Because mankind address him thus (as Sebastos) in accordance with their estimation of his honour, they revere him with temples and sacrifices over islands and continents, organized in cities and provinces, matching the greatness of his virtue and repaying his benefactions towards them. 29

Perhaps the closest to a description of an imperial sacrifice comes from an inscription from Gytheum near Sparta.

A procession made its way from the temple of Asclepius and Hygeia, the gods of health, to the imperial shrine. A bull was sacrificed there, but this was not, as one might have expected, to the emperor but “on behalf of the safety of the rulers and gods and the eternal duration of their rule,” that is on behalf of the emperors past and present. Another sacrifice was offered in the main square, and from there, probably, the procession passed to the theatre, where sacrifices of incense were made in front of the images of Augustus, Livia and Tiberius which had been placed there. 30

The imperial festival at Gytheum lasted six days, but the length could stretch as long as fifty-one days, although the normal duration was two to thirteen days. 31 Absent from this description of imperial sacrifices is the indication that sacrifices were made to the emperor. The *locus classicus* for the distinction of “sacrificing to” versus “sacrificing on behalf of” is Philo’s *Embassy to Gaius*:

“All right,” he (Gaius) replied, “that is true, you have sacrificed, but to another (ēτέρω), even if it was for me (ὑπὲρ ἐμοί); what good is it then? For you have not sacrificed to me (ἐμοί).” 32

However, reality is not so neat. One can adduce several examples of sacrifices to the emperor even though such sacrifices were likely “less common.” 33 One of the examples is a petition of L. Pompeius Apollonius to L. Mestrius Florus from Ephesus circa A.D. 88:

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32 Philo, *Embassy to Gaius*, 357 (trans. F. H. Colson; LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), 178–79. Price (*Rituals*, 211) claims, “In only one instance is a sacrifice to the emperor known to have been performed by an imperial priest.”
To the proconsul Lucius Mestrius Florus, from
Lucius Pompeius Apollonius of Ephesus:
Sir, mysteries and sacrifices are offered yearly
with great purity by initiates
to the fruit-bearing Demeter at the Thesmophoria (festival)
and to the divine Augustans [θεοτόκε Σεβαστοί; trans. mine]. 34

The ambiguity of the evidence ("on behalf of the emperor" vs. "to the emperor") prevents one from making absolute claims about the precise wording accompanying sacrifices to the emperor.

In addition to sacrifices, two other activities (viz., prayer and hymns) are worthy of brief comment. Prayers do not seem to have played a role in the emperor cult, 35 or if they did, the prayers may reflect "prayers for benefactors such as are well attested." 36 Hymns, on the other hand, probably played a significant role. Price describes the contents of an inscription from Pergamum that depicts a choir in the service of the emperor cult:

A private celebration is vividly depicted by the regulations of the choir of Rome and Augustus at Pergamum. This was an association involved in provincial imperial cult, but it also performed private ritual within the association, meeting on a variety of occasions in a special building. . . . Hymns were sung beside the altar during sacrifices, which perhaps consisted of wine. Ritual cakes, incense and lamps were offered to Augustus, the last perhaps for illuminating the images of Rome and the emperors. The inscription gives a very intense picture of the practice of imperial ritual and sacrifices.

The hymns were sung by groups called hymnodes. Friesen summarizes the duties of hymnodes from an inscription dated circa A.D. 41: "they sang hymns to the imperial family, participated in imperial sacrifices, led celebrations, and hosted banquets." 37 In this description, we see not only singing but also other activities regularly associated with pagan worship.

Finally, images played a role in the emperor cult; at the very least, they were present in the temple. A few factors indicate that images were placed in the imperial temples. First, we have the head of one of the Flavian emperors, which was found in the temple of Domitian in Ephesus. 38 Second, indirect evidence comes in the form of statues that appear to have been sculpted for a niche. For example, the back of the head of Livia (#10) "is left rough-hewn and the bun of

36 Price, Rituals, 214, esp. the examples in n. 41.
37 Friesen, Imperial Cults, 105. See also 104–13.
38 Jale Inan and Elisabeth Rosenbaum, Roman and Early Byzantine Portrait Sculpture in Asia Minor (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), 67, #27. The head may or may not be that of Domitian. For further discussion, see Friesen, Imperial Cults, 50.
hair at the nape of the neck has not been even indicated." Third, coins indicate the presence of images in the imperial temples. In summary, the use of imperial images, including those of the emperor, his family, and Roma, appears to be widespread in imperial temples.

From this brief survey, one can draw a few conclusions. First, the existence of temples to living emperors in some of the seven cities of Revelation is virtually certain. Second, the cult consisted of sacrifices and hymns probably preceded by processions and concluded with banquets. Third, one would likely find an image of the emperor in the temple. Fourth, there is no evidence of forced sacrifice to the emperor in the first century A.D.

The Exegetical Significance of the Emperor Cult for the Interpretation of Revelation

Equipped with some basic understanding of the presence and nature of the emperor cult, we are now ready to see what impact the emperor cult had on the composition of Revelation. Although the influence of the emperor cult on the book has been overrated, the emperor cult does seem important for some of the language and imagery in Revelation. However, the emperor cult does not appear to provide a sufficient cause for the book’s writing. That is, Revelation would look different if the emperor cult had not existed at the time. On the other hand, the emperor cult alone does not explain the present form and content of the book. For instance, the emperor cult does not explain much of the content in the seven letters to the churches (with the possible exception of the death of Antipas in the letter to Pergamum), the polemic against the Jews (2:9; 3:9; 11:8), or the negative attitude toward wealth (3:14–22; 18). In short, the emperor cult provides a necessary, but not sufficient, cause for the occasion and content of the book.

If the emperor cult does not play a major role, how does one account for Revelation’s images of death and persecution? Some of the examples may be due to conflicts between the Christians and Rome, independent of the influence of the emperor cult. John’s banishment to the island of Patmos in 1:9 reflects a conflict with authorities, but a link with the emperor cult is not necessary to explain John’s condition. Ste. Croix’s study makes it apparent that persecutions between

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39 Inan and Rosenbaum, Sculpture, 59.
40 See Price, Ritual, 188–91.
41 Price (Ritual, 221) finds four references to demands to sacrifice to the emperor in the “genuine martyr acts.” He cites Acta Pionii 8; Eusebius Mart. Pal. 1.1, 1.54; and EH, 7.15. Price also contends, “There is no parallel, so far as I know, for such an expression of conflict (i.e., confess the emperor’s divinity or die) between the imperial cult and Christianity in any preConstantinian document” (126). Against this last contention, compare Tertullian, Apology, 10, 28, 32.
42 Adela Yarbro Collins, Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), 102–4. Collins summarizes the debate over the nature of John’s banishment (i.e., whether it was a relegatio or deportatio). Whatever the case, neither sentence is explicitly connected to the emperor cult. Rather, the banishment
A.D. 64 and 250 were local, sporadic, and initiated from below.\(^{43}\) John's plight likely reflects such a conflict. There are a number of references to tribulation and death in Revelation (2:10, 13; 6:9–12; 7:13–14; 13:7; 16:6; 17:6; 18:24; 19:2; 20:4). Of those references, only three (2:13; 13:15; 20:4) may link death and the emperor cult. Rev 2:13 states:

> I know where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is; you hold fast my name and you did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

It is possible that “Satan’s throne” refers to this temple and the imperial cult. Others, such as Adela Yarbro Collins, suggest that “Satan’s throne” refers to “the complex comprising the Temple of Athena, the Great Altar, and the Temple of Zeus.”\(^{44}\) Whatever one decides, the relationship between Pergamum as “Satan’s throne” and the death of Antipas is not clear. Was Antipas “arrested” for merely being a Christian? For alleged abominations? For not sacrificing? Was Antipas required to give an oath of allegiance to the emperor? Offer a sacrifice to the emperor? These questions remain shrouded in silence. Perhaps the use of μαρτυρίς indicates some type of testimony or confession was associated with Antipas’s death. On this point, Rev 12:11 provides a suggestive comparison:

> And they (the brethren) conquered him (Satan) through the blood of the Lamb and through the word of their testimony (διὰ τὸν λόγον τῆς μαρτυρίας αὐτῶν), and they did not love their lives even unto death.

Despite all of the uncertainty associated with this passage, it does provide one of the three strongest arguments for persecution related to the emperor cult.

Rev 13:15 provides further support for some type of connection between persecution of Christians and the emperor cult:

> And it [the earth beast] was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast so that the image of the beast should even speak, and to cause those who would not worship (προσκυνήσωσιν) the image of the beast to be slain.

Here the “worship”\(^{45}\) of the image of the emperor plays a role. However, our evidence does not support or require forced “homage.” Perhaps the passage was probably the result of a perceived threat to the public order, perhaps prophecy (102; cf. Rev 1:3).

\(^{43}\) G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, “Why Were the Early Christians Persecuted?” 211, 228, 238–42. See also Pliny, Letters, 10.96.


\(^{45}\) “Worship” may not be the best translation here. Nock makes a distinction between “homage” and “worship,” the former in reference to humans, the latter in reference to gods. However, the distinction is not one based in antiquity, as Nock notes. He suggests the concept of τιμή. A. D. Nock, “ΣΥΝΝΑΟΣ ΘΕΟΣ,” in Essays on Religion and the Ancient World (ed. Zeph Stewart; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), 241.
reflects a situation like the one in Pliny’s letter (10.96). That is, someone accused of being a Christian has an opportunity to prove otherwise; however, the Christian does not render “homage” and is killed.

Another passage that appears to link death to the emperor cult is Rev 20:4. Rev 20:4 describes a vision of the “souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus (διὰ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ) and for the word of God (διὰ τοῦ λόγου τοῦ θεοῦ) and who had not worshipped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands.” Here is an explicit connection of worshiping the Beast (Caesar) image with a beheading. Again, as in the passage concerning Antipas, the language of “testimony” occurs. These three passages (i.e., 2:13; 13:15; 20:4) provide evidence for persecution associated with the emperor cult.

Nevertheless, the nature of the relationship and the extent of the persecution cannot be determined from the text of Revelation. Perhaps all the passages referring to the death of Christians reflect an extreme reaction of John to the death of Antipas and to Rome, an understandable reaction given John’s banishment. On this point, one must ask, “How much does it take to feel persecuted?”

On the other hand, perhaps Revelation is the exception; maybe there was widespread persecution of Christians that was somehow connected to the emperor cult. However, the latter option seems unlikely given the evidence about the emperor cult in the first two sections. Nevertheless, the influence of the emperor cult on the language and imagery in Revelation seems quite likely. Most convincing is the use of honorary titles. Aune lists several honorific titles of the Caesars. He wants to show that the antithetical claims of Caesar, symbolized by these names (i.e., god, son of god, god made manifest, lord, lord of the whole world, lord’s day, savior of the world, imperator) “characterized the imperial cult from its inception under Augustus.” Strikingly, Revelation uses precisely these titles for God or Jesus as a direct contrast to the claims of the Roman emperors.

First, θεός is used quite often. However, the only places where an antithesis is implied are 19:10 and 22:9, where the command is to worship God. However, the contrast is made with worshiping an angel, not the Beast or Satan. One could argue that the angel represents a divine intermediary, a being greater than humans, but less than God—a parallel with the emperors. Such an association could have occurred to the readers, but we have no way of being sure it did.

46 Note the occurrences of “testimony of Jesus” (1:2, 9; 12:17; 19:10).
47 See the same phrase in 1:9; 6:9; cf. 19:13.
48 A helpful insight shared by Greg Stevenson, Pepperdine University Lectures, May 1, 2002.
49 Furthermore, the earliest evidence for widespread persecution of Christians under Domitian is Eusebius, EH, 3.18.4.
Second, "Son of God" is used only once (2:18), and the title is not contrasted with the emperor.\textsuperscript{51} Third, "god made manifest" (or any form of ἐɲιᾷν\textsubscript{o}) is not used at all in Revelation.

Fourth, κύριος plays a significant role in the language about God in Revelation.\textsuperscript{52} The title "lord" was a common one for the emperors.\textsuperscript{53} Deissmann thinks that those who heard Paul preach would have understood it as "a silent protest against other 'lords' and against 'the lord' as people were beginning to call the Roman Caesar."\textsuperscript{54} Perhaps the phrase "Lord God" in Revelation is a protest against the arrogation of the title by Domitian.\textsuperscript{55} Pliny indicates that Domitian thought himself a god:

He (Domitian) was a madman... who felt himself slighted and scorned if we failed to pay homage to his gladiators, taking any criticism of them to himself and seeing insults to his own godhead and divinity (suam divinitatem suam numen); who deemed himself the equal of the gods yet raised his gladiators to be his equals (cumque se idem quod deos, idem gladiatores quod se putabat).\textsuperscript{56}

Suetonius does not say that Domitian required the use of the name "Lord." However, Suetonius does indicate that Domitian used the name of himself:

He (Domitian) delighted to hear the people in the amphitheatre shout on his feast day: "Good Fortune attend out [sic: our] Lord and Mistress" (Domino et dominae feliciter).

With no less arrogance he began as follows in issuing a circular letter in the name of his procurators, "Our Master and our God bids that this be done" (Dominus et deus noster hoc fieri tubet). And so the custom arose of henceforth addressing him in no other way even in writing or in conversation.\textsuperscript{57}

\textsuperscript{51} Compare the inscription where Nero is called "Son of the greatest of the gods, Tiberius Claudius" in Adolf Deissmann, \textit{Light from the Ancient East} (New York: Harper, 1927), 347 n. 4.

\textsuperscript{52} Eleven of the twenty-one times κύριος occurs in combination with θεός. In five of those eleven times, παντοκράτωρ is added to the string. Compare the inscriptions in Deissmann (\textit{Light}, 353 n. 3), where sacrifices are offered for Augustus (ὑπὲρ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ κυρίου Αὐτοκράτορος) and where Nero is described as "lord of the whole world" (354 fn. 4).

\textsuperscript{53} See Deissmann, \textit{Light}, 351–55.

\textsuperscript{54} Deissmann, \textit{Light}, 355.

\textsuperscript{55} However, the references in Dio Chrysostom, \textit{Oration} 45.1, and Dio Cassius, \textit{Roman History} 67.13.4, have δεσπότης not κύριος.


\textsuperscript{57} Suetonius, \textit{Domitian}, 13.1, 2. LCL. Many question or dismiss Suetonian’s testimony; on this point, see Friesen, \textit{Imperial Cults}, 148.
The evidence for the use of this title has been attested among the emperors up to Nero.\(^58\)

Fifth, κύριακός, employed in 1 Cor 11:20 and Rev 1:10, "may have been connected with conscious feelings of protest against the cult of the Emperor with its 'Augustus Day.'"\(^59\) Sixth, "savior" is not used in Revelation. Seventh, δεσπόρης is used only once (Rev 6:10):

They cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before thou wilt judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth.

Here a contrast with Caesar may be implicit, a contrast between the apparent sovereign and the real sovereign.

Eighth, the word "king" is significant in at least three passages. In 1:5, Jesus is described as ὁ ἄρχων τῶν βασιλέων τῆς γῆς. In 17:14 and 19:16, the phrase "King of Kings and Lord of Lords" appears. In 17:14, the Lamb ("the King of Kings and Lord of Lords") conquers the Caesars.

From this survey it is clear that some of the titles have polemical force. That is, they function to show the surpassing nature of that which is heavenly. The terms θεός, κύριος, κύριος θεός, κυριακός, δεσπότης, and "King of Kings/Lord of Lords" stand out. In fact, Dominique Cuss has suggested that divine titles used of the emperor may account for the phrase ὄνομα [τα] βλασφημίας in Rev 13:1, "And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems upon its horns and a blasphemous name upon its heads."\(^60\)

Another aspect, which may be promising, is the imagery surrounding the throne room scenes. However, since no hymns sung in the emperor cult survive, it is difficult to compare the hymns. Equally frustrating is the silence on the practice of obeisance before imperial images. One aspect, however, appears to be illuminated by knowledge of the emperor cult. Aune connects the crowns of Rev 4:10 with the crowns that the lictors wore.\(^61\) Price, on the other hand, suggests that the crowns on the twenty-four elders would remind the readers of the crowns on the imperial priests:

> These crowns worn by imperial priests displayed up to fifteen busts of the reigning emperor, his family and his predecessors, and are a token of the importance of the imperial cult. They are prominently featured on coins of one city (Tarsus), presumably as part of that city’s claim to special provincial status (Pl. 2f), while leading citizens often chose to be immortalized in stone in the prestigious role of an imperial priest, wearing the special crown (Pl. 1a).\(^62\)


\(^{59}\) Deissmann, *Light*, 359.

\(^{60}\) Dominique Cuss, *Imperial Cult and Honorary Terms in the New Testament* (Fribourg, Switzerland: Fribourg University Press, 1974), 50. See also 13:5, 6; 17:3.


It seems possible that Pergamum, the provincial center of the emperor cult, had similar coins or practices. At the least, these data present another feasible “solution” to the significance of the crowns in the book of Revelation.

Conclusion

Some of the presuppositions surrounding the study of the emperor cult, upon which many interpreters build, cannot be supported by actual data. In fact, part of the benefit of this study is negative, telling us what we do not know or know not to be true. In general, the threat of death because of the emperor cult seems overestimated, while the influence of the emperor cult on the daily life of early Christians is underestimated.

Illustrations of the pervasive influence of the imperial cult include the following: (1) provincial calendars were reformed around the date of the birth of the emperor; (2) other cities in Asia—beyond the seven addressed in Revelation—had provincial imperial temples (in fact, when one adds municipal imperial temples to the provincial temples we have been considering, then the number of temples and their influence rise dramatically); (3) imperial temples employed many—almost always influential—citizens.

In summary, the evidence adduced in this study indicates the presence of imperial temples in three or four of the seven cities of Asia. At least two of the cities (Ephesus and Laodicea) had a temple to Domitian at the time of the writing of Revelation if one dates Revelation circa A.D. 95–96. In addition, readers would have been familiar with the language and practices associated with the emperor cult. Although one should not presume that there was a general persecution under Domitian, much less a persecution based on forced sacrifice in the emperor cult, the presence of priests, images of the emperor, sacrifices, and hymns in Asia Minor does illuminate many features of the book of Revelation. The interpreter is aided in the areas of language, royal imagery, and titles, and perhaps the occasion of the writing of the book. Findings such as these highlight the importance of examining the full range of primary sources, from literary works to epigraphy, numismatics, and archaeology.

63 See the discussions in Friesen (Imperial Cults). On calendars, see 32–36. On the provincial imperial temple at Miletus, see 39–41. On municipal imperial temples, Friesen thinks that “most—if not all—small cities and towns had imperial temples” (61). Friesen also claims that even those cities that did not have temples still probably had imperial cults that used the existing temples of deities or various other public spaces (65–75). On imperial cult officials, note that although inscriptions record the titles of a number of officials, their functions are not always entirely clear (41–43, 54, 59, 104–13 [hymnodes], 114 [sebastophant]).
READING THE BIBLE WITH OLD FRIENDS: 
THE VALUE OF PATRISTIC BIBLE INTERPRETATIONS FOR MINISTRY

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In Ian Fair’s ministry of encouraging and equipping church leaders, he emphasizes the need to utilize their interpersonal relationships as resources for leadership: “leadership is a matter of developing relationships with others . . . ,” he suggests. ² Throughout his manual on congregational leadership, Fair emphasizes the importance of participatory strategies. Collaborative church leadership involves many factors, but at one level it prompts the wise leader to seek the counsel of others, aware that the collegial interchange of ideas deepens insight and seasons knowledge. Good conversations between people of faith stimulate growth in maturity. Although Professor Fair’s advice is undoubtedly concerned mainly with conversations between living persons, perhaps it is not inappropriate to suggest that even those who have “fallen asleep” can make good dialogue partners. It is becoming increasingly recognized today that church leaders of the past can become a rich resource in the present, contributing to our personal growth and ministries.

For example, one of the most interesting recent developments in biblical studies has been the appearance of exegetical aids drawing principally upon the work of the church fathers—most notably the IVP series, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (ACCS). ³ The success of the ACCS has been marked. Not only have the volumes sold well in English-speaking environments, but the global demand for works of this kind has necessitated the commissioning of

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¹ This article originated as a paper delivered at the Sermon Seminar of the Institute for Christian Studies (now Austin Graduate School of Theology) in Austin, Texas, 26 May 1999. I am grateful to that gathering of ministers for helpful feedback and encouragement.


³ Thomas Oden, ed., Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press). To date, nine volumes have appeared, covering various parts of the OT and NT. Hereinafter referred to as ACCS.
translations of the series into other languages: Russian, Spanish, Italian, and Arabic, to date. Church leaders reared within the Restoration heritage may well wonder who the so-called church fathers are and why it is that contemporary Bible students would be interested in making their acquaintance. After all, contemporary culture is basically convinced that new is better. Whether in the sphere of commercial mass-marketing or in the seemingly unrelated realm of graduate theological education, only the most current discoveries and latest developments merit much attention, it seems. Yet the growing popularity of antiquarian Bible study tools such as the ACCS suggests that today’s interpreters can find inspiration and insight, not only in the latest commentaries, but also in the oldest ones.4 This article surveys the benefits for Christian leaders of approaching the Fathers as colleagues in Bible study, both for personal spiritual growth and for help in reading and proclaiming the text. I conclude by offering some remarks about the ACCS in particular and about the use of these tools in general.

