



SOUTHWESTERN  
JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

# SOUTHWESTERN JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

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## CONTENTS

EDITORIAL . . . . .	I
THE THEOLOGY OF ELIZABETH I: POLITIQUE OR BELIEVER? . . . . .	3
MALCOLM B. YARNELL	
WHAT REMAINS OF OUR LAMENT? EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DEATH, MEMORY, AND GRIEF IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE AND IN RECENT CULTURAL TEXTS . . . . .	35
CHED SPELLMAN	
ADOPTION IN CALVIN'S SOTERIOLOGY: BASIS FOR REDEMPTION OR BENEFIT OF UNION? . . . . .	57
MICHAEL WILKINSON	
AN ASSARION FOR YOUR THOUGHTS: THE CHALLENGES OF TRANSLATING NT NUMISMATIC TERMS . . . . .	77
JAMES ROBERT WICKER	
BOOK REVIEWS . . . . .	97
INDEX OF BOOK REVIEWS . . . . .	117



## *Editorial*

W. Madison Grace II  
Managing Editor  
*Southwestern Journal of Theology*

As a doctoral student I was afforded the opportunity to work as the Editorial Assistant for the *Southwestern Journal of Theology* under the then editorship of Dr. Malcolm Yarnell. This work taught me the nature of academic work, writing, editing, and publishing. I had interactions with authors and readers as well as with printers and publishers. Most academic journals are limited to a set field of inquiry. This is especially true in the broader field of theology which has journals focusing on both the Old and New Testaments, Philosophy of Religion, Church History, Systematic Theology, and more.

The aim of the *Southwestern Journal of Theology* has always been broader than only these fields. At its beginning, the *Journal* began publishing articles in the variety of topics that Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary was teaching. Though it ceased to publish as an academic journal a few years later in 1948 it was revived and since then has addressed a variety of fields and topics that broadly relate to the purposes and goals of the Seminary. In the years I have been working on the *Journal* I have attempted to encourage that broad appeal to the subjects in which Southwestern is devoted. This multiplicity of topics often leaves volumes only partially read by many, but nevertheless allows non-specialists the opportunity to engage in a secondary or peripheral field of study.

This issue of the *Journal* offer that variety of scholarship as well as provides an engagement with topics that are more commonly known and less engaged today. The first article in this issue is an examination of the theology of Elizabeth I. In it Malcolm Yarnell challenges the historiography on the relationship between politics and religion in the thought of Elizabeth. Next, Ched Spellman engages a growing set of literature that engages theology and gaming. Spellman looks at the “themes of death, memory, and grief” in relation to recent “cultural texts.” This engagement not only highlights the usage of video games as cultural texts but specifically focuses on the concept of lament in a few of these games. Following this article Michael Wilkinson engages the question of Calvin’s doctrine of adoption and asks if it is a basis for redemption or a benefit of union. Finally, James Wicker presents an article that investigates the translation of numismatic terms in the New Testament.



## *The Theology of Elizabeth I: Politique or Believer?*

Malcolm B. Yarnell III

Research Professor of Systematic Theology  
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

The theological commitments of the queen of England from 1558 to 1603 have been the subject of much speculation.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps my least favorite review of her personal religion, from a historiographical perspective, was written as late as the post-war twentieth century in a respected academic journal. According to Henry Shires, “Elizabeth seemed to be untouched by the spiritual realities of religion.” Also, “she displayed a complete lack of interest in the higher questions of the Christian tradition.” Finally, “Whatever her religious convictions were, they were of such a nature that they could without difficulty be transcended by other considerations.”<sup>2</sup> The editors of *Church History* were unfazed by the ability of their author to make such claims while never citing a word written by Elizabeth herself, nor anything written by her contemporaries, whether supporters or opponents. It was simply taken for granted by the dominant historiography that Elizabeth was a studied practitioner of *Realpolitik*.

Elizabeth’s own words may be cited in response to the idea that she was personally irreligious. Referring to the hotter sort of Protestant minister in 1585, she noted that “some of them of late have said that I was of no religion, neither hot [nor] cold, but such a one as one day would give God the vomit.” “Yet,” she responded to the entire Parliament, “one matter toucheth me so near as I may not overslip.” And what was this matter that could not be omitted? It was “religion, the ground on which all actions ought to take root and, being corrupted, may mar all the tree.”<sup>3</sup> Religion, and a contested religious position at that, was of unsurpassed importance to Elizabeth.