Naming the Fathers

The designation “father” shows up early in Christianity to indicate an influential leader or teacher; the Apostle Paul uses the term this way about himself (1 Cor 4:15). In time, “church fathers”5 came to denote that body of ancient Christian thinkers and leaders who lived after the time of the apostles and who wrote significant works that many Christians over the years have found to be useful.6 These works include doctrinal treatises, letters, commentaries,

4 Thomas Oden attempts to explain the current fascination with traditional sources of theological reflection by relating the story of his own faith pilgrimage in an interview in Christianity Today (Christopher A. Hall, “Back to the Fathers,” Christianity Today [September 24, 1990]: 28–31). The call for modern evangelical Christians to reappropriate the spiritual foundations of early Christianity is being sounded with increasing frequency (e.g., see Robert E. Webber, Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999]; and D. H. Williams, Retrieving the Tradition and Renewing Evangelicalism: A Primer for Suspicious Protestants [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999]).

5 Increasingly, theologians and historians have seen the need to think in terms of Fathers and Mothers, not Fathers only. An impressive number of women have made significant impacts on Christian history, thought, and practice over the centuries. However, the overwhelming majority of Christian texts to survive from the first millennium derive from male hands. Hence, the consensus of scholarship, while appreciating the need to draw attention to the role of women, nevertheless finds the designation “Fathers” to be appropriate when referring to the group of people responsible for these texts.

6 See Boniface Ramsey, Beginning to Read the Fathers (New York: Paulist, 1994), 4–7, for a list of general criteria by which people have come to be known as Fathers: (1) antiquity, (2) holiness of life, (3) orthodox teaching, and (4) ecclesiastical approval (i.e., general acceptance).
sermons, prayers, and poetry. Together they form a sort of theological-literary “canon,” akin in function to the canon that English literature professors draw on to teach their students. As a whole, this canon represents the “best of the best” in ancient pious reflection. It does not rank alongside Scripture but has proven to be a useful study companion for those of any era who care to contemplate similar subjects. For the East, names such as John Chrysostom, Clement of Alexandria, Ephrem the Syrian, Athanasius, Eusebius of Caesarea, and John of Damascus come to mind; for the Latin-speaking West, Ambrose, Augustine, Gregory the Great, Jerome, Hilary of Poitiers, and many others. The study of these people and their writings is known as the field of patristics, from the Greek for “father” (πατήρ). Though no precise terminus exist, the patristic era is generally considered to begin after the time of the apostles and to extend until about the eighth century, with most Fathers having lived in the second to sixth centuries.

For many Christians who read the Fathers today, the issue is not one of authority but of community. They read the Fathers in order to expand their circle of dialogue partners. They are fully aware that they will not agree with everyone who speaks up in this conversation, nor do they feel obliged to do so. After all, it is not necessary that two people agree in every respect in order to share a beneficial relationship. Sometimes a difference of opinion makes the conversation conducive to personal growth. Yet as it turns out, fans of the Fathers are often drawn to them initially because they have found among them genuine colleagues with whom they share a kinship of faith, attitudes, and pastoral mission. It is not without reason that the Fathers’ works have been long considered the benchmark Christian classics.

The Need for Classics

The Fathers are Christian classics, and it is as such that they retain great value. Classics set standards by which to measure new and divergent strands of thought. Though sometimes the conserving force of the classic delays needed innovation and is therefore an unwelcome hindrance, most often the classic protects us from impulsive craziness. We live in an age of rapidly multiplying media and are subjected to a vastly expanding cacophony of voices. How does the Christian sort through the mountains of contemporary books and other resources? What criteria will we use to judge whether a new thing is good and true to the basic Christian faith—or flawed and imbalanced in some hazardous or immature direction? Popularity? Feel-good factor? Currency? What is needed is a cultivation of basic Christian “taste,” the faculty of discernment acquired through regular exposure to the long-proven classics of Christian thought and spirituality, an instinct coached and refined by the masters. For the classics keep before us the basic contours of sound Christian belief and practice; they help us recognize recent imitations of older trends, good or bad; they put the whims of the moment into perspective; they give us eyes to see the hidden implications of
contemporary messages. One day, a few of the books published this decade may become enduring classics in their own right, but we are too close to them to see their quality clearly without corrective lenses. Becoming acquainted with the proven classics gives us the deep vision we need to recognize a classic in the making.

The Christian classics also help us distinguish core issues from peripheral ones. Reading through the Fathers, one notices that some of them obsess over matters that seem insignificant to us. These issues vary according to time, place, and situation. It might be a disagreement about the correct dating of Easter, a controversy about whether a slave should be allowed to become bishop, or a problem concerning the right understanding of the millennium in Revelation 20. The people embroiled in such discussions took them seriously, assigning high stakes to the outcomes. It would be easy for us to dismiss their little obsessions as bizarre curiosities—if they did not remind us so poignantly that obsessing over peripheral matters has never gone out of fashion in the church. We have our own quirks, but we may be too close to them to recognize them for what they are.

This is where the Fathers can help us again. In their writings we not only find local, pet issues of a minor character, but we find that some issues show up over and over again. We may also notice that these matters tend to coincide with the weightier matters of Scripture, that the notes most commonly sounded in the Christian heritage correspond to those notes that occur most frequently or deeply in the Bible also—core issues of lasting importance, topics to be discussed deeply in every age, items of faith and practice and attitude without which Christianity does not survive as such. Attending to the harmony refines our ears are refined so that we become all the more attuned to the foundational themes in Scripture and all the more discerning in our ability to distinguish core issues from peripheral ones. Augustine of Hippo (354–430) reminds us of the centrality of love; John Chrysostom (ca. 347–407) pricks our consciences regarding our care of the poor; the mystagogical preaching of Ambrose of Milan (ca. 339–97) draws us to contemplate the universal significance of such ancient Christian rituals as baptism and the Lord’s Supper; the christological debates of the third to eighth centuries underscore the fact that one’s contemplation of the meaning of Jesus Christ is indeed “of first importance” (1 Cor 15:3).

Each of us brings assumptions and experiences to the biblical text as we strive to interpret it; some of that baggage hinders good reading, whereas some of it equips us as good readers. As I hope to show in the following discussion, by consulting the Fathers’ exegeses, we add to our baggage the potentially stabilizing weight of spiritual classics.

Colleagues from Another World

The Fathers walked the earth centuries ago. Upon first encounter, their world and their logic are so different as to seem off-putting and even irrelevant.
The gap between them and us materializes instantly when we study their interpretations of Scripture. For example, whence does Tertullian (ca. 160–220) get the idea that in the Gospels the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus in the form of a dove because the dove is a bird without any gall, a creature of "utter simplicity and innocence" and therefore appropriate to the Spirit?\(^7\) Surely the Gospel text itself does not require this biological association. More generally, some of the Fathers use allegorical reading strategies that strike modern interpreters as bizarre and dangerously out of control.

Admittedly, we will often stumble across passages that strike a familiar chord. When Basil of Caesarea (330–79) meditates on the Holy Spirit, insisting that to appreciate the Spirit we must "refute the objections brought forward in the name of so-called science,"\(^8\) we children of modernity feel a certain kinship with him. Also, for people like us who have been tutored on the notion that the Reformation was the first high note in the history of Christian theology after the Apostle Paul, it is heart-warming to read the likes of Ambrosiaster (late fourth century) or Chrysostom and discover that the rhetoric of salvation by grace through faith long predates Luther's time and had not been forgotten after Paul.\(^9\) Ephrem the Syrian (d. 373) displays a great respect for the contributions of women in his explanation of Eve's creation as the only suitable partner for man.\(^10\) Resonant passages such as these occur frequently, yet often the discrepancies between the Fathers and us loom larger than any commonalities. When Gregory of Nyssa (331–ca. 395) elaborates on the "three-fold unity" of human body, soul, and spirit, his explanation is complex and hardly reflects any modern psychological understanding of human nature.\(^11\)

On the other hand, precisely because Gregory's anthropology reflects the metaphysics of the time, his comments here may be useful. Though a great distance separates us from the Fathers, an even greater distance separates us from the writers of Scripture. The Fathers may seem foreign to us, but they are closer to the biblical world than we are, occasionally providing helpful insight into that foreign realm. Jerome (ca. 347–419) knew Hebrew and lived in Palestine for a while, whereas Chrysostom was well acquainted with native Aramaic speakers. These Fathers' remarks about the Semitic terms in Scripture, the geography of Palestine, Jewish traditions, and their general grasp of the culture can give us

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\(^7\) ACCS 2.13.


\(^9\) ACCS 6.31–32.

\(^10\) ACCS, Old Testament 1.69.

\(^11\) ACCS 2.173.
fresh perspectives on details in the biblical text. To take another example, today’s interpreters are often perplexed by Paul’s manner of quoting OT Scripture. Yet in his comments on Paul’s treatment of Ps 68:18 in Eph 4:8, Jerome helps acclimatize us to Paul’s thought by showing us that the apostle’s methods of adapting Scripture were not as foreign in Jerome’s world as they are in our own. Chrysostom offers a clue as to why the older women mentioned in Titus 2:3 might merit a particular warning against excessive alcohol consumption by pointing out that older women in that culture were prone to drink in order to keep themselves warm. It is also noteworthy that he is happy to take the reference to “women” in 1 Tim 3:11 as pertaining to “deaconesses” and that he seems familiar with that role.

Of course, not all the historical, linguistic, and geographical understandings of the Fathers are correct or helpful. A modern audience may not be convinced by Basil’s explanation of the science of thunder in connection with the naming of Boanerges (though they are bound to find his depiction of the Gospel’s explosive properties stimulating). The Fathers tend to be more naïve than we are about science and historical developments, and they do not approach fantastic traditions with the same skepticism that is our birthright. In some respects, we have a better understanding of the first-century world than a fifth-century writer might, due, for example, to modern archaeological finds and critical scientific methods. Patristic explanations of such things as Apollos’s origins (Chrysostom thought he was one of the one hundred twenty or of the Apostle Thomas’s alleged mission to India are perhaps legendary and should be weighed carefully against the known facts, scarce though they be. Nevertheless, the strangeness of the Fathers stands as a warning that the world of Scripture must itself be stranger and more challenging than our persistent attempts to domesticate the Bible allow.

Often at just the points where the Fathers make us most uncomfortable, they force us to deal with something in the biblical text that we might otherwise have overlooked. This is well illustrated by one feature of patristic thought that

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12 E.g., see Jerome’s linguistic treatment of the place and personal names in Paul’s “allegorical” reading of Hagar and Sarah (ACCS 8.69), his explication of the corban tradition (ACCS 2.98), and his and Chrysostom’s treatments of the term raca (SSGF 3.230)—at the very least, Chrysostom observes, it is impolite to call someone “empty” who has the Holy Spirit within!

13 See ACCS 8.165.


15 BHF 544.

16 ACCS 2.41–42.

17 BHF 107.
usually strikes contemporary American Christians as odd: an irrepresible ascetic tendency. The great majority of Fathers (and Mothers) adopted lifestyles of radical self-denial, prizing the life of consecrated singleness, minimizing personal ownership of possessions, and practicing extreme spiritual disciplines, such as celibacy and prolonged fasting. These baffling tendencies fly in the face of contemporary values so that we struggle to comprehend them. Surely God created the world for us to enjoy. Moreover, much evangelical rhetoric leaves no doubt that in the minds of many Christians today, being part of a happy and fulfilled nuclear family may be God’s highest calling. How, then, do we explain this ancient ascetic bent?

To be sure, ancient asceticism is a complex phenomenon, involving many factors and finding varied expression, so that no thorough explanation is possible here. It is instructive, however, to read the commentaries and sermons of these ascetically-minded ancient Christians and realize that they needed to search no further than Scripture for ample justification. Some of the OT prophets, John the Baptist, the Apostle Paul, and Jesus himself provide ready ascetic models. Ancient exegetes find no shortage of helpful passages, meditating on Jesus’ suggestion that the disciple will have no place to lay his head (Matt 8:20), taking seriously Jesus’ call to leave home and family (Mark 1:17–18; Luke 14:26–27) so that the disciple may voluntarily bear the cross of daily struggle with a minimum of worldly attachment (Matt 10:9–10). They appreciate Luke’s version of the beatitudes, for example, “blessed are the poor,” plain and simple (Luke 6:20–22). In anticipation of their future “angelic” lives, they choose to make themselves eunuchs for the Kingdom (Matt 19:12; 22:30), following Paul’s advice in 1 Corinthians 7 and emulating the devoted status of the widows’ office from 1 Timothy 5. Surveying their honest, literal reading of these biblical texts does not leave us puzzled as to the source of their asceticism so much as it leaves us to ponder the powerful set of values in our own society that has tended to blind us to this major biblical style of spirituality. The Fathers prompt us to wonder whether churches today might benefit from a more balanced, biblical theology of consecrated singleness—both for those who may live as singles and for those who are not yet married but find no consolation or help in the church’s typical presumption that real Christianity begins with marriage and family.18

Another area in which the Fathers’ ascetic strangeness illuminates our own distance from Scripture involves the handling of possessions. To people who find themselves growing comfortable with the affluent privileges of American culture, the Fathers’ persistent focus on Scripture’s criticisms of materialism is strikingly uncomfortable. Commenting on the Rich Fool of Luke’s Gospel, Basil remarks, “Do not imagine that everything has been provided for your own

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18 See Beth Phillips’s plea to recover a biblical expression of devoted singleness in “1 Cor 7 and Singleness in the Church,” Leaven 9 (2001): 123–28. Phillips draws her inspiration from the ancient ascetics’ plain application of Scripture to their lives.
stomach. Take decisions regarding your property as though it belonged to another.” Philoxenus of Mabbug (ca. 440–520) expresses a core patristic value when he writes, “faith’s only possession is God, and it refuses to own anything else besides Him. Faith sets no store by possessions of any kind, apart from God, its one lasting possession.” Cyprian of Carthage (ca. 200–258) reminds us of the biblical redemptiveness of generosity: “When we have pity on the poor, we are lending to God at interest.” In the same vein, Salvian (ca. 400–ca. 480) offers good advice: “there is no compelling necessity for you to store up large earthly treasures for your children,” though he certainly has something else in mind for those treasures besides the self-indulgent consumption of the children’s inheritance. We may find comfort reading Clement of Alexandria (ca. 160–215), who acknowledges that the heart is more important than possessions in determining one’s quality of faith, so that the piety of the humble rich may outdo that of the arrogant poor. Even so, the perspective of Caesarius of Arles (469–542) chastens us: “While there is much in the world to love, it is best loved in relation to the one who made it.” The Fathers force us to face Scripture’s indictment of worldliness head-on.

Another feature of the Fathers’ strangeness that can renew our reading of Scripture is their corporate bias. Like the writers of Scripture, they lean towards communal understandings of the faith. Chrysostom illustrates this well. Discussing the divisions mentioned in 1 Corinthians 1, he argues that the problem at Corinth is not that there were many groups, each on its own and “entire within itself,” but that the One has ceased to exist in that community of believers. At its root, church division is bad because of what it means with reference to Christ, not to us. In Chrysostom’s understanding of Ephesians 4, the Holy Spirit came not for the sake of individual indwellings, but as the divine substratum of Christian community: “the purpose for which the Spirit was given was to bring into unity all who remain separated by different ethnic and cultural

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20 JWF, Year C, 131.

21 BHF 533.

22 ACCS 2.146.


24 ACCS 2.114; cf. ACCS 2.145.

divisions: young and old, rich and poor, women and men." The Fathers put us
back in touch with the communal bias of Scripture against our own
individualistic assumptions.

Given a voice, the Fathers’ readings of Scripture challenge many contemporar­
y trends in our society and in our churches, thereby refreshing our outlook
on the text. Although today’s readers will often disagree with the Fathers, these
inevitable clashes of ideas and positions do not disqualify the Fathers from our
consideration. In fact, the opposite is true. In his introduction to Athanasius’s
*Incarnation of the Word*, C. S. Lewis invites us to welcome moments of dis­
agreement with classic texts as growth opportunities:

> Every age has its own outlook. It is specially good at seeing certain truths and
specially liable to make certain mistakes. We all, therefore, need the books that will
correct the characteristic mistakes of our own period. And that means the old books.

> ... They will not flatter us in the errors we are already committing; and their own
errors, being now open and palpable, will not endanger us. Two heads are better than
one, not because either is infallible, but because they are unlikely to go wrong in the
same direction.

The Fathers may appear peculiar to us, but their odd features can coalesce
into a perspective on Scripture that powerfully challenges our own social norms
and enriches our interpretive assumptions. In this way, these strangers are our
friends.

Embracing A Spiritual Kinship

Though these ancients do not have the benefit of our modern scientific,
historical-critical worldview, neither do they suffer under its materialist and
humanistic limitations. Their premodern viewpoint is therefore not just a source
of provocative discomfort for us; it is undoubtedly also one of the reasons that
many Christians today find them comforting. The experience of typical graduate
students is illustrative. When students begin graduate theological study, they are
bound to be delighted with the opportunity to take faithful reflection to a higher
level—engaging the best theological minds in print and in person, submitting to
the discipline of philosophical and scientific rigor. Unfortunately, they often
discover that many of the most highly acclaimed scholars in biblical studies may
be lacking certain characteristics that they as students naively supposed to be
prerequisite to the field—such as faith, personal spirituality, investment in a faith
community, or involvement in genuine pastoral care. Some of the scholars they
read exhibit no faith at all; others appear to have faith but have chosen to pursue
methods of reading Scripture that bracket out faith questions and any notion of
divine operation, perhaps in favor of the materialistic assumptions of the social

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26 *ACCS* 8.159.

sciences. Biblical studies is rich with immensely helpful tomes that aid in the
careful historical-literary interpretation of the text but lack the integrative
thinking that reveals a heart burdened with the mission of connecting to church
contexts. The problem of integration falls to the students on their own or perhaps
to those who specialize in application, for example, preaching instructors and
leadership gurus, or writers of pop-Christian texts.

The danger here is in over-generalization. There are many exceptions to the
above characterization of academe; in any case, the scholarship it represents is
of great value, ranking alongside that of any age. Nor is the need for
specialization likely to abate soon. The point is not to denigrate modern
scholarship, but to diagnose a trend: it should not be surprising to us that the
average Christian or even the Master of Divinity can come to be disillusioned
with the gains of modern scholarship, yet find the Fathers deeply refreshing. In
the Fathers, the person of faith may detect kindred spirits. Here are some of the
most highly trained, reasoned, and articulate minds of their age, yet their reading
of Scripture is "from faith unto faith," for the sake of community. It not only
begins in the matrix of personal spirituality but has the aim of shaping piety and
of addressing pastoral issues in communal settings. For the Fathers generally,
there is no methodological gain from segregating their reading of the biblical text
from the pressing concerns of worship, church conflict, the spiritual growth of
new converts, and the life of prayer. In their discussions of biblical texts, they
move from exegesis to pastoral care to theology to cultural critique in ways that
may seem illogical in light of the fragmented specialization of modern methods
and critical outlooks.

Students of the Fathers’ exegeses welcome the integration, feeling a natural
kinship with their forebears in several areas. First, not only do the Fathers allow
faith as a legitimate starting point for study, they consider it a necessity. Trust in
God and a heart inclined to follow his ways are prerequisites to good reading.
Along with philological tools and philosophical training, good Bible students
must cultivate spiritual disciplines. “In order to study the scriptures and
understand them correctly, an honorable life, purity of soul, and Christlike virtue
are needed,” contends Athanasius of Alexandria (ca. 300–373).28 Ephrem
embraces Bible study as a kind of worship, an encounter with the divine Word
incarnate on the page. He cautions against the arrogant “prying” of some who
forcefully assert their clever intellects upon the text. Our human minds are
limited; we ought to be grateful for any revelation we receive, not proud at
having acquired it. Meditating upon the creation narrative in the opening
chapters of Genesis, Ephrem says:

28 Athanasius, On the Incarnation of the Word, 57 (trans. A. Robertson, Library of
I took my way stand halfway
between awe and love;
A yearning for Paradise invited me to explore it,
but awe at its majesty restrained me from my search.
With wisdom, however,
I reconciled the two;
I revered what lay hidden
and meditated on what was revealed.
The aim of my search was to gain profit,
the aim of my silence was to find succor.\(^{29}\)

In the Fathers' understanding, hours spent in Bible study and sermon preparation represent a spiritual discipline, a season of worship, to be approached with appreciation and proper humility. Study should be an occasion for praise and thanksgiving. This may mean admitting ignorance occasionally. In regard to the perplexing phrase of Rom 11:26 that "all Israel will be saved," Origen (ca. 185-ca.251) bluntly concedes that only God and the Son know what it means—and perhaps a few of their friends.\(^{30}\) Though not always consistent in their humility toward each other, the Fathers universally assume that faith and a humble attitude toward God always accompany good Bible reading.

Second, their faith orientation naturally leads them to value the application of the text to real life. They habitually move from exegesis to implementation. Indeed, in their way of thinking, praxis connects to faith as another prerequisite for good reading. Philoxenus accuses people who read the text without doing the good works prescribed therein of being like corpses, incapable of hearing even the blast of trumpets.\(^{31}\) Augustine points out that "knowing" without "loving" is a demonic trait.\(^{32}\) Contemplating the text’s practical application is not too pedestrian for these brilliant exegetes; on the contrary, this is their highest aim and ambition. Nor do they consider themselves exempt from the censure of Scripture. Some of their harshest criticism is aimed at their own roles. Jerome applies the submission language of Eph 5:21 to leaders first of all: "In the church, leaders are servants."\(^{33}\) Origen speculates that all selfish desire to lead would evaporate if people took seriously Scripture’s call for leaders to judge themselves more severely than they judge others.\(^{34}\) Christians must read the text


\(^{30}\) *ACCS* 6.298.

\(^{31}\) *JWF, Year A*, 94.

\(^{32}\) *ACCS* 2.22.

\(^{33}\) *ACCS* 8.194.

\(^{34}\) *ACCS* 6.54.
for the purpose of applying it, and good application begins with the readers themselves.

Third, as pastoral caregivers, the Fathers are concerned about the welfare of their people. Not all the Fathers were monks, secluded behind stone walls or in caves. It is tempting to imagine them as the unrealistic protohippies of Late Antiquity, but most of them were preachers, deacons, Bible teachers, and church leaders, deeply involved in the lives of their fellow Christians and in the day-to-day affairs of church work. In this, their hope was to imitate Jesus, the "all-sufficient physician of humanity," according to Clement of Alexandria’s comments on Jesus’ healing of the paralytic (Mark 2:1-12)—a healer of the whole person. The Fathers seek to do the same by their sharply challenging interpretations and preaching. For example, in an age of compromise and half-hearted commitment, Augustine draws a sober lesson from the woman who touched the hem of Jesus’ garment (Mark 5:25-34): “Few are they who by faith touch him; multitudes are they who throng about him.” Reflecting on certain Gospel passages, Radbertus reminds his readers that a Christian of any status should feel compelled to act as a servant: “otherwise, if he refuses to learn the master’s lesson, far from being a master himself, he will not even be a disciple.”

Isaac of Nineveh (late seventh century) advises us to be frank about the problem areas of sin in our lives, without taking refuge in our other virtues, however laudable they may be: “If you owe God a small coin over some matter, He is not going to accept from you a pearl in its place.”

Though the Fathers may be stern moralists, their sensitivity and compassionate pastoral instincts can be inspiring as well. In his enduring classic on ministry, the Pastoral Rule, Gregory counsels ministers to represent the message of Scripture confidently, but he warns that their effectiveness will depend largely on the integrity of their own example—and on their ability to accommodate the message of the text to the needs of their people. After all, the reason God allowed the great Apostle Peter to be frightened by the weak voice of a maidservant when he denied knowing Jesus was so that Peter “might learn through his own fall to have compassion on others.” Sin is no trifle, but one Syriac author explicates the story about the sinful woman anointing Jesus’ feet by calling the listener to “reflect within yourself that your sin is great, but that it is blasphemy against God and damage to yourself to despair of his forgiveness

35 ACCS 2.75.
36 JWF, Year A, 139.
39 ACCS 2.222.
because your sin seems to you to be too great."40 By contrast, Theophan the Recluse (1815–1894)41 sounds like an uncompromising legalist when he insists, "it is necessary only to do everything according to the commandments of God," until he takes up the obvious question, "Just what exactly? Nothing in particular —only those things which present themselves in the circumstances of life, . . . [in] the every day happenings we all encounter."42 Discipleship is a lofty calling of radical commitment, but it is also a mere matter of everyday living. Gregory Palamas (1296–1359) recommends that we be patient and not too quick to judge one another, drawing a lesson from Jesus’ parable of the tares (Matt 13:24–30). We should be patient with tares in the church because some of them will change heart and become wheat, or perhaps have children who will be wheat. The disciple should simply focus on being wheat43

The Fathers’ impulse to identify with the people they shepherd drives good ministry. For all their great faith, they are not unacquainted with the struggles, doubts, and frustrations common to the Christian experience. Augustine comments on the man who cries, "I believe; help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24) with comforting words: "Where faith fails, prayer perishes. For who prays for that in which he does not believe? . . . yet let us pray that this same faith by which we pray may not falter."44 Prayer requires faith, yet we obtain faith through prayer. Doubt is understandable. Its healing antidote is the spiritual discipline of prayer, even in the face of the heart’s uncertainty.

A fourth point of connection with the Fathers emerges when we recognize them as fellow strugglers in the business of Bible interpretation. The Fathers wrestle with texts, trying to understand, expound, and apply God’s word. Today’s Bible readers find in the Fathers ready companions on this journey and sources of creative stimulation. For example, in regard to the problem of explaining why the Apostle’s name changes from Saul to Paul in Acts, the Fathers discuss a wider range of plausible historical, literary, and theological solutions than one is likely to find in a modern commentary.45 How does sleeping with a prostitute defile the Christian, but the Christian wife sanctifies an unbelieving husband (1 Cor 6:15–16; 7:14)? Chrysostom contends that in
marriage a fair chance exists of converting the spouse to Christianity, whereas sleeping with a prostitute is not an effective evangelistic strategy.⁴⁶ Tertullian explicates Jesus’ command to “Give to Caesar’s what is Caesar’s” by asserting that Caesar’s coin goes to him because it has his image on it, whereas we belong to God because we have his image—to which Augustine adds, “we are God’s money.”⁴⁷ Ephrem struggles to make sense of the bizarre scene in which Zipporah circumcises Moses’ son (Exodus 4:25).⁴⁸

Patristic interpretation can stimulate and excite the interpreter as well as any modern commentary. It is intriguing to observe Chrysostom sort through possible identifications of the “man of lawlessness” in 2 Thessalonians 2,⁴⁹ weigh different understandings of Jesus’ cryptic statement “Are there not twelve hours in the day?” (John 11:9),⁵⁰ or explain various ways of seeing John’s use of the term “Passover” as he deals honestly with chronological problems among the Gospel accounts.⁵¹ Origen’s classical rhetorical analysis of Romans 1 is astute.⁵² The remarks of Methodius (†ca. 311) about the saying “have salt in yourselves” (Mark 9:50) helpfully remind us that levitical gifts were to be seasoned with salt.⁵³ Gregory Nazianzus’s (ca. 329–390) discussion of the different ways of understanding Jesus’ occasional inability to do miracles shows a sophisticated grasp of language and a profound understanding of faith.⁵⁴

Like today’s interpreters, the Fathers struggle to discover the significance of biblical texts. Many readers today find their approaches to this task inviting because the Fathers are naturally integrative. Even where today’s readers might disagree on the interpretation of a specific passage, the Fathers’ holistic methods disclose a shared kinship at a profound level.

Deeper Practical Theology and the Symbolic Exploration of Faith

The quest to plumb the deep, vibrant meanings of our faith is the duty of every generation of believers. However, deliberate contemplation aimed at deepening faith has not normally been the focus of theological reflection in Churches of Christ, which have devoted themselves usually to the functional matters of determining what God wants his people to do and how we wants them

⁴⁶ BHF 237.
⁴⁷ ACCS 2.167–68.
⁴⁸ ACCS, Old Testament 3.32.
⁴⁹ BHF 517–18.
⁵¹ Homily 83 on John, ibid., 409–10.
⁵² ACCS 6.25.
⁵³ ACCS 2.133.
⁵⁴ ACCS 2.79–80.
to do it, plain and simple. This inclination has suited the American frontier values of simplicity and common-sense pragmatism. As modern, practical people, Churches of Christ have tended to concentrate on the concrete, tangible dimensions of Christian faith and practice, such as church organization, morals, and worship forms. These are important dimensions, yet at its core our faith also involves dimensions that are intangible, even impractical. The present fascination with spirituality and the ongoing obsession with worship remind us that Christianity entails experiential and relational components, emotional elements, and transcendent realities.

In order to provide secure foundations of sustainable faith, it is crucial that we dive into the depths of Christian belief and explore the transcendent dimensions in our reflections and teaching. Capturing these elements, however, requires a more poetic approach to the facts of the faith, one that is artistic and imaginative, multiplying symbolic associations. For example, Paul’s treatment of baptism as a participation in the experience of Christ (Romans 6) shows us that it is not enough to teach the necessity of baptism and provide instruction on its proper form. Paul goes well beyond such surface level matters to explore the rich web of associations that exist between the form and practice of baptism, the Gospel story, and Christian living. By using a language of images, symbols, and experience, he deepens our understanding of baptism and imparts a powerful vision to the imaginations out of which we live our lives. Our faith is deepened: its facts and rituals become more meaningful, more compelling, more integral to the business of everyday living in the world and in Christian community. For Paul, correct doctrine draws together the historical Gospel event, mystical union, public ritual, proper thinking, and ethical living into one coherent world.

One of the great qualities of the Fathers’ meditations on Scripture is their shared inclination toward a holistic, mystical appropriation of faith—one that tenaciously clings to the hallmarks of orthodox faith and practice, yet is alive with faithful imagination, bearing the fruit of discussion on the biblical text that can be as evocative as it is descriptive. Reading patristic exegesis not only supplies dynamic stimulation for the task of deepening faith reflections, but it also attunes our minds to this feature of the apostolic mindset, which traffics in symbols and metaphors. When the NT interprets baptism through a wealth of creative symbols—a mystical participation in Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection (Rom 6:3–10); a cleansing spiritual bath (see Mark 1:4); a Red Sea moment (1 Cor 10:2); the water saving Noah’s ark (1 Pet 3:20–21); or a spiritual rebirth (John 3)—the Fathers are comfortable handling these symbolical threads.

Scripture’s teachings on the Lord’s Supper also supplied fertile ground for the patristic imagination to plow. The Didache associates the bread fragments gathered after the feeding of the five thousand with the bread broken in the
Lord's Supper, praying for the final regathering of the dispersed church. Augustine reads Luke 24 through symbological lenses, unpacking the significance of the moment of breaking bread at Emmaus as a moment of recognizing Jesus' body and connecting the idea to 1 Cor 11:29. Chrysostom meditates at length on the grape of the Lord's Supper:

The grape contains within it the mystery of Christ. For as the cluster has many grapes joined by the wood of the stalk, so Christ has many faithful joined by the wood of the Cross... In the grape we have a figure of patience, in that it goes through the winepress; of joy, in that the wine rejoices the heart of man; of sincerity, because it is unmixed with water; and of sweetness, in that it is delectable.

Ambrose, similarly, has no difficulty grasping the significance of Christ as a second Adam for the human race since he is unencumbered by the modern individualistic impulses that cause us to treat Paul's imagery as mere figure of speech. For Ambrose, as for Paul, the individual and the collective group overlap so that they are inseparable. Paul's second Adam language is not merely analogy; it reflects reality, but a mystical reality that requires special means of explication. Ephrem meditates on the doctrine by explaining that in the passion of Christ a series of redemptive exchanges occurred: Adam's sweat for Jesus', the cross for the tree of Eden, the sixth day of passion week for the sixth day of creation, the hands pierced with nails for hands plucking the forbidden fruit, a mouth struck with blows in exchange for the mouth that ate the fruit. Jesus' pierced feet take the place of Adam's stumbling foot, while the bitter gall Jesus drank on the cross sweetens the bitter effects of the Serpent's venom.

It may be argued that Ephrem's language sounds more like poetry than exegesis, but that is precisely the point. Where modern exegesis would criticize the Fathers for being unscientific or unhistorical, the Fathers would criticize modern methods of being unspiritual—of reducing the text's meaning to historical and material facts in an attempt to recreate the original, literal sense. The Fathers were convinced that the Word has power to speak to people in every age. For them, much of this power operates on a spiritual level by means of engaging artistry that is both the fruit of disciplined contemplation and its catalyst, not just on a cognitive level through bare description or on an

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55 ACCS 2.205.
56 BHF 19.
57 SSGF 3.299–300.
58 ACCS 6.136.
imperatival level as pure command. Like good preachers of every generation, many of the Fathers understood that the transformative power of the ancient word becomes living and active in its creative adaptation as a fresh vision to capture and shape the Christian imagination. Exegesis and preaching are not distinct disciplines. Ephrem’s evocative language may seem to be only an unnecessarily elaborate way of stating the fact that Jesus’ death reverses the Fall—and that Christian worship and life are somehow joined to that ongoing drama—yet Ephrem’s inspiration is the Apostle Paul’s own evocative language. Reading Ephrem helps us experience more fully Paul’s thought world. In some ways, the Fathers operate according to a worldview that is more compatible with biblical Christianity’s basic convictions about spiritual realities than the prevailing modern worldview. The Fathers respect the fact that deep mysteries are best grasped through symbol and paradox and that discussions of spirituality rely on the language of art, metaphor, and experience. Reading Scripture with the Fathers alongside can sensitize Bible students to Scripture’s own methods, with the result that the magnificent, faith-forming imagery of Scripture, viewed through the Fathers’ perceptive lenses, could have a revitalizing impact on the language of preaching, Christian education, and worship.

Looking up Old Friends—The Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture

The purpose of the foregoing discussion has been to illustrate the benefits for the contemporary interpreter of consulting ancient commentators and preachers. To sum up, as people who are closer to biblical times, the ancients give us clues to help unravel the text’s meaning. Their discussions often expand our range of options in treating a passage. Their integrative, holistic methods are friendly to faith, the practice of ministry, and the task of deepening spirituality and theological reflection. Their classic character sharpens our ability to discern quality and distinguish the essential from the marginal. The Fathers even make good devotional reading, as timely and pertinent as more contemporary material.

Unfortunately, however, in the past the Fathers’ accessibility to the average reader has been limited. Some patristic works have not been available in recent English translations. Also, the corpus of patristic texts is enormous; the thought of plodding through even single works and commentaries can intimidate busy preachers pressed for time. They also need a good library that has the numerous volumes, and academic editions tend to be expensive. Furthermore, the task of sifting through many pages of densely packed material in order to find the most relevant treasures can become a burden. Reading through a patristic work in its entirety usually repays the investment, yielding serendipitous insights into the nature of God, the Christian life, and the Scriptures. However, ministers typically come to the task of theological reflection with either a text or a topic in hand and a deadline looming. They need tools respecting this pattern.

In the foregoing discussion, the patristic quotations and illustrations mostly come from a narrow range of sources that were designed with just such needs in mind. These selections were made intentionally to demonstrate the expanding
body of resources now available that make the Fathers highly accessible to church leaders and lay people. One such resource is *The Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, a series whose growing popularity attests to its eminent usability. Produced by InterVarsity Press and overseen by series editor Thomas Oden, ACCS has commissioned a number of patristic scholars (mostly North American) to comb patristic exegetical literature and extract the most interesting and serviceable portions for inclusion in its volumes. The volumes therefore function as anthologies of patristic commentary on Scripture, in the tradition of ancient catenae. Most of the volumes will cover one or a few biblical books and, though only nine have appeared to date, the projected twenty-seven volumes will eventually comprise comments on all the books of the Bible.

The format of the volumes is handy, being structured along the lines of modern commentaries. After an introductory discussion of the contemporary relevance of patristic material, the editors explain their methods of excerpting comments, offer some guidance for using the volume, and present a discussion of critical issues. Each volume has basic bibliographical information regarding sources. The editors use existing English translations of the patristic texts wherever possible but must translate many of the texts directly from the ancient languages. The introduction is followed by the commentary proper. Having divided the biblical book into sections, the editors begin each section of the commentary by supplying the relevant passage of Scripture (RSV), followed by a brief synopsis of the patristic selections. The subsequent patristic excerpts themselves are collected into a running commentary of one or a few paragraphs each, given verbatim and keyed to biblical verses. Each includes the name of the Father excerpted (where known) and a summary heading that tells the reader at a glance the excerpt’s theme. Footnotes indicate the sources of the excerpts so that users may consult their original contexts. Topical and biblical text indices enhance the volumes’ usefulness.

*ACCS* is impressive in many ways. It makes a significant portion of the patristic heritage available in a delightfully practical (and affordable) package. By doing an immense amount of reading, sifting, excerpting, translating, and organizing, the editors have saved readers an enormous amount of time. Each volume collects some of the best material gleaned from many works (some formerly unavailable in English) into a condensed space. Its organization and contents render each volume a flexible tool: the reader may either work through the commentary sequentially as a sort of devotional Bible reading companion or consult an assortment of patristic comments on specific passages. The focus of the series on patristic commentary and homily sources keeps the excerpts close to the biblical text, producing results most likely to catch the attention of those

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61 A catena is a “chain,” consisting of brief quotations from the Fathers in a continuous string of commentary.
engaged in regular Bible interpretation. In an effort to incorporate as many interesting and helpful comments as possible, the series has not shied away from including influential heterodox thinkers such as Origen and Pelagius (ca. 350–ca. 425), along with lesser-known Fathers, such as Ambrosiaster and Philoxenos of Mabbug, whose comments on Scripture are important.

However, I am disappointed with ACCS in a number of ways. The volumes provide little information about the Fathers they quote, beyond providing names and dates. Brief biographical orientations to each Father, even just a sentence or two, would enable readers to connect more easily with them and to contextualize their contributions. The inclusion of biblical text is also problematic. The editors should make it clearer that the biblical texts the Fathers read sometimes vary from those of most modern versions—indeed they were often closer to the King James Version than to the RSV. Also, though the editors claim to be inclusive of Eastern Fathers who are less known to Western readers, the inclusion of Eastern (e.g., Syriac) interpretations is limited, with a number of rich resources left out or only sparingly consulted. The method of selection creates another problem. The series deliberately limits itself to the Fathers’ exegetical writings, with some exceptions. This is understandable. Editors are able to survey only so many texts, after all, and the running commentaries of most of the patristic exegetical texts have contents that are portable into the ACCS format. However, many other patristic texts (e.g., doctrinal treatises, epistles) also teem with biblical citations and allusions. Naturally, a project such as this must have boundaries. Though delaying the project and increasing volume length would be unfortunate, it is also unfortunate that many rich insights into the biblical text have been systematically excluded because they do not occur in the right genre.

A final criticism is also connected to methods of excerpt selection. Not all the volume editors follow the same methods. The volume on Mark’s Gospel draws from numerous ancient sources, presenting a wide selection of brief excerpts. By contrast, the Matthew volume focuses heavily on the exegeses of a handful of Fathers, presenting generally longer quotations from Augustine and Chrysostom chiefly—in spite of the fact that a greater variety of patristic commentary exists for Matthew’s Gospel than for any of the other Gospels. Furthermore, the continuous presentation of Augustine and Chrysostom on Matthew is helpful, but casting a broader net would in this case have been more faithful to the breadth of the patristic tradition and the explicit aims of the series. For example, the brevity of the excerpts in the Mark volume accents in another way the difficulty of achieving balance in a project such as this: this way of presenting the Fathers creates the problem of removing passages from their contexts. The editors sometimes include a fair amount of context, enough to catch the gist of a Father’s thought. Some of the Fathers’ ideas, however, become

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62 The later volumes appear to be addressing this problem more adequately; see ACCS, Old Testament 1 (Genesis), xl–xiv.
clear only after reading several paragraphs; hence editors appear to have preferred selecting comments that express ideas concisely, in easily digestible chunks. The ACCS anthology is useful, but it cannot substitute for the patristic contexts themselves. On the plus side, one of the strengths of ACCS is its utility as a sort of annotated index to the Fathers' own, full texts. Users will find ACCS a helpful first reference before they consult the Fathers' original contexts. Yet ACCS is not an exhaustive compendium of patristic exegesis, but more of a generally faithful representation of the broad contours of patristic interpretation.

In spite of these problems, ACCS makes a unique and beneficial contribution to the commentary genre, of great value to professional exegetes, preachers, Bible teachers, or even lay persons who welcome thoughtful stimulation in their Bible reading. Eerdmans is working on a parallel multi-volume series under the editorship of Robert L. Wilken entitled The Church's Bible, the first volume of which has yet to appear. 63 Having received assurances that it will not merely replicate the work being done by Oden and InterVarsity Press, we wait to see how it will measure up to ACCS.

Conclusion

As Christopher Hall explains in his companion volume to ACCS, we all strive to be good Bible readers. The Fathers are helpful to us because they read the Bible well. This is not to say that every patristic interpretation is correct or admirable, nor that the modern interpreter will always agree with a Father's specific conclusions about a passage. It does not mean that we ought to relinquish the gains of modern interpretive approaches. The Fathers read the Bible well because they read it in church community with the aims of faithful preaching, spiritual growth, and pastoral care. 64 They approach Scripture from within a communal environment, adhering to values that resonate with the aims and tasks of contemporary ministry. I have observed that for Ian Fair the crucible and final testing ground of theological reflection, beginning with sound Bible interpretation, is the life of the Church. This essay seeks to honor that spirit by providing orientation to the use of patristic exegesis—a resource for spiritual growth and the practice of ministry that is basically compatible with the ideal that good theology is always done for the church, by the church, in the church. The proliferating assortment of handy tools (e.g., ACCS) opens a window on this valuable resource—as Theodoret (393–460) says: "In the future life we shall attain perfection. But in the present life we need all the help we can get." 65

63 See the notice in Blowers, In Dominico Eloquio, xiv.
64 See Christopher A. Hall, Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 191–99.
65 ACCS 8.167.
IAN FAIR and I, after biking or jogging together, relax in a hot tub and consider issues relating to Scripture and church. One question we have considered is the topic of this essay: How is the text of Acts 19:1–7 to be explained in light of Luke’s overall scheme, especially with regard to the “unusual” way in which the Holy Spirit was bestowed by the laying on of hands (vs. 6)? This is one of three texts in Acts in which the bestowal of the Spirit on converts seems to depart from the usual pattern. It is also one of three cases (four if Acts 8:18 fits) in which speaking in tongues results.

The Gift of the Holy Spirit in Acts

Luke’s literary style sets down controlling texts in the beginning of a book or a discussion. These controls are then foundational for reading the rest of his words. Luke 3:10–14 sets the agenda for the rest of the gospel with regard to repentance. The synagogue reading of Isaiah 61:1, 2 (Luke 4:18f.), along with Jesus’ subsequent application of it to himself (vs. 21) sets the program for his ministry. Later in Luke 4:31–6:11, Luke presents the authority of Jesus in a number of ways (over infirmity, demons, nature, sins) as constitutive for his subsequent writing (cf. Luke 4:32, 35f.; 5:6, 10, 13, 31; 6:5). The beginning of Jesus’ fateful journey to Jerusalem (9:51) is to be understood against the background of the passion saying in 9:31. The journey section (9:51–19:27) reminds the reader that Jesus was on his way to his death.

Such a programmatic, normative passage also occurs in Acts 2:38. The initial preaching about the resurrected Christ cut to the hearts of the hearers at Pentecost (2:37), and they cried for mercy. Peter’s response echoed the words of John the Baptist in his call for repentance and baptism for forgiveness of sins, but Peter added two new elements to the former preaching. Now baptism was to be in the name of Jesus (cf. Rom. 6:1–4), and those who responded were to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Luke intends the reader to assume that all subsequent conversions in Acts took place on these terms. Certainly, varied language is used in Acts to describe conversions, but unless we assume the process was never standardized, then all the “elements” of 2:37f. should be present in each case. The most common descriptor in Acts is some reference to
faith or belief (4:4, 32; 5:14; 9:42; 10:43; 11:17, 21 etc.). Next come references to baptism (2:41; 8:38; 10:47f.; 16:15, 32; 18:8; 19:5; 22:16), then “obey” and “obedience to the faith” (5:32; 6:7), “turned to the Lord” (9:35; 14:15), repentance (20:21; 26:20), and “joined” (17:4, 34). Luke was not interested in saying everything in every case because he was not plagued with today’s divisions over these issues and because he had already given the “control” in 2:38, to which reference could constantly be made.

It was at the point of baptism (preceded by faith and a penitent heart) that God bestowed the Holy Spirit. This view is supported by all the relevant texts in Luke-Acts. The only apparent aberration is in Acts 10:44–48, but these verses, on closer examination, are supportive as well. Luke prepares for the view of Acts on the Spirit by describing the reception of the Spirit by Jesus at his baptism (Luke 3:22).

In the third person account of Paul’s conversion, Ananias told Paul that Jesus had sent him so Paul could be filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:17). The complement to this text in Acts 22:16 says Ananias bade Paul to arise and be baptized, calling on Jesus’ name, so that his sins would be washed away. Noteworthy is that these texts in Acts repeat the two “new” elements found in Acts 2:38, the name of Jesus and receipt of the Holy Spirit.

As indicated, the only seeming exception to this pattern is found in Acts 10:44–48. One can imagine Peter’s difficulty, despite divine urging (Acts 10:9–16, 19, 34f.), in offering salvation to Gentiles who had not first converted to Judaism. To do so would seem to invalidate all the rich history and ritual of God’s chosen people. Peter seems to have stopped just short of calling on Cornelius and his people for response when God sent the Holy Spirit on “all who heard the word” (vs. 44). When this happened, Peter was amazed as the Gentiles spoke in tongues. Peter’s response, “can anyone forbid water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have” (vs. 47), makes sense when we recognize that in every other instance the coming of the Spirit was at baptism. The leaping of the immense gap between Jew and Gentile called for a decisive, divine impulse. The use of tongues was such an undeniable demonstration that the Spirit had come and thus that the entire proceeding was the work of God. Nowhere else do we find the gift of the Spirit preceding baptism because this was a once in history event of the greatest moment.

This bestowal of the Spirit was similar to the baptism of the Spirit promised by John (Acts 11:16f.). This case and the Pentecostal experience are the only instances where the granting of the Spirit is called a baptism (Acts 1:4; 2:1–4). The baptism of the Spirit, rather than being one of a number of “measures” of the Spirit, thus describes the overwhelming nature of the experience. Not only was the phenomenon itself remarkable, but the occasion marked the beginning of the “last days” (Acts 2:17, quoting Joel 2:28) and of the church.

In Acts 19:2, when Paul learned that the twelve had not received the Spirit, his next question concerned their baptism since the reception of the Spirit was
connected with baptism in Jesus' name, not the baptism of John. Other references in Acts clearly indicate that the Holy Spirit was the endowment of the church, but are not as clear in connecting it with baptism. However, Acts 5:32 does say that the Spirit was given to those who obeyed God, and Peter and John prayed that Samaritans who had been baptized would receive the Spirit (Acts 8:15f.). A number of references in Acts show the Spirit purifying the church (5:3, 9), enabling difficulties to be met victoriously (4:31; 6:3, 5), or, especially, empowering the proclamation of the gospel (e.g., 4:8; 6:10; 8:29; 10:19; 13:4). Acts never indicates that the Spirit descended upon the unconverted to make conversion possible. Rather, it was an in-house blessing, active to further God's purposes through his people.

To restate what was said earlier, four texts in Acts are bound together by common, and atypical, elements. In Acts 2:4; 10:46; and 19:6 those affected were able to speak in tongues. In Acts 2 speaking in tongues is clearly identified as foreign languages (vss. 7–11, especially 11) since the apostles were "telling ... the mighty works of God" (vs. 11). Peter's explanatory citation of Joel 2:28f. did not mention tongues, but the equation with prophecy appears in Acts 2, 17, and 18. A supernatural event had transpired that had the ultimate goal of leading to salvation through Jesus' name (vs. 21).

The coming of the Spirit thus inaugurated the new age. The sound like wind and the sight like fire (2:2f.) may have been witnessed only by the "all" of verse 1 (probably the apostles, although some would argue for the one hundred twenty of Acts 1:15), but the tongues were obvious to all the "multitude." Yet once the tongues had attracted attention and verified the coming of the Spirit, they were not mentioned again in Acts 2, especially not in 2:42–47, where one might have expected a reference if they were a continuing part of church life. We hold that the gift ceased when it had verified the coming of the Spirit. If someone claimed that the Spirit had come, that claim might be disputed by witnesses. But such a dispute would be negated when the tongues verified the bestowal.

In Acts 10:46 the Spirit fell upon the Gentiles and they spoke in tongues, to the amazement of Peter and the Jewish believers present. The content of their inspired speech is described as "extolling God." As in Acts 2, there is no indication of any continuing role of the tongues in the lives of the church or the converts. In this remarkable episode the tongues were an audible demonstration of the coming of the Spirit. How else would the Jewish Christians present know Gentiles had received the Spirit? The tongues were undeniable proof.

In Acts 19:1–7 the "about twelve" who were rebaptized in Jesus' name and received the Holy Spirit "spoke in tongues and prophesied." Once again the tongues verified the coming of the Spirit and validated the second immersion of these "disciples."

We should probably add to these texts Acts 8:18. When the Samaritans had received the Spirit, Simon "saw the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands." Unless there was some empirical evidence, Simon would only
have noted two men touching certain Samaritans, but something besides that happened. Since in the three other cases cited it was the gift of tongues, it is likely that this was the case here as well.

Thus we have three, or probably four, cases in which a special gift of tongues verified an action of God. Further, in the last three cases (Acts 8, 10, and 19) there was a departure from the normative coming of the Spirit at baptism indicated in 2:38. In Acts 8 and 19 the gift came by the laying on of hands, subsequent to baptism (though Acts 19:6 could be interpreted as the act of baptizing) and Acts 10 presents the solitary instance of the advent of the Spirit preceding baptism. Each of these four cases was a watershed moment in the early church, thus necessitating God’s special action.


The second case occurs in Acts 8, where the gospel moved out of the purely Jewish context into the Samaritan world. The gospel of Luke prepared us for this with three unique stories involving Samaritans (9:51–56; 10:25ff.; 17:11–17). Much uncertainty exists about the Samaritans since most sources of information are late and not all the available traditions can be considered reliable.

Later Samaritan traditions regard Moses as the tāhib, the restorer or coming one, but it is difficult to know if this was a part of Samaritan theology at the time of the episode in Acts 8. Even with the uncertainties regarding the Samaritans and with the recognition that their faith, like that of the Jews, may have been splintered enough that one cannot speak of a “normative” Samaritanism, there is no question about the strain, if not the break, between them and the Jews.

The record of the Samaritan mission in Acts 8:4–25 is remarkable indeed. A Jewish preacher, Philip, entered hostile territory, proclaiming a Jewish Messiah. His message would have challenged Samaritan thought. Yet the Samaritans were receptive, and both men and women were baptized. No doubt the signs done by Philip, including notable exorcisms and healings of paralytics, were a powerful incentive to attend carefully to his message. Startling exhibitions of divine power overcame theological scruples. The Samaritans were not asked to convert to Judaism, but to a “new” faith, albeit at the time an exclusively Jewish one.

If preaching to the Samaritans did not leap the great gulf breached in the case of Cornelius (Acts 10), at least it did have to jump a lesser divide. These conversions augured further evangelism beyond strictly Jewish limits. Would the church in Jerusalem accept this bold outreach? They did, indeed, sending Peter and John, who confirmed the previous work of Philip. Contrary to the usual manner of the bestowal of the Spirit, in this case it was through the prayers and
laying on of hands by Peter and John that the Spirit came on the converts. The coming of the Spirit in this atypical way both showed divine approval and sent an unmistakable message to any doubters in the Jewish church. Had this been a conversion of Jews, as in 2:41, 47; 3:4 and 6:7, such a special circumstance would not have occurred, but the situation called for divine activity, apparently in empirically observable forms. We now have seen two significant circumstances in which God made his will clear and demonstrated it in special ways.

The third case is the opening of the Gentile ministry. Its radical nature is clear by the extensiveness with which Acts treats it, telling the story in chapter 10, with inner story repetitions (10:22, 28, 30–33), and by the difficulty experienced by the church in accepting it (11:1–18; 15:1–32). Jewish Christians understandably question whether God would change the laws that had stood for centuries. What of circumcision, food laws, Sabbaths, and temple festivals? What consequences would come if a community were formed in which Jews and Gentiles were equal in Christ?

Nonetheless, Acts 10 opens up the call of the gospel to the entire human race through the conversion of Cornelius. Even though Peter seemed to have been inching toward a broader understanding (cf. 9:43), he was reluctant to take this evangelistic step. He argued with God when told to eat unclean food (vs. 14). The Holy Spirit had to prod him into meeting Cornelius's Gentile emissaries (vss. 19, 20). On arriving in Caesarea, he acknowledged that he had learned that God would save those from any nation without obligating them to convert to Israel’s faith. But as he preached Christ (vss. 38–43) and announced the offer of forgiveness of sins to “everyone who believes in him,” we might see him as reluctant to make a call for decision.

It was an epic moment. At that time God stepped in and did what Scripture records as a once-in-history event. He sent the Spirit on the Gentile hearers, making it clear he accepted them on the terms Peter had announced. The “believers from among the circumcised” called for the baptism of those who had received the Spirit because they knew the connection between baptism and the Spirit. This instance is bound to Acts 2 and 8 by the gift of tongues and by the departure from the norm in the bestowal of the Spirit. Again it would appear that these two phenomena, in the theology of Acts, mark watershed events in the story of the early church.

The Gift of the Spirit in Acts 19

One more instance of the gift of tongues and an unusual bestowal to the Spirit appears in Acts 19:1–7. This text, with its rebaptism of “about” twelve men who had previously been immersed with John’s baptism, has the two elements we have noted in Acts 2, 8, and 10. Verse 6 seems to indicate that Paul laid his hands on the twelve subsequent to their baptism and “the Holy Spirit
came on them.” The same verse says they consequently spoke in tongues and prophesied.

Other parallels exist between this passage and Acts 2:38. In that text two new elements went beyond what John’s baptism had done. That “new” baptism was in the name of Jesus and resulted in reception of the gift of the Holy Spirit. The same two elements appear in Acts 19. In verse 5 they were baptized “in the name of the Lord Jesus,” and in verse 6 they received the Spirit.

Since each of the other cases in Acts displays an extraordinary granting of the Spirit and the gift of tongues, Luke apparently uses these markers to indicate circumstances of special moment. That is relatively clear in chapters 2, 8, and 10. If the same theology prevails here, this was also a significant event. But what was its significance? Clearly the story does demonstrate the necessity of the indwelling Spirit for the life to which God calls people. A survey of the more than fifty references to the Spirit in Acts reveals how central the power of the Spirit was in the life of the church. Expanding the survey to include Paul (cf. Rom. 8; Gal. 5:22–23) makes the point clearer. But the circumstances of this text seem to imply more than their spiritual need. Acts 2, 8, and 10 deal with people who, rather than being complete foreigners to the gospel message, were already partly “in the way.” Jews (Acts 2) were monotheists who hoped for the coming of a messiah. Samaritans (Acts 8) were also monotheists and in most respects shared the same faith as Israel’s. Cornelius (Acts 10) seems to have been a God-fearer. Acts 10:2 makes his piety explicit. The twelve in Acts 19 knew the prospective preaching of Jesus done by John and had been baptized as penitents, who were thus forgiven. Thus in Acts 2, 8, 10, and 19, believers who were “on the way” were fully drawn into the new people of God, his true Israel.

All this means that in the church or churches to which Luke wrote, the inclusion of those whom the twelve represented was as fully in need of divine demonstration as the conversions of the Samaritans and the Gentiles. This fact raises this situation to a position of greater importance than is often assumed. If this was not an urgent concern to Luke, then why was the situation mentioned, and why is it set apart by the two markers found only in Acts 2, 8, and 10? It was necessary for God to demonstrate that those like the twelve must be rebaptized, and that in so doing Paul was acting properly.

Thus some sort of John the Baptist groups or individuals existed within the area of Luke’s readership, and Luke needed to make it clear how they should respond to the Christian message. Whether such people were part of Luke’s churches or they operated independently, it was important that the church be unified, composed only of those baptized in Jesus’ name and in receipt of the Holy Spirit.


To understand Acts 19, one must look more broadly at the portrayal in Luke-Acts of John the Baptist. He appears in Luke as a man sent from God, and
to reject him and his message was to reject God (Luke 1:13–17; 7:20f., 26; 16:16; 20:6–8). This heightens the importance of John’s role as one preparing the way for Jesus. He was not trying to draw men to himself, but to lead them to another, hence the story in Acts 19:1–6.

Luke, in recording the circumstances surrounding the birth and infancy of John in chapter 1, gives a wealth of information found only in his gospel. Yet the texts are carefully juxtaposed with texts about Jesus, showing the superiority of the latter and depicting John as the harbinger.

Gabriel announced that both John (1:13–20) and Jesus (1:31–37) would be conceived supernaturally, but John would be a “prophet of the Most High” (1:76) whereas Jesus would be the “Son of the Most High” (1:32). Zechariah doubted God’s promise (1:20) while Mary believed (1:38, 45). The parallel literary forms in which these two episodes are related underscore the superiority of Jesus.

The two narratives come together in 1:39–45, where John, a fetus in his mother’s womb, leaped for joy at the presence of the “mother of my Lord” (1:43). The birth of John in 1:57–66 parallels the more extensive and spectacular birth of Jesus in 2:1–20. In Zechariah’s speech at John’s birth, he emphasized the role of his son in preparing the way for the Lord (1:76). At the end of chapter 1, Luke moves John aside and gives exclusive attention to Jesus throughout chapter 2.

Further indications of John as the one preparing the way are found in the OT quotation in 3:4, in the call for repentance (an early instance of the kingdom ethic in 3:10–14), and in John’s self-humiliation in deference to the coming one (1:15–17). In Luke 7:18–23 John sent his disciples to Jesus. In Luke 11:1 John’s teaching about prayer was a sort of preparation, for it led Jesus’ disciples to inquire for further prayer instruction.

Also, apparently John’s disciples (or some of them) continued a special lifestyle. Were they congregational or formed in cell groups? Information is lacking, but given the continuance of their particular devotions, some kind of group activity cannot be ruled out.

John’s disciples fasted often and prayed (Luke 5:33), but so did many Jews. This specific reference indicates something special, distinct from usual Jewish piety, and may well imply some kind of separated or partly separated cadre of disciples. Luke 11:1 also refers to their prayers, but the context implies special prayer instruction from John. The content of such prayers is not given, but we might suppose it had to do with repentance and the coming kingdom.

The continued existence of a Johannine group even after their leader was martyred is implied by the popular opinion about Jesus in the views of the people reflected by Herod (Luke 9:7–9) and the twelve (9:19). Regard for John did not diminish, Luke 20:6 indicates. The Jewish leaders, put on the defensive by Jesus, refused to deny that John’s baptism was from heaven because to say it was from
men would lead "all the people to . . . stone" them. This is an exceedingly strong regard for a teacher who had been dead for some time.

Thus there is no doubt of the importance of John in Luke's gospel. Perhaps most significant in this survey is Luke's "minimizing" of John in a way that did not diminish his role in the divine plan, but did move him aside so that his disciples would ultimately follow Jesus. Luke does not wish to encourage an inappropriate regard for John, such as characterized those about whom he was concerned in Acts 19:1-7.

In addition to the aforementioned texts, others in Luke-Acts treat John the Baptist and his disciples:

(1) In Luke 3:21 Jesus was baptized, but Luke does not indicate that John performed the act. In fact, in the previous verse John had been imprisoned by Herod. A naive reader would conclude that John did not baptize Jesus. Luke certainly knew from his source that the baptism was performed by the Baptist (cf. Mark 1:9). But he chose not to tell his readers that, thus minimizing the role of John.

(2) Luke 5:33 refers to John's disciples fasting often and offering prayers. Mark 2:18 describes the same action, while in Luke there is only a report of it. Thus it seems Luke gives a bit less prominence to John than does Mark.

(3) Luke omits Matt 11:12-15 (presuming he knew the tradition, which is likely, given the relation of John to Elijah in Luke 1:15). This Matthean text specifically identifies John with Elijah.

(4) Luke 7:18ff. tells of John sending two of his disciples to ask Jesus if he was the coming one. Matthew 11:2 notes that John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ. Except in 3:20, Luke omits any reference to his imprisonment prior to John's martyrdom. Then, in Luke 7:21 only Luke indicates that Jesus responded to John's messengers by curing and exorcising "at that hour." This serves to strengthen the position of Jesus vis-à-vis John when compared to Matthew's account. It was as if to say that Jesus, not John, did such wonders. Luke, like Matthew, directs the attention of John's disciples to Jesus.

(5) One of the most remarkable cases is Luke's omission of the lengthy account of John's death detailed in Mark 6:17-29 and Matthew 14:3-12. This significant event receives only passing mention in Luke 9:7-9, with Herod's remark that he had beheaded John. Otherwise, Luke's readers would not know that John had been executed. Since Luke apparently did not wish to contribute to any high regard for a martyr, he bypassed the martyrdom with only a sideways glance. Luke 9:9 seems to have Herod saying that due to John's decapitation, Jesus could not be the risen John. Mark 6:16 seems to leave the possibility open in the forum of public opinion.

(6) Luke shows a special interest in Herod Antipas (cf. 3:1; 8:3; 13:31f.; and especially 23:6-13, 15, all of which are unique to Luke). Why, then, did he omit one of the most notable acts of Herod found in Matthew and Mark—the execution of John?
(7) In Luke 11:1 Jesus’ disciples asked to be taught a prayer “as John taught his disciples.” The subsequent instruction in the Lord’s Prayer tells the reader that the prayer content taught by John had now been supplanted.

(8) Luke chooses to omit certain personal details found in Mark regarding John, including the reference to those whom he baptized confessing their sins (1:5) and the reference to John’s dress and diet (1:6).

Some of these instances are more probative than others, and there are details about John given only in Luke (besides chapter 1, already noted, cf. 3:10–14). In sum, however, Luke omits the evidence that would encourage individuals to remain with, or become a part of, a “John the Baptist” group.

A final concern is whether such “Baptist” communities can be documented for Luke’s place and period. This is virtually impossible to demonstrate since we do not know exactly when or where Luke wrote. Some have argued that some of the John the Baptist material in the Synoptics is theological in the sense that earlier traditions have been “remodeled” to suit the purpose of each author. It would follow from this that the Lukan material in chapters 1 and 3, since it is more extensive than that in the other Synoptics, could argue for a continued interest in John at this later period. Luke’s indications of the piety of John’s disciples (fasting, praying) and the case of Apollos (Acts 18:24ff.), if taken at face value, demonstrate the continued vitality of the Johannine relationship.

Conclusion

The people represented by the twelve posed a serious problem for Luke’s readers. One can imagine questions arising about what was required of them for complete inclusion in the church. What was their relation to the church? Were they an outside group? If so, were they friendly, or were they rivals? The fact they are designated “disciples” seems to argue against their being an outside group. If they were an inside group, were they insisting that they were in full fellowship with the rest of the community? Were there intrachurch disputes regarding the validity of their response to God’s call through John’s baptism? Did they consider themselves full members or “half members”? How did others in the church consider them? These and other issues apparently swirled around those who had received John’s baptism.

What was the church to do? This issue could become seriously divisive. Luke’s answer was “they must be rebaptized.” Only then would they be in relation to Christ, their Savior. Only then would they be invested with the gift of God’s Spirit. Luke may not have been the first to enunciate this requirement, but he is the first and only witness we have indicating this answer to a perplexing ecclesiological problem.
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Throughout its history the church has had problems knowing exactly how to understand the Holy Spirit. The earliest creeds give the Holy Spirit only passing mention as Christians struggled to articulate an understanding of God’s nature. One of the chief theological differences between the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox Churches revolves around the question of whether the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father through the Son or equally from the Father and the Son.

In general, two tendencies surface in church history regarding the place and work of the Spirit. One leans toward the ecstatic and irrational, the other toward the calm and rational. The first sees the Holy Spirit active in the conversion of sinners and in the life of Christians directly, apart from other means. The other sees the Spirit’s work inseparably and uniquely linked to the words and ideas conveyed by the written word—the Bible. One generally sees a literal personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit in Christians; the other may see only a figurative...
indwelling as Christians take the words and ideas of Scripture into their mind and draw spiritual strength from them.

The extremes of these two positions have squared off against each other in practically every age. The Montanists of the second century elicited strong opposition to their ecstatic, anti-institutional message. Joachim of Fiore in the twelfth century and the Pietists Philip Jacob Spener and August Hermann Francke in the seventeenth and eighteenth agitated upholders of orthodoxy in their day. Rationalists were pitted against mystics, revivalists against anti-revivalists, holiness advocates against older mainstream denominations. 3

In its beginnings in the early nineteenth century, the Stone-Campbell Movement embodied both tendencies. Although some danger exists in caricaturing the differences between the two most important thought shapers of the early movement, Barton W. Stone and Alexander Campbell, no one can dispute that Stone tended toward the more active, irrational view of the Spirit and Campbell toward the rationalist understanding.

Campbell’s beliefs about the work of the Holy Spirit were greatly affected by what he viewed as the excesses of the emotional camp meetings and revivals of his day. He readily admitted that the Spirit must move persons toward salvation, but the Spirit does that in the same way any person moves another—by persuasion with words and ideas:

Now we cannot separate the Spirit and the Word of God, and ascribe so much power to the one and so much to the other; for so did not the Apostles. Whatever the word does, the Spirit does, and whatever the Spirit does in the work of converting, the word does. We neither believe nor teach abstract Spirit nor abstract word, but word and Spirit, Spirit and word. But the Spirit is not promised to any persons outside of Christ. It is promised only to them who believe and obey him. 4

This statement sums up Campbell’s teaching: the Holy Spirit works only through the word in the conversion of sinners and at baptism is given to the Christian as a gift. 5 The precise nature of that gift of the Holy Spirit is not always clear in Campbell, however. At times he seems to indicate a literal personal indwelling in the Christian, while at others he seems to say that the Spirit works only through the word. An article from a series on the Holy Spirit in 1831 is characteristic of his statements:

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[T]he Spirit of God puts forth all its converting and sanctifying power in the words which it fills with its ideas. . . . If the Spirit of God has spoken all its arguments; or, if the Old and New Testament contain all the arguments which can be offered to reconcile man to God, and to purify them who are reconciled, then all the power of the Holy Spirit which can operate on the human mind is spent.6

Many of his later followers would certainly understand him to mean that the Spirit operated now only through the written word.

Barton W. Stone, on the other hand, rejected the notion that the Spirit worked only through the words and ideas of Scripture. He never repudiated his belief that the Holy Spirit was at work in the activities of the Cane Ridge meeting of 1801 and other such revival meetings, and he insisted all his life that the union of Christians sought by the movement he helped begin would never happen until Christians were filled with the Spirit. Near the end of his life he wrote concerning the gift of the Holy Spirit:

Acts 2:38 “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is to you and your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” This is the ancient gospel. For the first part of Acts 2:38–39 we strenuously contend, why not for the second also? Was not this spirit to abide with the apostles forever? and also with all Christians, who are the temple of the Holy Ghost? If the temple be destitute of the Spirit, it has ceased to be the temple of God; but if the Spirit yet dwells in his temple, is its power diminished? Which of the divine writers says so?7

After the union of many of the churches from the Stone and Campbell Movements beginning in 1832, Stone’s views were largely eclipsed by Campbell’s. Some historians have said that Stone finally accepted Campbell’s more rationalistic teachings, while others insist that until his death in 1844 Stone believed the Holy Spirit was active in the conversion of sinners and the life of the Christian.8 In either case, the understanding of an active role of the Holy Spirit before or after conversion apart from Scripture was increasingly a minority position in the movement as the nineteenth century progressed.

Churches of Christ in Reaction to the Three Waves of the Spirit

The Holiness and Pentecostal Movements

Just as Churches of Christ were emerging as congregations distinct from the Christian Churches or Disciples in the late nineteenth century, another major

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movement in American church history was taking shape. Since the 1830s certain persons in the Methodist Church had become increasingly concerned about the lack of emphasis on the Wesleyan doctrine of Christian perfection, or holiness. John Wesley had taught that Christians should seek what was often called in the nineteenth century a "second blessing" subsequent to conversion that produced "entire sanctification" in the Christian. Some at least understood Wesley to mean an instantaneous event that resulted in Christian perfection. 9

After the Civil War advocates of the Wesleyan holiness doctrine established the National Camp Meeting Association for the Promotion of Holiness, later called the National Holiness Association. Though initially not wishing to split from Methodism and the other established denominations, many holiness advocates began to "come out" and form their own churches in the 1880s and 1890s. The Church of the Nazarene (itself a merger of several smaller bodies) is one of the most important of these Holiness churches. 

In some late nineteenth-century Holiness circles the second blessing was increasingly referred to as "the baptism of the Holy Spirit." A few Holiness preachers began to adopt the doctrine, attributed to Charles Fox Parham and his students at Bethel Bible College in Topeka, Kansas, in 1901, that the invariable evidence one had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit was speaking in tongues. Many other holiness advocates, however, rejected the glossolalia doctrine. Those who accepted it became known after 1906 as Pentecostals. 10

Churches of Christ seem to have taken relatively little notice of the Holiness and Pentecostal movements in their journal literature. That is especially surprising since the strongholds of those movements were often the same as those of Churches of Christ. For example, the New Testament Church of Christ, a holiness body that later became part of the Church of the Nazarene, began at Milan, Tennessee, near Nashville, a center of numerical strength for Churches of Christ. 11

Churches of Christ at the beginning of the twentieth century, however, were very much involved with their own problems. The internal fights with the Christian Churches/Disciples of Christ still demanded a tremendous amount of energy. Furthermore, Churches of Christ were turning more strongly than ever toward the rational aspects of their heritage, feeling increasingly at home with assumptions of modern thought and rejecting what Richard Hughes has called the apocalyptic strain in their heritage. 12


10 Ibid., 84–112.

11 Ibid., 49.

Not that Churches of Christ were not challenged by the Holiness and Pentecostal movements. When, however, the claims of Holiness and Pentecostal advocates did confront them, they had a ready response from the most rationalistic part of the earlier movement, especially Alexander Campbell's reactions to the excesses of the camp meetings and revivals of his day. In the weekly question and answer section of the *Gospel Advocate*, David Lipscomb and others responded to periodic inquiries about the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the gift of the Spirit, and the continuation of miracles—all questions probably sparked by the Holiness/Pentecostal fervor of the day.

Though leading teachers in Churches of Christ in the 1890s took different positions on specifics, all agreed that the miraculous manifestations of the Spirit were no longer valid. David Lipscomb, for example, insisted that “[f]rom the days of the completion of scripture until this day, no human being has received the gift of the Spirit, or has been able to know truths without learning them in the ordinary way or been able to work a miracle.” 13 Also, “[t]he gifts were the miraculous powers bestowed by the Holy Spirit on the individuals for their own preaching and confirming the gospel. When God had revealed his perfect will, these gifts were all to vanish.” 14 Lipscomb equated the “gift of the Holy Spirit” with miraculous manifestations and rejected any modern gifts. He asserted that the way people today receive the Spirit is by receiving the word of God (the ideas and precepts of Scripture) into their heart. When they take the word of God into their heart, they receive the Spirit into their heart, “just as we place the germinal principle of the wheat into the soil. . . . When the word of God is cherished in the heart, then the Spirit of God dwells there. . . .” 15

As for the baptism of the Holy Spirit, Lipscomb explained:

> When the soul of man is completely overwhelmed by the Spirit of God he is baptized by the Spirit regardless of whether it was done by direct and miraculous outpouring of the Spirit, or by the gradual bringing of the man’s spirit under the influence of God’s Spirit. 16

He taught that in these times humans are under the scriptural laws of the Spirit that require a lifetime to effect the complete submission of the human spirit to God’s.

T. R. Burnett, longtime contributing editor for the *Gospel Advocate*, challenged Lipscomb’s idea of the Spirit’s inseparable connection to the word: “If the Spirit was in the word, then the Spirit entered into persons who were neither

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saved nor in the body. If the Spirit is in the word, then persons in disobedience have the Spirit given to them.”

Lipscomb defended his views in a long article in June 1898 in which he again used the image of the seed. Just as the spirit of the father is imparted to a child in the act of begetting—in the seed—the Holy Spirit enters the heart with the word of God—the seed of the kingdom. He implied that this is not merely taking in facts, but accepting the truth and believing in the word.

It is a contradiction of the laws of God in nature and grace to say that the spirit of the father is imparted to the child after the birth of the child. The unborn child is just as much the child of the father as it is after its birth. The person who believes is just as much the begotten of the father, the child of God, before it is baptized as it is afterwards.

He hastened to add that the child must continue the process and be born or it will perish. His point here was not about baptism. He was trying to be consistent with his logic that the Spirit dwells in the word of God.

Another idea advanced by Burnett and C. E. W. Dorris was that the Spirit resided in the spiritual body, the church—a kind of corporate or institutional indwelling. When people were added to the church through baptism, they received the Holy Spirit in the sense that they were then part of the spiritual body in which the Holy Spirit dwelt. E. G. Sewell taught that the gift of the Holy Spirit was the Spirit itself, given to all who obey the gospel to dwell in them. He explained that different measures of the Spirit were given in different eras. The miraculous spiritual manifestations were only for the age before the written word was completed.

Perhaps the classic statement of the idea that the Spirit operates only through the written word came from the pen of longtime preacher Z. T. (Zachary Taylor) Sweeney. His book *The Spirit and the Word: A Treatise on the Holy Spirit in the Light of a Rational Interpretation of the Word of God* was first published in 1919 by the Christian Standard Company and was later reprinted by the Gospel Advocate Company. Sweeney’s succinct argument would do credit to any medieval scholastic or modern logician. First, he asserted that everything claimed to be effected by a personal indwelling of the Spirit could be accomplished by the Spirit acting through the word of God. He then proceeded to

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examine every Scripture that might be used by advocates of a literal personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit. He concluded by saying,

In the above cases we have covered all the conceivable things a direct indwelling Spirit could do for one, and have also shown that all these things the Spirit does through the word of God. It is not claimed that a direct indwelling of the Spirit makes any new revelations, adds any new reasons or offers any new motives than are found in the word of God. Of what use, then, would a direct indwelling Spirit be? God makes nothing in vain. We are necessarily, therefore, led to the conclusion that, in dealing with his children today, God deals with them in the same psychological way that he deals with men in inducing them to become children. This conclusion is strengthened by the utter absence of any test by which we could know the Spirit dwells in us, if such were the case.21

Sweeney’s argument is in essence a restatement of Alexander Campbell’s rationalistic statements on the subject and apparently became the dominant teaching in Churches of Christ. E. G. Sewell’s view that the Holy Spirit literally dwells in the Christian, though without miraculous manifestations such as tongues and healing, seems to have been the other major position within Churches of Christ. Yet that idea was largely eclipsed at the turn of the century by the so-called “word-only” view.

Clearly, Churches of Christ were partly defined in the early twentieth century by their rejection of Holiness and Pentecostal understandings of the Holy Spirit. Their rational foundations stood unthreatened by what they generally ridiculed as ignorant nonsense.22 While anecdotal evidence suggests some losses to those movements, Churches of Christ in general were not menaced by them.

**The Charismatic Movement**

It was the second “wave of the Spirit” that began to challenge the identity and cohesion of Churches of Christ significantly. Unlike the earlier Pentecostal movement, the charismatic movement of the mid-twentieth century encouraged those who believed they had received the second blessing—again with the evidence of speaking in tongues—to remain in their religious groups. This would allow adherents to spread the doctrine of Holy Spirit baptism and effect spiritual renewal in the existing denominations.

The charismatic, or Neo-Pentecostal, movement is usually said to have begun with the work of Demos Shakarian, millionaire dairyman from southern California, and a Pentecostal. In 1951 he founded the Full Gospel Business Men’s Fellowship International, an organization designed to allow Pentecostal businesspeople to “witness” to non-Pentecostals. Through local prayer breakfasts and regional and national conventions, non-Pentecostals were confronted with,


and often experienced, the “baptism of the Holy Spirit” as Pentecostal doctrine understood it. Converts came from practically all groups—Episcopalian, Presbyterians, Southern Baptists, Roman Catholics, and members of Churches of Christ.  

By the mid-1960s there was increasing tension in Churches of Christ over this issue. Articles began to appear in reaction to the so-called “tongues movement.” But the controversy began in earnest on Churches of Christ when at the 1966 Abilene Christian College Lectureship four speakers advocated the literal, personal, indwelling of the Spirit in the Christian. Robert Oglesby, Bob D. Smith, Eddie Couch, and Duane Evans all insisted that a proper understanding of the Holy Spirit included his direct indwelling and empowering of the Christian. While none advocated miracles or tongues, they offered a challenge to the word-only view that had been dominant since the early part of the century.

Proponents of the word-only theory were quick to respond. Several articles and series appeared in the *Firm Foundation* through the rest of 1966 and 1967, with the paper’s editor, Reuel Lemmons, and Perry B. Cotham leading the opposition. J. D. Thomas of ACC then penned an eleven-article series championing the literal indwelling position. He later published the articles as a book titled *The Spirit and Spirituality*. Rebuttals followed in editorials by Lemmons and a series by H. A. (“Buster”) Dobbs, another word-only proponent. In the spring of 1967 Lemmons published still another series against the literal indwelling idea written by Foy E. Wallace Jr., which was also later published as a book, *The Mission and the Medium of the Holy Spirit*. This in turn was followed by another series by Abilene Christian College professor JW Roberts, who asserted, against Wallace and others, that the literal indwelling theory had been the most widely accepted in the nineteenth century.

Perhaps we need to take a second look at our idea of what has been “surely believed among the best minds of the Restoration Movement. . . .” I believe I know the literature of the movement as well as I know any area or body of knowledge. And this is the truth of the historical question.

This incident reflected the growing tensions in the fellowship aggravated by stories of “conversions” of leaders, including several elders and preachers in Churches of Christ, to charismatic belief and practice. In a publication of the Full Gospel Business Men’s Fellowship International titled *The Acts of the Holy Spirit in the Church of Christ Today*, fourteen former ministers and leaders in Churches of Christ gave their testimony of charismatic conversion. Perhaps the

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most spectacular event took place in 1969 when the popular actor and entertainer Pat Boone announced he had experienced a baptism of the Holy Spirit. His 1970 book *A New Song* met even stronger assertions from the word-only proponents that any other understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit would inevitably lead to what they characterized as the unbiblical and irrational beliefs and behavior evidenced by Boone and other "defectors."

That same year James D. Bales, a professor of Bible at Harding College in Searcy, Arkansas, published *Pat Boone and the Gift of Tongues*, and Guy N. Woods, a prominent minister and debater, published several articles in the *Gospel Advocate* asserting that any view other than the word-only teaching (though he rejected the term[@footnote:27]) was an aberration in the Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement.

The view that the Holy Spirit exercises an influence apart from and beyond that of the word of God [Bible] is a new, novel, and dangerous doctrine, unheard of in the churches of Christ until the last decade or two. We challenge any man among us to produce a statement from any prominent writer from the inception of the Restoration Movement until 1950 who taught that there is additional guidance and direction through the Spirit, not set out in God's word.[@footnote:28]

This was an obvious challenge to JW Roberts's earlier assertion. Woods reasoned that since the Holy Spirit is a person, he cannot literally abide in the person of another. The relation between persons is one of influence through moral suasion. In other words, the Spirit speaks to us through the words and ideas of Scripture, and in no other way. Woods sharply attacked minister Roy H. Lanier Sr., whose negative review of a widely circulated tract by Woods on the Holy Spirit had appeared in the *Firm Foundation* in late 1973.

When Brother Lanier affirms that the Holy Spirit is *actually* in the body of the Christian, I assume that he simply means that the Holy Spirit, an intelligent person, is in direct contact with, and has his abode in the mind of, the Christian. I doubt that he thinks the Holy Spirit has taken up residence in his big toe![@footnote:29]

In his 1976 book *Order in Reverse*, the widely known Abilene, Texas, minister E. R. Harper epitomized the real fear of those who held the word-only position. He began by identifying four positions on the Holy Spirit in the Churches of Christ of his day. The first was the word-only position that he strongly promoted. The second was, in his words,

those who believe . . . that somehow (they do not exactly understand how), the Holy Spirit's actual person dwells non-miraculously within the Christian's heart. I call this the "hibernation theory." This does no special harm to the [first] position since the Holy Spirit is said to perform no miraculous work upon the [person] in whom

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he dwells. The weakness of this position is not so much in the "position itself," but in its becoming the "breeding ground"... from which are born numbers three and four.30

Harper then proceeded to explain positions three and four. They are progressions that first admit the Spirit can and does do some things apart from the word—"without any assistance or help by or through any means, not even the word of God. Such is forced to be miraculous. This is what miraculous functions are." And the final fatal step was the claim of baptism of the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues, performing miracles, and advocating the possibility of modern revelations. He ended his description by comparing this progression of views of the role of the Holy Spirit to the progression seen in drug users from marijuana, to pep-pills, to heroin.31

When the charismatic movement began, some in Churches of Christ viewed the word-only doctrine of the Holy Spirit's work as cold and sterile. The seemingly deep and spiritually satisfying experiences of the charismatics attracted many. The leading voices in Churches of Christ who continued to assert that the Spirit acted only by helping one apprehend biblical facts seemed to provide little to a spiritually hungry generation. The other view from their heritage—that the Spirit does work beyond the written word—was heard increasingly in the decades of the 1960s and 1970s.

The Third Wave of the Spirit

What has been characterized as a "third wave" of the Spirit began to take shape in American religion especially in the 1980s. Though similar to the first (Pentecostal) and second (Charismatic) waves, the so-called third wave is different in several important ways.

First, those who identify with this movement believe that the gift of the Holy Spirit comes at conversion rather than as a second work of grace after the new birth. They reject tongues as the validation of a spiritual conversion experience, though accepting this as one of many legitimate spiritual gifts. Ideally they have tried to focus on ministering to others through a body of believers rather than on personal spiritual experiences. While they criticize what they see as the self-directing emphases in the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements, consciously focusing on praise and outreach, they have found it difficult to overcome the individualistic tendencies of Pentecostal and Charismatic theology.32

This so-called third wave is varied. Two early leaders, C. Peter Wagner and John Wimber, focused on activities such as healing, casting out demons, and

30 Ernest Rosenthal Harper, Order in Reverse (Birmingham, Ala.: Roberts & Son, 1976), xxv.
31 Ibid., xxvi–vii.
receiving prophecies, all understood to be activities of the Holy Spirit in them. They sometimes referred to what they were leading as the “Signs and Wonders” movement. An emphasis is on turning people toward the written word and generally insisting that any message people believe they have received from the Holy Spirit must be tested by the sword of the Spirit, the Scriptures.

Manifestations of the third wave in Churches of Christ have included the efforts of persons such as Jim Bevis, longtime minister in the charismatic Belmont Church in Nashville, Tennessee, through the Conference on Spiritual Renewal. This annual event was begun to introduce ministers in Churches of Christ to the third wave understanding of a wider role of the Spirit in the church today. For a while the Conference published *Paraclete Journal* as a renewal magazine for the various branches of the Restoration Movement.

It would be stretching things to say that belief in the indwelling and work of the Spirit apart from the written word, without accepting miraculous healing and other wonders, would qualify one as part of the third wave. To class all efforts labeled “renewal” as part of this phenomenon is certainly inappropriate. Yet the third wave is, in some aspects, an attempt to correct the extremes of both the Pentecostal/Charismatic teachings and the so-called word-only doctrine. Though the label “third wave” is problematic, current efforts at renewal in Churches of Christ are part of a much larger set of renewal efforts seen today in practically every Christian body worldwide. Much of the renewal involves reconsideration of the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian. This is intended only to be suggestive and to point to the need for much more investigation on the impact of the third wave on Churches of Christ.

**Conclusion**

The rational rock of doctrine concerning the Holy Spirit created by Alexander Campbell and reinforced by his followers was assailed by repeated “waves” of the Spirit in the twentieth century. For better or worse, those who champion the so-called word-only theory no longer have a hold on the minds of the constituency of Churches of Christ. Though relatively few have adopted outright charismatic and third wave views and remained in the body, apparently the spiritual waves have begun to erode that rational rock.
CO-WORKERS IN THE LORD: A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF PARTNERSHIP*

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Men and women work together every day in the church, yet Christians pay little attention to what Scripture has to say about how and why these relations are formed and conducted. Partnership between men and women is central to God’s design and will be examined in this article from three central perspectives: (1) a theology of partnership from the creation account in Genesis, (2) partnership as found in the OT narrative, and (3) the establishment of a new order in the NT.

The Creation Account in Genesis

A natural starting point for developing a theology of partnership is an examination of the Genesis account of God’s original intention for men and women. The creation account in Genesis indicates that God made all humankind in his own image—both male and female. As Bilezikian states, “Femaleness pertains to God as fully as maleness.”1 Fleming notes, “Woman is specially and carefully made by God’s hands, created from the very material of man.”2 God blessed the newly formed human beings and gave them work to do. They were jointly to be fruitful and multiply, to fill the earth and subdue it, and to share dominion over all things. Van Leeuwen identifies these commands as a “cultural mandate” to the woman and man that gives them a great deal of “latitude for creativity and variety” within the parameters God has set.3 Haubert adds, “Instead of teaching

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* Special appreciation goes to Dr. Ian A. Fair, without whose partnership my work in the Center for Women in Christian Service at ACU would never have been possible.
1 Gilbert Bilezikian, Beyond Sex Roles: What the Bible Says about a Woman’s Place in Church and Family (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 23.
the subordination of woman to man, Genesis 1 and 2 tell of the beauty and the uniqueness of mutual interpersonal relations.”

In the Genesis account God made the woman to be a helper/partner to the man. Yet God commanded Adam to leave father and mother and cleave to his wife (2:24), a directive that “counteracts a patriarchal culture, which would command the wife instead.” Evans notes that the word “cleave” used in Gen 2:24 “is used almost universally for a weaker cleaving to a stronger. It is used of Israel, cleaving to God (e.g., Josh 23:8; Ps 91:4), but never the other way around.”

From the beginning, strength and equality were implied in the role of woman as helper/partner to the man from whom she had come. As God surveyed his creation at each phase, he declared that it was good. When he evaluated the creation of male and female in his image, he called it “very good.” The only time something was pronounced “not good” was when the man was alone and no helper/partner had been found suitable for him. Adam appeared to have no knowledge of, or participation in, the creation of Eve, yet when he awakened from the surgery, he marveled at God’s handiwork and recognized her as his flesh and bone. Tucker well says, “They are alike, and it is this likeness—not their differences—that he finds so striking.”

The role of helper/partner is critical to the overall design of God’s creation. In this context the role is one of co-working and co-leading—a partnership. This understanding is consistent with the use of ezer (Heb. “helper”) in numerous OT passages to describe God’s help to his people:

1. “My father’s God was my helper; he saved me from the sword of Pharaoh.” (Exod 18:4)
2. “May he send you help from the sanctuary and grant you support from Zion!” (Ps 20:2)
3. “We wait for help from the Lord; he is our help and our shield.” (Ps 33:20)
4. “Surely God is my help; the Lord is the one who sustains me.” (Ps 54:4)
5. “Yet I am poor and needy; come quickly to me, O God, you are my help and my deliverer; O Lord, do not delay.” (Ps 70:5)
6. “Give me a sign of your goodness, that my enemies may see it and be put to shame, for you, O Lord, have helped me and comforted me.” (Ps 86:17)
7. “Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God.” (Ps 145:5)

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6 Mary J. Evans, Women in the Bible (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1983), 17.
8 Susan Hunt and Peggy Hutcheson, Leadership for Women in the Church (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 28.
Hunt and Hutcheson further note that "God helps his people by protecting, supporting, shielding, delivering, comforting, giving hope and blessing. God’s ministry of help is described in connection with action words indicating strength. Being a helper is neither a lesser role nor a weaker one. Helping is certainly not a passive role."9 Dawn further emphasizes that the title of helper “contradicts a patriarchal culture by elevating woman’s imaging of God, the Helper Superior. The woman is called a Helper Corresponding, imaging the care of God in a human, rather than divine, way.”10

From a Trinitarian perspective, another important dimension of the mutuality of the helper/partner relationship between women and men results from the mutuality, harmony, and unity that are innate to God. His character, person, and function as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit are uniquely and distinctly three yet also always one. “The Godhead gives us an example of differences in function but equality in existence. . . . Ontologically (relating to existence) there is equality in the Trinity, but economically (relating to function) there are different roles.”11 Likewise, even though men and women may be different in person and function, they too can experience mutuality, harmony, and unity in service and leadership within the kingdom of God.

In Genesis the entrance of sin into the world, when Eve and then Adam ate the forbidden fruit, shattered the perfection of God’s creation and his intentions for it. Yet even in the face of sin, God’s providential love and mercy are evident. Understanding this larger picture is important for understanding the pronouncements made in Genesis 3. The effects of sin are broad and devastating—nothing God created is unaffected—but they are also profoundly personal. The disobedience of God’s command went beyond the simple act of eating forbidden fruit; it was a matter of intention, attitude, and relationship. Eve and Adam were unwilling to trust God completely and live in perfect relationship with him. Rather, they chose their own desires, sought their independence, acted on their self-determination, and faced the consequences. Sin radically altered the relationship between Adam and Eve as husband and wife, as man and woman; it sullied the relationship with, and between, their children with hatred, jealousy, and murder. The whole world was impacted by the sin that was unleashed in the garden.

When examining God’s pronouncement on his creation in Genesis 3, one must ask whether these words are prescriptive or descriptive. Those who understand them as prescriptive see the results of the fall still in existence today—in a sense this has become the new norm for life and, therefore, is the will of God. Those who see them as descriptive recognize that the ramifications of what happened in Eden are far-reaching but not endless. Dawn acknowledges that

9 Ibid., 29.
10 Dawn, Reaching Out, 100.
11 Hunt and Hutcheson, Leadership, 29.
The rest of scripture demonstrates time and again how the brokenness of the world is manifested in all sorts of human inequalities and oppressions: Then the New Testament particularly emphasizes that the new order brought by Jesus eliminates race, class, and gender distinctions so that once again, as in God's original design, there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female.  

Understanding God's words in Genesis 3 as descriptive rather than prescriptive is consistent with what he reveals about his true nature and his response to sin in other OT passages. For example, in Exodus 20 the second commandment instructs Israel to have no other gods before him and to make no idols of any kind. He then gives a rationale that flows from his character and person: "For I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and fourth generation of those who reject me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love and keep my commandments" (Exod 20:5b-6; cf. also, Exod 34:6–7, Num 14:18, Ps 103:8–14). In keeping with God's promise for the effects of sin to be felt through the third and fourth generations, Eve's family suffered for her sin and Adam's until their grandchildren, the third generation, were born. Then "people began to invoke the name of the Lord" (Gen 4:26).

In Genesis 3 God pronounced two curses—one on the ground and one on the serpent—although the first man and woman also obviously felt the effects of these curses. God spoke to the woman about her increased pain in childbirth and the desire she would have for her husband. He told the man that he would have to work harder and suffer in that labor. Both of these represent a reversal of God's original design.

Adam became subject to the soil from which he had been taken. Eve became subject to Adam from whom she had been taken. . . . As a result of Satan's work, man was now master over woman, just as the mother-ground was now master over man. For these reasons it is proper to regard both male dominance and death as being antithetical to God's original intent in creation.

Much attention has been given to what it means for a woman to have increased pain in childbirth and to have a greater desire for her husband who will

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12 Dawn, Reaching Out, 100.
14 Westermann sees these pronouncements by God as descriptions of the difficulties of life as it would be lived now between Adam and Eve. He states, " . . . the clause in Genesis 3:16 expresses only one side of the relationship of man and woman, whereas in 2:21–24 man and woman are equals, and no trace of subordination is to be found. In contrast to the temporary subordination of the woman stands the permanent relationship between man and woman: the difference between them is a part of human existence that will always remain." Claus Westermann, Genesis: A Practical Commentary, trans. David E. Green (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 26.
15 Bilezikian, Beyond Sex Roles, 49.
rule over her. In light of the foregoing theological understandings, I offer a
different interpretation here. Instead of increased physical pain of the woman in
childbirth, the pain Eve experiences is grief and shame over her own sin and
its effects on the lives of her children and grandchildren. Julia Kristeva
understands the nature of the pain women suffer through childbirth. She writes,
“One does not give birth in pain, one gives birth to pain: the child represents it
and henceforth it settles in, it is continuous. Obviously you may close your eyes,
cover up your ears, teach courses, run errands, tidy up the house, think about
objects, subjects. But a mother is always branded by pain, she yields to it.”

The desire that Eve felt toward her husband has also been greatly misunder­
stood. God does not seem to be describing a sexual desire that Eve would have
for Adam, nor an emotional longing for his companionship when he was away
at work, nor even a vengeful wish to dominate him instead of being dominated
(three interpretations offered by contemporary scholars). Rather, Eve’s longing
appears to be one of sorrow and regret that her sin and Adam’s had sullied the
mutual, harmonious, and unified wholeness of the relationship God intended for
them. She would always long for her past relationship with her husband.

Adam, on the other hand, was destined to till the ground in hard labor alone.
Not only had the sin of the first man and woman caused their expulsion from
Eden; it had also disrupted their relationship. Bilezikian says, “The ruler/subject
relationship between Adam and Eve began after the fall. It was for Eve the
application of the same death principle that made Adam slave to the soil. Because
it resulted from the fall, the rule of Adam over Eve is viewed as in origin, no less
than is death itself.” Adam and Eve felt the effects of their sin in their
relationship with each other, in their offspring, and in future generations.
Yet even as God punished sin and allowed humans to feel its consequences,
he also acted consistently with his redeeming, merciful nature in, among other
ways, pronouncing judgment of the woman and simultaneously offering a
remedy for their sin by relating redemption to motherhood.

The woman’s offspring will crush the serpent who is the embodiment of evil. . .
The three aspects of this redemptive motherhood revealed in the account of God’s
response to the sinful disobedience of the man and woman are characteristic of the
overall biblical paradigm for prophetic ministry: struggle, suffering and servant­
hood.

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16 Neither of the Hebrew words normally used to describe pain in childbirth is used

17 Julia Kristeva, “Stabat Mater,” *Contemporary Literary Criticism: Literary and
Cultural Studies*, 2d ed., eds. Robert Con Davis and Ronald Schleifer (New York:

18 Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles*, 58.

19 Cheryl J. Sanders, *Ministry at the Margins: The Prophetic Mission of Women,
Youth and the Poor* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1997), 46.
Enmity between the serpent and woman are characteristic of the classic struggles between good and evil, life and death. As later Christian tradition consistently understood the promise of Gen 3:15, through the painful process of giving birth, the woman will suffer to offer hope as she eventually bears the redeemer of the world. Also, 

The redemptive servanthood of the mother is readily seen in relation to the word to the man, that he must work hard to feed himself and his family because the soil is cursed: A partnership [emphasis mine] of redemptive servanthood emerges—the mother labors in childbearing while the father labors as breadwinner, both towards the end of serving human needs.20

Finally, even though the effects of Adam and Eve’s sin were felt for several generations within their lifetime, God offered them immediate hope of renewed life in their descendants. At the birth of Seth (Gen 4:25), Adam recognized that it was God who had given him another son.

The Old Testament Narrative

The OT witnesses is to the continuous disharmony resulting from sin, but it also speaks of God’s repeated efforts to redeem humanity and mitigate the effects of sin. Yet it also bears testimony to great men and women who powerfully influenced the lives of those around them. Several partnerships between women and men appear in the OT. Prominent pairs include Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Elkanah and Hannah, and Ruth and Boaz. The recognition of the first woman created as a helper/partner to man and these examples of great husbands and wives tempt readers to place shared leadership/partnership in the context of marriage only. Other women in the OT, however, stand out among God’s people as strong, capable, and godly leaders. They share partnerships with significant men who are not their husbands. For example, “Miriam’s ministry skills [were] not only recognized and confirmed, but she [was] accorded the same respect Aaron and Moses received.”21 Deborah served as a deliverer in Israel and was named prophet and military leader (Judg 3:4).22 The Moabite Ruth, ancestor to David and eventually Jesus, served as the breadwinner of her family by gleaning in the fields. She was said to be “better . . . than seven sons” (Ruth 4:15).23 Esther stands out as a national figure whose bravery and fortitude served God’s purposes for his people well.

Huldah and Noadiah were two female prophetesses who exercised leadership in Israel (albeit negatively in the second case). Certain females also were referred to in Hebrew Scripture as “wise women” who conducted diplomatic missions (see

20 Ibid.
21 Linda L. Belleville, Women Leaders and the Church: Three Crucial Questions (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 44.
23 Belleville, Women Leaders, 44.
2 Sam 14:1-21; 20:14-22). Also, the figure of Wisdom in the book of Proverbs functioned as a paradigm in Prov 1:6; 9:10; and 31:30. As "the ideal wise woman of Proverbs 31, . . . [her] children call her blessed and . . . [her] husband praises her because of her wisdom." 24 The Song of Songs abounds with expressions of mutual relationship and high esteem. In short, then, the OT knows of male/female partnerships that transcend the boundaries typical of patriarchal cultures.

The New Order in the New Testament

With the coming of Jesus Christ and the eventual establishment of his church, the NT emphasizes a new order. Several images emerge in Scripture to describe this new order; one is that of a new creation. Paul writes to the Corinthian church, reminding them that "if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see everything has become new!" (2 Cor 5:17). Peter says that God is establishing for himself a new people, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Pet 2:9). Luke describes what happens to the first Christians as they are formed into the new Israel,

Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles: All who believed were together and had all things in common. . . . Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people (Acts 2:43-47b).

"Before Pentecost, circumcision was the sign of membership in the community of God's people. . . . After Pentecost, baptism became the sign of entering the community of believers." 25 The sign of the covenant relationship with God, once available only to men, is now open to everyone. "All believers in Christ are new creatures who are called to be God's ambassadors." 26

The mutuality, harmony, and unity of relationships experienced by the first believers reflect the beauty of God's original design, the joy of life lived in Jesus Christ, and the transforming power available to all believers through the Holy Spirit.

All the Gospels, but particularly Luke and its companion volume, Acts, serve as testimonies to the significant roles women played as helpers, leaders, and partners in the coming of the kingdom. The Pauline epistles are full of examples of women's participation in the establishment of, and service to, the church.

24 Ibid., 45.
Although male leaders were more numerous, women also served in virtually every ministry (the exception is overseer/elder, but individual men were not identified specifically by name in these roles either). Women served as teachers, apostles, deaconesses, patronesses, prophets, evangelists, and ministering widows.27 Several key examples show women’s participation in these kingdom events and the new community:

1. Mary Magdalene, from whom Jesus had cast seven demons; Joanna, the wife of Herod’s steward, Chuza; Susanna and many others provide for the disciples from their means (Luke 8:1–3).
2. Mary and Martha, two sisters from Bethany, and their brother, Lazarus, open their home to Jesus and serve his needs in a very personal way (Luke 10:38–42).
3. A poor widow gives all that she has, two coins, and is commended by Jesus to his disciples, and ultimately to all of us, for her faithfulness and generosity (Luke 21:1–4).
4. Women are the last at the cross and first at the tomb (Luke 23:55, 24:1–10).
5. Tabitha, a faithful disciple who leads/serves a group of widows and orphans, dies, and the group is so distraught that Peter resurrects her so she can continue her good works (Acts 9:36–41).
6. Lydia, a wealthy merchant, is gathered with a group of God-fearers in Philippi worshipping God when she meets Paul. Upon hearing the gospel, she and her whole household—she is the head of it—are baptized (Acts 16:14–15, 40).
8. Philip, the evangelist, has four unmarried daughters who prophesy (Acts 21:9).
9. Phoebe is commended as a deaconess, and her service to the kingdom is extolled, and Junia is mentioned as prominent among the apostles (Rom 16:1, 7).
10. Euodia and Syntyche are listed as Paul’s fellow-workers and urged to agree in the Lord (Phil 4:2–3).
11. Lois and Eunice are commended as grandmother and mother to the envoy, Timothy, for how they have developed and influenced his faith (2 Tim 1:5).

The emphasis in these passages is on faithfulness, unity, surrender, discipleship, mission, blessing, giving, serving, learning, healing, sharing, giftedness, honoring, teaching, partnership, mutuality, and prayer. Truly, “Jesus was a friend of women. He vigorously promoted the dignity and equality of women in terms of both value and function, and He left us this example [to follow].”28 Jesus essentially establishes a new paradigm for our world.

Our Lord liberated men and women from their bondage to the social orders that violate God’s intention for human life-in-community. Jesus freed males from the role of domination that belongs to the fallen world, in order that they can be truly male. On behalf of women Jesus acted as the model human standing against the

27 Belleville, Women Leaders, 50–69.
patriarchal system, bringing women into the new order where sex distinctions no longer determine rank and worth.29

This new paradigm, however, has not always been realized. From mainline Protestant churches to obscure fundamentalist groups, from Roman Catholics to Pentecostals, Christians for the past two thousand years have dealt with men and women of all ages, classes, and ethnicity who struggle with issues of the new order. Ruth A. Tucker and Walter Liefeld examine church history from a woman’s perspective and identify several discernible patterns that signify the continual struggle over issues of mutuality, harmony, and unity throughout the history of Christianity.30

This ironic failure to attend to the Bible’s interest in the partnership of men and women, which has plagued the church for the last two millennia, first appeared in the terrible difficulties facing Pauline churches in the first century. Paul wrote to instruct the women in Corinth who were praying and prophesying with their heads uncovered and causing all kinds of disturbances to conduct themselves with greater propriety (1 Cor 11:3–16). He also addressing some Christian women who were causing disturbance in the assembly, instructing them to be quiet (1 Cor 14:33–40). The church in Ephesus was the target of false teachers, and the witness of the church was threatened by misconduct on several fronts. Paul wrote specifically to the women there about how they were to dress, how they were to learn, and how they were to live holy lives that reflect their salvation (1 Tim 2:11–15).

In most discussions about gender issues in Christian ministry, these three texts become the focal point. Careful and faithful exegesis has not always led to a clear-cut interpretation upon which most Christians could agree (see the proliferation of works on this topic in any Christian bookstore). However, as Groothius writes, “a myopic fixation on a handful of biblical texts will not ultimately resolve the gender debate.”31 Although discussions on women’s roles in worship and ministry are significant and should be conducted within the church, attention should also focus on how men and women might serve together as co-workers in godly partnership. A broader view of the entire biblical witness can help us acquire a deeper understanding of this relationship.

29 Grenz, Women in the Church, 209.
31 Groothius, Good News, 231.
What is informed judgment, and what factors contribute to it? What role does theological reflection as a mature expression of informed judgment play in shaping ecclesial life? The end result of such inquiry is a richer understanding of ways informed judgment shapes the process of belief formation and theological reflection within an ecclesial setting.

The capacity to connect knowledge of God and ecclesial context requires informed judgment. As an acquired skill, informed judgment aptly assesses and applies theological ideas to particular situations. It is indispensable for ministering proficiently to people in ecclesial, social, academic, and other contexts. This essay highlights the process by which informed judgment takes place within a communal context as people learn to think theologically and to connect theological themes with real world environments.

Forming Theological Judgment

Formation of theological judgment reflects a social process in which people learn to develop theological skills and to render apt judgment about particulars. Knowing how to think theologically comes by habit and by imitation, not by the mere acquisition of isolated facts. Proficiency in theological judgment stems from knowledge enhanced by interaction with mature practitioners of Christian faith. The aim of informed judgment is to achieve a coherent account of Christian faith, which is another way of defining a fundamental task of theology.

Forming theological judgment requires the integration of at least two elements: praiseworthy dispositions and wisdom. The first element depends upon a proper disposition of the mind, which is indispensable for reasoning proficiently about theological matters. For example, habitual practices such as studiousness, prayer, concern for truth, and a desire for an informed understanding of Christian faith solidify a properly disposed faith into good theological judgments. In essence, a rightly disposed faith fuses both intellectual

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1 The following essay is a shorter version of chapter 5 in my book Communities of Informed Judgment: The Significance of John Henry Newman's Notion of the Illative Sense for Shaping Accounts of Rationality (Catholic University of America Press, forthcoming).
and moral dimensions of Christian faith, realizing that communal well-being depends upon good theological practices. In its mature form, theological judgment involves an earnest and long-term commitment to cultivate the "gift of Christian wonder or curiosity, which is the specifically theological mode of faith."²

Without praiseworthy dispositions, individuals adopt theological excesses and deficiencies (e.g., dogmatism, narrow-mindedness, or fanaticism). By contrast, a rightly disposed faith aids a Christian in forming a mind of holiness that facilitates proper love for, and obedience to, God. As William J. Wood has recently suggested, "we come to knowledge of God and other religious truths only if our affections are rightly ordered. Just as our ability to grasp scientific truths requires that we be equipped with the requisite training and abilities, so our capacity to grasp religious truths requires that we be the right sorts of persons."³

In addition, praiseworthy dispositions have a communal dimension. They display integration of moral, theological, and cognitive habits necessary for forming and sustaining a community of informed judgment. Cognitive and moral vices, by contrast, cripple a community and prevent it from fulfilling its theological goals. For instance, vices such as intellectual dishonesty, closed-mindedness, and rash judgments preclude the possibility of refining theological judgment and of participating in conversations with others. They also distract a community from its correlative ground of thought, affection, and behavior, namely, the triune God, who calls people to love him with all of their mind, heart, and being. Dispositions such as love, humility, honesty, courage, and other-mindedness ensure proper development of theological judgment within the life of a community of informed judgment.

Maturation of theological judgment also depends on knowledge of the tradition to which one belongs. For example, a community without sufficient historical knowledge of doctrinal developments lacks proficiency in assessing contemporary theological options. Consequently, praiseworthy dispositions take their shape from a particular theological vision embedded within communal practices. Worship, preaching, experience, prayer, and catechesis play a crucial role in nurturing praiseworthy dispositions into communal judgments about theological issues.⁴ The church, then, is where people cultivate properly disposed

faith, acquire theological skills of excellence, and learn to discern theological truths.\(^5\)

Though knowledge of the Christian tradition is necessary for developing theological judgment, it is not sufficient for rendering informed judgment about particular theological issues. Procuring knowledge without evaluative proficiency bars people from determining whether the material acquired is worthy of consideration. Such a deficiency necessitates the insights of the second element of informed judgment, namely, wisdom. Informed judgment entails an expansive base of knowledge, yet without wisdom "knowledge lacks nuance, since decision-making requires constant shifts in judgment in assessing information and circumstances."\(^6\) Accumulating isolated facts exhibits a basic level of reasoning, but wisdom enhances theological judgment, enabling people to connect knowledge and particular situations. Such acts of theological discernment require communal support; without reliable social channels of wisdom, refinement of theological reflection suffers, and, subsequently, communal understandings of Christian faith lack a coherent pattern of expression.\(^7\)

Wisdom empowers people to grasp complex issues, integrate knowledge and experience, and make apt judgments for particular situations. In grasping the overall significance of various pieces of data, wisdom weaves ideas, experiences, and practices into a community’s theological life.\(^8\) Without wisdom, a community ignores various possibilities for filtering crucial insights into its own locus of knowledge. For example, the difference between a person of informed judgment and a novice lies in the former’s ability to decipher relevant pieces of

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\(^6\) Charry, *By the Renewing of Your Minds*, 4.

\(^7\) William A. Christian (*Doctrines of Religious Communities: A Philosophical Study* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987]) captures the process in which religious communities extend doctrinal formulations into a coherent pattern of life. "It seems a fair generalization to say that each of the major religious communities teaches its members to live in a certain way, in accord with a certain pattern of life, and that it teaches them how to live in that way. It nurtures them in that pattern of life. The beliefs, valuations, and courses of action which are proposed in its primary doctrines are constituents of the pattern. By way of precepts, backed by accounts of how the world is, by way of examples, pointing to individuals whose lives have manifested and defined the pattern concretely, and by way of direct induction of its members into certain practices and habituation in those practices, a community aims at shaping the lives of its members. It instills habits of appreciation, of overt behavior, and of thought, which hang together as a more or less coherent pattern of life" (5).

\(^8\) Linda T. Zagzebski (*Virtues of the Mind: An Inquiry into the Nature of Virtue and the Ethical Foundations of Knowledge* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996], 50) rightly points out that wisdom “is neither a matter of the properties of propositional beliefs, nor is it a matter of the relations among such beliefs; it is a matter of grasping the whole of reality.”
data, not to acquire a quantity of information.\(^9\) Collecting massive pieces of evidence uncritically implies deficient evaluative skills in determining the worth of the information acquired. People of informed judgment recognize important clues for evaluating particular issues and know how to integrate relevant information into their community’s locus of knowledge. Accumulating knowledge and experience does not weigh down people of informed judgment; they are not simply extended brains saturated with facts.\(^{10}\) Though people of informed judgment operate from an extensive base of knowledge and wisdom, the distinguishing mark is recognizing patterns, connecting ideas, and seeing the big picture.

The art of medical diagnosis aptly illustrates the point. Though technology and science greatly aid medical diagnosis, skillful judgment distinguishes good physicians from average ones. Physicians of skillful judgment have sufficient medical knowledge, but they also possess the gift of informed judgment, a quality that “cannot be captured by a set of rules, and cannot be taught except by personal influence.”\(^11\) To take another example, good teachers apply knowledge to particular learning situations rather than simply dispensing isolated facts. Knowledge and wisdom, though connected with the same subject matter, are distinct phenomena. On one level, basic knowledge of the subject matter is essential for informing students, but it does not ensure proficient evaluation of the information acquired. Along with knowledge, teachers acquire skillful judgment by means of experience and employment of specific pedagogical virtues (e.g., love of truth, compassion, intellectual integrity, wisdom, knowledge of audience, good skills of communication, and patience).\(^{12}\) More importantly, combining knowledge and wisdom enables teachers to render qualified judgments for particular situations. Pre-established rules are no replacement for informed judgment within concrete moments of existence.

Wisdom as a mature exercise of informed judgment also involves “sympathetic imagination” in which a community sees different proposals in all their complexity and considers “how well each position is able to accommodate the


\(^{10}\) Gary Klein, *Sources of Power: How People Make Decisions* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998), 147. Klein (149) points out that two primary sources of expertise are pattern matching and mental simulation. “Pattern matching (intuition) refers to the ability of the expert to detect typicality and to notice events that did not happen and other anomalies that violate the pattern. Mental simulation covers the ability to see events that happened previously and events that are likely to happen in the future.”


\(^{12}\) For a good and practical discussion on pedagogical virtues, see James M. Banner Jr. and Harold C. Cannon, *The Elements of Teaching* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).
strengths of the other and to remedy its own weakness."\textsuperscript{13} Without living voices of wisdom, a community of theological judgment struggles both to assess competing claims and to develop a coherent understanding of Christian faith. By contrast, maturation of theological judgment enables a community to connect practices and ideas, mirroring the unity to which the triune God has called it. Thus proficiency in theological judgment reflects knowledge of Christian faith and of recognized patterns of experience.

However, the contextual nature of theological judgment does not rule out exchange with others; rather, it demands an exercise of extended judgment. The goal of a community of informed judgment is to expand particular expressions of thought into communal forms of judgment. The precondition for exercising mature judgment is the capacity to evaluate and weave insights from other sources of informed judgment into a community's locus of knowledge. By ignoring insights from others, a community exhibits theological narrow-mindedness and suppresses the urge to connect ideas from larger domains of thought.

In this regard, wisdom considers and connects three items: truth-conduciveness, theological virtues, and consultation of other sources of informed judgment. First, theological judgment is a matter of truth-conduciveness since its goal is to guide communally established practices in ways that yield true beliefs over false ones. The task of theological judgment is to foster good understandings of Christian faith, identify deficiencies, and achieve greater levels of truth-conduciveness. Second, theological virtues shape judgment. Any communal inquiry that is a matter of truth-conduciveness requires habitual formation of theological qualities of excellence (e.g., knowledge, love, faith, hope, humility, courage, and wisdom). Third, a community ascertains whether its theological proposal shows continuity with other sources of theological judgment. Social transmission of theological judgment requires confidence in sources from which we derive knowledge and consensus. Again, consensus does not imply attainment of theological truth; rather, theological collaboration protects a community from isolationism.

Of course, different communities are bound to disagree, but incorporation of truth-conduciveness, theological virtues, and consultation with other sources enhances the probability of informed judgment. Any community of theological judgment shows interest in following a reliable social process that yields true beliefs over false ones. In spite of methodological and interpretive differences, communities of theological judgment have a common interest in pursuing truth and in avoiding falsehood. Entering the public domain guards a community of theological judgment from uncritical acceptance of its own ideas. Wisdom demands a public hearing!

\textsuperscript{13} Basil Mitchell, "Newman as a Philosopher," in \textit{Newman after a Hundred Years} (ed. Ian Ker and Alan G. Hill; Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), 244.
A community’s reservoir of wisdom structures the “internalization of models within the context of a tradition.” The end result is the creation of people who reflect the presence of God in the world; rightly ordered thought leads to mature expression of Christian faith both within the life of the church and within the larger context of society. Theological judgment grows directly under the influence of mature practitioners of Christian faith or indirectly from “helping individuals to develop the skills needed to learn more effectively from their own experiences.” Such training equips people to extend personal and communal forms of theological judgment to larger domains of inquiry.

Managing the Theological Load

A community of informed judgment understands formation of theological discernment as a collaborative process. Solitary theological discernment is an illusion; rarely does a person make judgments in isolation from other agents of theological discernment. However, highlighting a communal dimension of theological judgment does not suggest annulment of individual contributions. Rather, it stresses social conditions under which people materialize a specific theological vision. John Thiel expresses the complexity of the relationship between individual contributions and the communal context of theological reflection:

The exercise of theological talent involves judgments that draw the theologian’s individual experience into such intimate relationship with the communal realities of church and society that it is virtually indistinguishable from them. Indeed, theological talent is measured by its ability to speak in an intellectually defensible manner on behalf of these groups and the truth they have to tell about God, humanity, and the world. But there is no denying that theological talent, like any talent, is fundamentally an individual affair and that mediating the sources of theology, though responsible to the church, is an act of the personal imagination.

Recognizing individual contributions is important, but adequate distribution of theological labor still requires a communal process of discernment. Clearly, a community of theological judgment must guard against squelching unfamiliar voices, for unwillingness to listen to others implies a lack of community wisdom. Nevertheless, a community of theological judgment maps out ways in which distribution of labor contributes to fulfillment of a common vision.

Proper exercise of theological judgment requires effective distribution of labor. Identifying a reliable belief-forming process is indispensable for enhancing theological judgment. Without reliable social channels of knowledge and wisdom, maturation of theological judgment suffers. Depending exclusively

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14 Charry, *By the Renewing of Your Minds*, 27.
on personal reflection impedes a communal process of rendering apt theological judgments. Consequently, a community stresses the importance of social practices for acquiring requisite qualities of theological judgment. It also recognizes that theological judgment, though connected with a common goal, is multifaceted. For example, some focus on conditions of belief formation as an exercise in theological method, while others tackle doctrinal or pastoral issues. Both practices contribute to the theological life of a community, but they use different resources. Within a community of theological judgment, not all focus on the same issues; rather, they combine individual efforts in order to achieve a common goal. Proficiency in theological judgment results from successful distribution of tasks that enhance both growth and fulfillment of theological goals.

Implications for Contemporary Theology

Thus far I have focused on the formation and management of theological judgment. The next logical move involves exploring its relevance for contemporary theology. It is evident from reading contemporary theology that many proposals exist, some compatible and others not. Is there a way of seeing through the methodological fog and coming to a clearer but broader understanding of theology? The fundamental premise of informed judgment—the urge to connect—unfolds new possibilities for engaging contemporary theology. Hence, I offer a brief foray into contemporary theology and show what a theology of informed judgment means in this arena.

Contemporary theology is a multifaceted enterprise. At least five options appear on the current theological landscape. The first option sees theology principally as a philosophical enterprise and takes the broader philosophical climate as its point of departure. It construes the task of theology as a constructive activity, not as a description of the grammar of Christian faith. The goal is to construct theological ideas that cohere with broader criteria of meaningfulness and universality rather than simply articulating the material claims of Christian faith. The church is not the exclusive domain of theological reflection.

The second option reverses the order of priority and roots theological reflection in the life of the church. As an ecclesiastical discipline, theology involves critical reflection on the church’s discourse about God. The norm of theology emerges from the internal witness of Christian faith, not from some general theory of knowledge. Transporting alien epistemic schemes into the life of the church distorts the task of theology, compromises the integrity of Christian faith.


faith, and shackles the freedom of God. Divine revelation is the starting point for theological reflection.\textsuperscript{19}

The third option, though compatible with the second, differs slightly. It understands the task of theology mainly as a description of the grammar of Christian faith. As a nonfoundational enterprise, theology concentrates on communally established practices. Within this context, one learns the internal logic of Christian discourse, like a language, and understands the truth claims of the Christian story.\textsuperscript{20} Consequently, Christian discourse cannot be assessed by some independent standard of justification. In other words, the task of theology is to unpack the internal logic of Christian discourse and to live out faith from that perspective.

The fourth option anchors theological reflection in concrete moments of human existence. It sees an unbreakable linkage between praxis and theological reflection, especially within the context of oppressed communities. Experience is the starting point for thinking theologically. More specifically, the praxis of liberation functions as the norm by which communities judge the adequacy of theological statements.\textsuperscript{21}

The fifth option defines theology as critical correlation of the broader contours of human experience and the Christian message. Theological reflection entails a dipolar process, an interaction between the Christian tradition and the contemporary situation. Neither pole dominates theological reflection. Rather, each pole informs and challenges theological reflection, expressing a mutually critical process, not a level subordination.\textsuperscript{22}

How does a theology of informed judgment speak to this vast range of theological perspectives? The landscape of contemporary theology is oriented toward various communities and is essentially a social enterprise. Proliferation of theological approaches occasionally hinders the urge to connect, creating what appears to be incommensurate boundaries. As a social enterprise, however, contemporary theology exhibits levels of epistemic dependence, deriving insights from work in biblical studies, science, philosophy, history, sociology, psychology. Thus contemporary theology would benefit by making its epistemological commitments explicit.\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{22} See David Tracy, \textit{The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism} (New York: Crossroad, 1981).
\textsuperscript{23} For example, George Hunsinger (\textit{How to Read Karl Barth: The Shape of His Theology} [New York: Oxford University Press, 1991], 32–35) shows how a particularist epistemology factors into Barth’s theological proposal. Barth takes an epistemological
A theology of informed judgment calls for greater levels of integration among different fields of knowledge without blurring their distinctive modes of inquiry. A fitting example is a recent project in which biblical scholars and theologians seek to bridge a long-standing gap between their disciplines by exploring ways in which biblical interpretation informs the task of theology. As a person trained in both theology and biblical studies, I can attest to the importance of this conversation. A theology of informed judgment implicitly guides such activity since its fundamental premise calls for integration. Unpacking epistemic commitments is crucial for continuing the conversation.

Canonizing an epistemology is not what I have in mind here. Rather, a theology of informed judgment balances specificity and comprehensiveness, avoiding extremes such as epistemic imperialism and theological sectarianism. Acknowledging philosophical commitments does not imply that they govern the task of theology. Theology, like other domains of thought, has its own methodological concerns, material forms of witness, and particular questions. However, acknowledging the contextual nature of theology does not justify theological sectarianism or suppression of methodological commitments. Uncovering epistemic points of reference opens up possibilities both for enhancing communal self-understanding and for connecting with other communities.

Various stripes of contemporary theology would benefit from a theology of informed judgment. Two examples should suffice. First, a theology of liberation (option 4) reminds us of the human potential for involvement in dehumanizing activities. Theological reflection must engage the struggles of life. Specific focus on concrete experiences of life is indispensable for engaging in the task of theology. Yet a theology of liberation should seek comprehensive understanding of Christian faith and the broader context of human experience. Inclusion entails a multiplicity of perspectives, but not at the expense of some common end. Cultivating informed judgment makes us better practitioners of theological reflection, exposing our idiosyncratic tendencies while connecting us with the rest of creation.

The second example combines options 2 and 3. Both options rightly stress the importance of paying close attention to the internal logic of Christian faith and to securing their theological proposals from resources such as Scripture and tradition. The outcome is an informed understanding of the Christian message.

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Both, however, must guard against quickly subsuming contemporary concerns into classical formulations of Christian faith. One has to give only cursory attention to contemporary expressions of theology to see how powerfully they have been impacted by intellectual developments of the last four centuries. In fact, a theology of informed judgment could be read as a critical response to two long-standing tendencies in Christian theology, namely, fideism and evidentialism. The point here is that theological reflection is multifaceted, but its elasticity does not warrant theological balkanization.

A proposal of informed judgment characterizes theology as an enterprise of wisdom in which practitioners embody an urge to connect. It rejects the temptation to hibernate in theological enclaves. Affirming the particular without concern for broader expressions of Christian thought creates an unnecessary impasse. It tends to see the task of theology as a one-dimensional enterprise. Focus on social location is important, but not at the expense of conversation with other theological communities. Implementation of good theological habits should create greater possibilities for authentic forums of dialogue. The urge to connect does not imply sacrifice of particular theological commitments; rather it calls for growth of theological wisdom.

Concluding Remarks

The relevance of my proposal can be summed up in the following way. A theology of informed judgment renders a phenomenological account of the landscape of contemporary theology. It observes concrete ways in which contemporary theologians go about their business. Obviously, the aim of a particular theological option will impact division of labor. For example, option 1 places a high premium on philosophical inquiry; options 2 and 3 rely heavily on insights from biblical studies and history; option 4 depends on insights from political philosophy and sociology. Option 5 tries to correlate the Christian message with insights from various fields of knowledge. Nevertheless, all work with implicit philosophical assumptions. The key is balance rather than uncritical endorsement of one resource of theological reflection. Comprehensiveness and specificity are essential poles of theological reflection. Insulating Christian theological discourse from broader philosophical thought creates the problem of relativism while subsuming theological discourse into an epistemic scheme compromises the integrity of Christian faith.

A theology of informed judgment has many components. It seeks to weave biblical, historical, philosophical, moral, and social insights into a coherent account of Christian faith. Obviously, ways of prioritizing these resources vary according to how each community works out issues in theological prolegomena. Furthermore, greater awareness of epistemic dependence may increase informed understanding of radically different proposals. As I have shown, a theology of informed judgment furnishes insights for thinking about the process of belief-formation, but not at the expense of particular theological traditions. With this
in mind, a theology of informed judgment seeks to render a synthetic understanding of Christian faith, implementing insights from various dimensions of contemporary theology.

A theology of informed judgment also stresses the communal nature of theological reflection. Without a communal presence of wisdom, the process of theological judgment is left to personal choice. Under the tutelage of mature people of theological judgment, a community learns to connect key ideas within concrete moments of human existence. Learning to think theologically requires something greater than mastery of information. A theology of informed judgment recognizes the difference between acquiring facts and filtering information for particular situations. As an acquired skill, theological judgment fuses contemporary issues with biblical and historical expressions of Christian faith.

A proposal of informed judgment sees the nature of theological judgment in holistic terms. Since theological judgment is context- and agent-sensitive, it cannot be reduced to a formal process of reflection that claims to discern theological truths independently of the theological agent. Rather, theological judgment, like all modes of reflection, stems from the “activity of the living person”; thus it includes personal outlook as well as moral and social dimensions of reflection. 25

I have offered some brief suggestions on the formation of theological judgment. Cultivating praiseworthy dispositions and wisdom enhances the probability of informed judgment. Rejection of wisdom hinders the process by which a community internalizes and articulates the content of Christian faith. A vital aspect of the habit of theological judgment is the urge to connect. 26 Without informed judgment, a community fails to secure a coherent understanding of its own material witness; moreover, it never achieves the capacity to converse with other communities of informed judgment. A theology of informed judgment sees theological reflection as a process in which people connect ideas without losing communal particularity. Extended judgment, as a mode of being in the world, sustains healthy communities of theological judgment.

25 Thomas J. Norris, *Newman and His Theological Method: A Guide for the Theologian Today* (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 89–90; Francis Schüssler Fiorenza (“Systematic Theology: Task and Methods,” in *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives*, vol. 1 [ed. Francis Schüssler Fiorenza and John P. Galvin; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991], 3.87) adds that theological judgments, like moral judgments, “are not simply the outcome of abstract logic, but result from practical reasoning. Just as practical reason is based upon a learned experience, so too does a link exist between moral knowledge and ethical experience. . . . In short, practical experience determines what persons become; it affects not only who they are but also their whole process of reasoning, ranging from the selection of principles, to the mode of argumentation, to the construction of conclusions.”


Truth on Trial deals with the rhetorical features of testimony and conflict that pervade the gospel of John. In its attention to these rhetorical features, which Lincoln calls a “lawsuit motif,” this book is a significant contribution to Johannine scholarship. However, the book attempts too much.

The book opens with a chapter that introduces the lawsuit language in the Fourth Gospel and shows how it pervades the structure of the gospel. The second chapter is a brief summary of the “rib” lawsuit in the OT, especially Isaiah 40–55, which is connected to John’s lawsuit motif. In chapter 3, Lincoln traces more systematically the lawsuit motif in the narrative development of the Fourth Gospel. Lincoln shows the reader how he imagines the combination of a lawsuit motif and the “rib” pattern work in the narrative of John. Following this close reading of John, he then applies a more theoretical approach by analyzing the issue through the lens of literary-critical methodology. This is followed in chapter 5 by a theological analysis of John using the lawsuit theory as new perspective. Lincoln then turns in chapter 6 to the historical situation of the gospel’s composition, applying the lawsuit theory to support J. Louis Martyn’s approach to the gospel’s origins. In the final three chapters, Lincoln asks questions about the validity and applicability of this theory in approaching the Fourth Gospel today.

The central issue at stake is the often-observed use of language in John that seems linked to a highly charged rhetorical situation. The use of martur- stem words (witness, testify, evidence), the controversy with “the Jews,” and the developing rejection of Jesus that ends in a trial and death are strong evidence of this rhetorical situation, which Lincoln calls a “lawsuit motif.” Alan Trites, in The New Testament Concept of Witness, and A. E. Harvey in Jesus on Trial, have noted some of these points, but a more complete analysis of the motif has been needed for some time. Attention to the motif and the use of specific language and argumentation in support of the motif, as well as the importance of this rhetorical emphasis in the construction of the Fourth Gospel, make this work very helpful.

Lincoln, however, goes beyond simply a lawsuit motif and imports an idea of God’s lawsuit with humanity, a “rib” motif from Isaiah 40–55, as the dominant way of seeing the rhetoric of the Fourth Gospel. As Lincoln argues: “The lawsuit between God and the nations becomes a [lawsuit between] God and the world and provides the overarching framework within which Israel’s controversy with God is now seen to be a part. In fact, Israel’s lawsuit with God not only forms...
the counterplot within the main plot; Israel also now becomes the representative of the world in the main plot” (46). In other words, the Fourth Gospel, according to Lincoln, functions as an expanded trial in which God in the form of Jesus is accused by Israel and he in turn accuses and judges Israel.

While substantial material supports part of this—certainly the opposition by “the Jews” is a central motif in the Fourth Gospel—at its heart this added component of the “rib” seems to overly complicate the task Lincoln has set for himself. An example of how the complexity seems to blunt the argumentation is in his conception of the stasis, or central thrust of the rhetorical argument. It would seem that a “rib” approach is forensic in thrust—reviewing past events to demonstrate how and why a judgment has been made. But that seems not to be the case in Lincoln’s argument. Instead, the literary device is seen primarily as epideictic—to strengthen wavering faith and encourage readers to be witnesses (142). But in this epideictic quality, the central role of the “rib” is removed. Moreover, one might ask whether Lincoln has adequately taken into account the Fourth Evangelist’s own stated purpose, which actually sounds more deliberative than either forensic or epideictic: “but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:31). In this difficulty with the main purpose of the trial motif, its stasis, the central argument loses much of its focus and force.

A central element in Lincoln’s argumentation is based on a use of J. Louis Martyn’s view of the structure of the Fourth Gospel. In History and Theology of the Fourth Gospel, Martyn argued that John is constructed on a two-level approach: the level of the narrative and another level of events currently taking place. The events in the gospel actually represent, by analogy, events in the life of the community to which the gospel is addressed. In particular, Lincoln picks up the central element in Martyn’s argument, the synagogue expulsion dealt with in John 9, and suggests that this expulsion, with its attendant trials and judgments, gives the motif a particular poignancy and validity that would speak to a community that has been expelled from the synagogue. Thus he also imagines a conflict situation as the proximate historical and social situation that gives rise to the trial motif. While not impossible, once again it seems that Lincoln explains too much, relying on a hypothetical construction to support his argument. While Martyn’s reading is possible, numerous objections have been raised to his two-level reading and the historical scenario upon which it is based. Lincoln seems unaware of the major critiques of Martyn’s approach to reading the gospel. If Martyn’s reading is not correct, would this invalidate Lincoln’s analysis of the Fourth Gospel?

Lincoln’s theoretical essays about how to understand the witness language in light of a historical critical methodology are strong. Can a person who accepts the critiques of historical examination of the gospel find anything of value in the claims to authoritative witness in the Fourth Gospel? He rightly says that much of the witness language is confessional rather than narrational. That is, the witness language serves more often to talk about the truth of Jesus’ identity than
the truth of the narrated events. Thus the entire motif presents a truth claim that is quite distinct from the issue of whether an eyewitness actually wrote all these things down as a historically sound report. Lincoln grapples with this issue at length, in part to suggest a way of better understanding the claims to truth within the expanded metaphor of witness and opposition. In his engagement with Riceour and Derrida, he presents a cogent way of valuing the truth claims that serve as an effective argument to Casey’s rejection of John’s value.

Despite difficulties with Lincoln’s reading of a “rib” in the trial narrative and his too-ready acceptance of Martyn’s reconstruction of the historical and social situation as the basis for the trial motif, he nonetheless has focused attention on a central thematic feature of the Fourth Gospel. Clearly, the Fourth Gospel uses rhetorical language (whether it is “lawsuit” terminology is perhaps a leap) and argumentation to present a compelling narrative. In drawing our attention to this feature, Lincoln has done a great service to Johannine scholarship. Moreover, his numerous insights into the gospel and its theology are very helpful. This is a book that all Johannine scholars and students should read. Whether the central thesis withstands criticism, however, is doubtful.

Milligan College

MARK A. MATSON


Rochester College Lectures on Preaching intend to offer integration between scholarship and preaching by examining the role of Scripture in proclaiming the gospel. This first volume tackles the common themes of Luke-Acts, asking how the preacher can constructively preach the gospel and take the Bible seriously. Edward Farley and David Buttrick (Vanderbilt) have recently challenged the role of the Bible, cautioning preachers about the limitations that preaching biblical texts have when proclaiming the gospel. Preachers in the Restoration Movement historically have conflated the options and ignored the issues. Farley and Buttrick recognize a concern, yet offer little solution and overstate their case. The Rochester Lectures offer a viable alternative to mediate the divide by recognizing how the gospel transcends texts while being faithful to the Bible.

The editors state that “Part 1 addresses homiletical issues and theological themes that influence the way one preaches Luke/Acts” (16). Chapter 1 surveys current trends in homiletical theory by offering a more nuanced proposal for using biblical texts than does the bi-polar either/or options of concordance and expository preaching of the Bible as compared to meeting congregational expectations often exemplified by seeker services. Bridging the “then/now” chasm often is unidirectional. Some post-liberal approaches seek to mediate the chasm not only by reversing the traffic but also by exploring dialogical options. The Rochester Lectures attempt to offer incarnational understandings of
preaching that expose the bridge metaphor's limitations. Yet some chapters and sermons tend to stay on the historical-critical side of the divide by opting to continue to display the bridge paradigm in their hermeneutical practices and not exemplify the possibilities of a post-liberal homiletic.

The next four chapters examine particular exegetical, thematic, and rhetorical aspects of Luke's writings. Tom Long surveys Robert Tannehill's taxonomy for pronouncement stories and offers several sermon starters. Long's chapter resembles his Preaching Literary Forms of the Bible. His sermon starters imaginatively find analogous contemporary stories that function in similar ways as Jesus' pronouncement stories. Long seems to believe that an analogous story achieves Luke's rhetorical and theological purposes but often ignores how particular pericopes function to accomplish larger intentions. Although these stories may be situationally analogous and rhetorically similar, they cannot stand alone nor replace the theological intentions of Luke's usage.

The chapters on Luke's understanding of poverty, wealth, and prayer cover familiar terrain, offering little new to current scholarship. The authors helpfully identify ways American preachers often ignore and avoid the radical views presented by Luke. By examining these larger theological concerns, these chapters model healthy ways to read narratives. Intratextual readings between Luke and Acts also expose Luke's theological concerns clearly. Yet the chapters tend to lean too heavily on historical-critical scholarship and analogous applications and implications, but not offer the incarnation dialog the editors promised.

Part 2 offers twelve sermons that attempt to model preaching possibilities for Luke-Acts. Although each of these sermons on Luke were preached at a particular time and place, they function in this book more as essays that synthesize the material in part 1 than as actual sermons. More often than not, these essays explain texts and offer analogous applications rather than perform the gospel. The sermons on Luke tend to offer running commentary on stories with appropriate applications rather than retelling stories as events that are still able to connect today's pew with a living word. However, the sermons on Acts more aptly (but not completely) model releasing the text as a living word in the present tense.

The Rochester Lecture offers churches in the Restoration Movement and the larger Detroit area current and lively homiletical scholarship. Future volumes promise a rich resource that will cover a wide variety of the biblical literature, further modeling how preachers can mediate text and gospel.

Abilene Christian University

TIM SENSING
One does not have to be around the Tübingen NT faculty for very long to realize the deep respect it has for Adolf Schlatter (1852–1938). Schlatter had no time for those who laboriously sought to determine the sources behind the Gospels and construct a critical historical account of Jesus’ life based on the results of their research. For Schlatter the Christ that the gospels portrayed was not an artifact that was the starting point for the historians. Rather, this Christ of faith found in the Gospels was the historical Jesus. The Gospel writers got it right. Jesus was Israel’s messiah and the Son of God.

The *sine qua non* of biblical exegesis is to grasp that fact. Only then will one be in a position to expound systematically what the books of the NT are saying. That is the way to do theology. That is what Schlatter does in this book.

In an interesting preface on the original reception of Schlatter’s biblical theology, the translator notes what was happening in Germany at that time. At first there was some interaction between Schlatter and such major figures as Holtzmann and Bultmann. But once Schlatter’s theological methodology became apparent, he was ignored by the major scholars. There was no review of this book in the scholarly literature of the time. Yet amazingly, today, when no one reads Holtzmann, and few read Bultmann, we are told that about thirty of Schlatter’s publications remain in print in Germany. Schlatter’s commentaries and theological treatises have an abiding appeal in contemporary German Pietism. Now a major American Evangelical publishing house has expressed interest in Schlatter and has made his landmark biblical theology available to English readers. We are grateful to both Baker and the tireless work of the translator.

Of course, there is not a precise correlation between German Pietism and American Evangelicals. American Evangelical scholars will be puzzled by Schlatter’s Augustinian thesis on the composition of the gospels (Matt–Mark–Luke). Mark is not much more than an epitomist of Matthew and gets only five pages in this book. They will also probably wince at some of his statements that baptism is the event that effects our relationship with Christ (383).

Also, with the passing of the years, some things are dated. The treatment of Israel and Judaism as the foil that is always transcended by Christianity raises many methodological difficulties for modern readers.

The book is beautifully produced. Besides there being something odd about footnote 4 on page 327, this reviewer could find few typographical errors in reading the text. This will be a treasure for both scholars and ministers for many years. Could Baker encourage the translator to get Schlatter’s commentary on Matthew into English?

Austin Graduate School of Theology

ALLAN J. McNICOL

The author of this book is a journalist, not a sociologist or a theologian. Perhaps that explains why it is so interesting and easy to read. Gary Dorsey grew up as a Protestant, but after he left home, he became an agnostic. After he married, he attended a little rural Presbyterian church with his wife. What he found in this congregation started him on his “journey back to church.”

Dorsey was looking for a congregation that he could study as a journalist, not as a seeker, member, or scholar. The little Presbyterian church he attended with his wife did not suit him. Eventually he found the right congregation to study: a United Church of Christ congregation in Windsor, Connecticut. It was a very old church steeped in the Congregational tradition. The pastor gave Dorsey permission to observe life in that church for one year. He spent a lot of time with the pastor, attended various committee meetings, and got to know the people.

The story Dorsey tells gives the reader an intimate view of the inner workings of a congregation. The human side of a church is shown with all its imperfections. But the year he spent with these very human church members eventually brought him back to church, not just as a journalist, but as a participating member. Dorsey’s book is similar to James Hopewell’s Congregation: Stories and Structures. Hopewell’s approach, however, is more systematic and analytical, while Dorsey’s is more of a narrative, case-study approach.

Most readers of ResQ will find little in common with Dorsey or the UCC congregation he studied. Dorsey probably did not even know about a remote connection between the United Church of Christ and the Restoration Movement led by such pioneers as Barton Stone and Alexander Campbell. Most students of Restoration Movement history know about Abner Jones (1772–1841) and Elias Smith (1769–1846). Both were New England Baptists who left that denomination and led a movement to restore NT Christianity. Some of the heirs of that New England Restoration Movement remained isolated and eventually evolved into the Christian Denomination in America. In 1931, this denomination united with the Congregational Church to form the Congregational Christian Church. In 1957, that denomination merged with the Evangelical and Reformed Church. The name they selected for their new denomination was the United Church of Christ. But if Dorsey ever heard about that Restoration Movement connection, he never mentioned it.

The UCC congregation that Dorsey studied had internal issues quite different from the issues that concern most readers of ResQ. The members were concerned about using Bible translations that remove all gender-specific references to deity. They wanted songs and prayers that addressed God as “Parent” rather than “Father.” They were also very concerned about how best to promote “gay rights.” Most of their members were “pro-choice” rather than “pro-life.”

Dorsey’s journalistic approach lets the reader see the human side of a congregation with all its faults. Doctrinal differences are not the primary cause of congregational divisions. Instead, those divisions begin with personality
clashes. Doctrinal differences are used to justify the division, but those justifications come after the fact. Dorsey’s study of internal conflict in a UCC congregation shows how a church can differ without dividing.

Harding University


Over the past three decades, evangelicals have increasingly moved into the mainstream of biblical scholarship, with positive results for both scholarship and the church. Bruce Waltke, the honorand of this Festschrift, has contributed significantly in the area of Hebrew grammar and syntax, and his shorter commentaries, while very conservative, nevertheless have some value for readers of the biblical text. The field looks forward to his forthcoming commentary on Proverbs and his biblical theology. It is thus fitting that his students and colleagues have produced this work in his honor.

The nineteen articles (plus a bibliography of Waltke’s work and a tribute to him) offer a snapshot of evangelical concerns with wisdom in the Bible. J. I. Packer writes about the nature of theology as “a pointer to... the way the Holy Spirit uses the word of God to change people” (11), signaling his assent to the current flight from theology as a set of epistemic claims toward theology as formation. Most of the contributors, however, write about “wisdom” dimensions of various biblical texts: in the Pentateuch (John Sailhamer, Walter Brown, David Diewert, and Elmer Martens), in Job (William Dumbrell), in Proverbs (Walter Kaiser, Robert Stallman, David Montgomery), in Song of Songs (Iain Provan), in the prophets (Ronald Youngblood, Richard Pratt), in Wisdom of Solomon (Peter Enns), in the NT (Karen Jobes, Gordon Fee); and in the history and ongoing life of the church (Raymond van Leeuwen, Jonathan Wilson, Roger Nicole, James Houston). The variety of the essays allows various kinds of readers to gain something from this book. For example, those dealing with contemporary pop-apocalyptic of the Left Behind series may wish to disseminate Richard Pratt’s popular-level essay “Historical Contingencies and Biblical Predictions” (180–203).

On the other hand, this variety also marks a weakness of the work. One expects a range of interests and even skill in contributors to Festschriften. This work shows a wider range than many others, however. Some of the articles seem appropriate for popular journals (e.g., Youngblood on the “Fall of Lucifer” or Roger Nicole on “The Wisdom of Marriage”). They contribute little to scholarship on their subject. Other articles fall into a middle range: they are scholarly and carefully done, but add little to current debate. A few pieces do, however, stand out as valuable.

Iain Provan’s state-of-the-art discussion of Song of Songs 3 (150–67) not only makes sense of a notoriously difficult text, but offers a reading of the
chapter and of the book as a whole that all future commentators on the Song, even if they do not agree with Provan, will need to consider carefully. Similarly, Gordon Fee's criticism of the widespread conclusion that notions of personified Wisdom drove Paul's Christology should provoke much discussion. His caution against the current overemphasis on wisdom sounds an important note. Some of the other essays in the book will be similarly important.

To conclude, then, one can only applaud the attempts evangelicals are making to do serious biblical scholarship. This book, whatever its imperfections, provides a good example of what may be accomplished in such circles.

Abilene Christian University

MARK W. HAMILTON


The author's purpose is to introduce beginning students to a methodology for the critical reading of the NT. He assumes that his readers have no acquaintance with elementary terms or concepts employed by modern interpreters. The flavor of the book is clear when the author first introduces exegesis. He not only defines the word but adds parenthetically, "pronounced ex-uh-jee-sis." Allen has designed the book so that it could be used as a supplementary text on interpretative technique for a course introducing the NT or the Gospels. It could be used in a class taught either in a church or an academic setting.

Through successive chapters the author explores steps in the interpretative process that uncover multivalent dimensions of the biblical text. Using Matt 12:46–50 for a case study, Allen first examines methods readers may use to delineate the pericope they want to examine. From there he offers suggestions on tools and methods that can help unveil the social and historical setting of the biblical author and the first readers. One chapter examines the way an author's literary techniques open still other dimensions of the text. The author rounds out his study by examining the relationship of form and function in a text. He calls on readers to read the Gospels for story and plot. Finally, he reviews a few of the tenets of reader-response criticism. Each chapter ends with a list of works to which the student may go for additional reading.

Allen's assessment of the biblical narrative is that it is historical but not history. He wants to take account of the form critic's contribution to biblical interpretation by examining the way the early church fashioned stories about Jesus and his teachings. The author gives considerable space to the theological agendas in Matthew, Mark, and Luke as reflected in important themes in each narrative. The author's seeming lack of confidence in the historical worth of pericopae, including the one he uses for a case study, will offer a problem for some readers.

On the whole, Allen offers a good summary of major critical techniques that bring the biblical text to life. In a few instances he is careless with data. For
example, citing a footnote from the New American Bible, he notes that Matt 12:47 is omitted in some textual witnesses, "including Codex Sinaiticus (original reading) and Codex Vaticanus." Commenting on the footnote, Allen writes, "The NAB . . . notes that some manuscripts (including the one they consider to be the ‘original reading’) do not include this verse" (22). The NAB translators surely intend to say that the original hand in Codex Sinaiticus omitted the verse. They were not saying that they considered Codex Sinaiticus to be the original reading (reproduced the autograph?).

Still, Allen's work is a good introduction to interpretative methods that the beginning student would not likely consider or understand. The work is readable, uses technical language sparingly, and labors to demonstrate that critical questions brought to the text unfold meanings for modern readers that they otherwise would have overlooked.

Harding University

DUANE WARDEN


In The Gift of the Psalms, Roland Murphy presents a complete revision of his earlier work The Psalms Are Yours. Murphy states that his goal is to help modern audiences make the Psalms their own by appropriating them into their thoughts, prayer, and faith. Before this is possible, however, modern readers must appreciate the setting of the Psalms in the ancient world.

Murphy divides his work into two major sections. The first, covering a third of the book, deals with introductory matters. The second, the latter two thirds of the book, gives a brief commentary on each of the one hundred fifty psalms. These commentaries range in length from a paragraph to a couple of pages.

The opening chapter treats issues such as authorship, collection, and types of psalms. Much of this material will be well known to students of the Psalms, but Murphy does a good job of presenting the information clearly and succinctly. His section "Psalms in the Context of a Book" (17–22), is a balanced analysis of the work of Brevard Childs and others who suggest Psalms 1 and 2 provide an interpretive framework for the book. Murphy sees some validity to this approach, especially in the use of Psalm 1 as an introduction, but he is less certain about linking Psalms 1 and 2 as a framework. He also contends that this is not the only valid framework for interpretation. The final section of the opening chapter deals with various Christian approaches to the Psalms. Murphy notes that the early church often viewed the royal psalms as messianic and saw the laments as pointing to the suffering of Christ. During the middle ages a fourfold method of interpretation became popular. This approach began with the historical level, but quickly moved on to allegory, typology, and analogy. These last three were believed to contain the spiritual levels of understanding. Murphy notes that many Christians still enjoy these allegorical and typological readings, but he insists that these are not the only Christian way to read the Psalms. He suggests that the
Christian may read and pray the Psalms just as Jesus would have done. They are prayers and meditations addressed to the Lord and may still be read as such today without any particular Christian interpretation.

The second introductory chapter deals with the theology of the Psalms. Here Murphy treats a number of topics and themes taken from the Psalms. These topics include God, soul, heart, name, creation, salvation, enemies, and violence and vengeance. The section on creation notes that the Psalms view creation as a part of God's work in overcoming the forces of evil in the universe. This battle with evil is a central part of creation language in the ancient world that may be overlooked by modern readers of the Psalms. Murphy acknowledges that many of these topics deserve a fuller treatment, but his comments are thoughtful and often lead the reader to further reflection.

The third chapter of the introduction is the shortest, yet many readers may find it the most helpful. Here Murphy discusses "praying the Psalms." He defines prayer as conversation with God and suggests that the Psalms are certainly that. He notes that the Psalms have been, and continue to be, used in both public worship and private meditation and devotions. He suggests that a greater understanding of the Psalms and their context will lead to a greater use, and in turn greater use will lead to a deeper understanding.

The second major part of the book is the commentary on individual psalms. A few selected psalms will serve as illustrations. Murphy notes that Psalm 1 may have been placed here during the Exile as an introduction to the entire Psalter. The theme of the two ways and the choice between good and evil are common throughout Scripture. Here the good choice also includes meditation on God's instruction that may also serve as an encouragement to meditate on the Psalms that follow.

Murphy notes that Psalm 23 describes God as both shepherd and host. The ancient orient often conceived of the king as shepherd, a concept also applied to the Lord who pastures his people (Ps 79:13, Isa 40:11, and Ezek. 34:15). The second picture of the Lord as host at a meal may come from a sacrificial meal at the Temple. The phrase "dwell in the house of the Lord forever" is not to be taken literally, but is a metaphor for divine shelter.

Murphy has accomplished much in this small volume. He has written a book that is certainly familiar with current scholarship, yet remains understandable and free from technical jargon. He deals with some difficult issues such as the treatment of enemies and vengeance and with the Christian use of the Psalms. Some readers may find that, in an attempt to be brief, Murphy has given some psalms and topics too little treatment. If this work leads some to take the psalms more seriously and others to seek fuller treatments of the Psalms, then perhaps it is indeed a success.

Harding University Graduate School of Religion  PHILLIP MCMILLION
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