Following calls in Parliament to further the church’s stalled evangelical reformation, Elizabeth queried, “If policy had been preferred before truth,

<sup>1</sup>This essay was originally presented to the British Reformations Seminar meeting at Corpus Christi College in the University of Oxford. Special thanks are extended to Diarmaid MacCulloch, Judith Maltby, and Christopher Haigh for the invitation. It is dedicated to Elizabeth Joy Yarnell, the daughter given to Karen Searcy Yarnell and me.

<sup>2</sup>Henry M. Shires, “The Conflict between Queen Elizabeth and Roman Catholicism,” *Church History* 16.4 (1947): 222.

<sup>3</sup>Speech to Clergy (27 February 1585) and Speech to Parliament (29 March 1585), in *Elizabeth I: Collected Works [ECW]*, ed. Leah S. Marcus, Janel Mueller, and Mary Beth Rose (London: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 179, 182.

would I, trow you, even at the first beginning of my reign, have turned upside down so great affairs or entered into tossing of the greatest waves and bilows of the world, that might (if I had sought mine ease) have harbored and cast anchor in more seeming security?"<sup>4</sup> Elizabeth was referring back to her courageous 1559 decision to return England to the evangelical religion of Edward's reign, through Acts of Uniformity and of Supremacy. It will be remembered that she was opposed in such a move by the old privy council, her bishops, Spain, and many of her subjects, especially in the House of Lords. As a result, she was personally indignant anyone might later infer she did not care to advance the true Christian faith.

### Academic Evaluations

In the last several decades, the subject of Elizabeth's religious beliefs has occasioned academic conversation. In a compilation regarding numerous women in the Reformation period, Roland Bainton opined, "One might call her already an Anglo-Catholic."<sup>5</sup> Winthrop S. Hudson concluded she was both theologically literate and somewhat Reformed in her theological outlook, being generally in religious agreement with her bishops, even if they quibbled over polity.<sup>6</sup> William P. Haugaard disagreed with the skeptical interpretation of Elizabeth and turned to her Book of Devotions to show that Elizabeth was a genuinely pious believer.<sup>7</sup>

Patrick Collinson, in an early article, wondered whether these written devotions were a genuine self-reflection of Elizabeth. Collinson left the issue of her personal religious beliefs open, using the imagery of Chinese boxes and Russian dolls. He glibly compared the question of Elizabeth's beliefs with the weighty problem of whether there were snakes in Iceland.<sup>8</sup> Later, Collinson classified her as "a particularly odd kind of protestant," because she disliked unrestrained Puritan preaching.<sup>9</sup>

J.E. Neale famously pictured Elizabeth as a *politique*, who initially supported the old religion in the 1559 parliament against an insurgent House of Commons. However, Norman Jones's careful reconstruction of the parliamentary data demonstrated she was actually allied with the Protestant

<sup>4</sup>Speech to Parliament (15 March 1576), in *ECW*, 169. Cf. J.E. Neale, *Elizabeth I and Her Parliaments, 1559–1581* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1953), 346–59.

<sup>5</sup>Roland H. Bainton, *Women of the Reformation in France and England* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1973), 234.

<sup>6</sup>Winthrop S. Hudson, *The Cambridge Connection and the Elizabethan Settlement of 1559* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1980), 144–45.

<sup>7</sup>William P. Haugaard, "Elizabeth Tudor's Book of Devotions: A Neglected Clue to the Queen's Life and Character," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 12.2 (1981): 81–82.

<sup>8</sup>Patrick Collinson, "Windows in a Woman's Soul: Questions about the Religion of Queen Elizabeth I," in *Elizabethan Essays* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 91, 118.

<sup>9</sup>Collinson, *Elizabeth I* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 11.

House of Commons against a conservative House of Lords.<sup>10</sup> Roger Bowers modified that historiography, claiming Elizabeth preferred the more conservative 1549 Book of Common Prayer, but “[g]rudgingly and reluctantly” settled on the 1552 version in order to hold her government together against the Lords and Convocation.<sup>11</sup>

In a substantial examination of the religious sentiments displayed in Elizabeth’s letters, including both personal and diplomatic dispatches, Susan Doran argued that Elizabeth was “an old sort of Protestant,” who imbibed the evangelical, humanist, and Lutheran views prominent in the early English Reformation, moving slowly toward a more Reformed outlook, but always aiming to be broadly Protestant in doctrine.<sup>12</sup> Christopher Haigh offered a balanced assessment: “She was a political realist, but this does not mean that she was indifferent to spiritual things.”<sup>13</sup>

The following review of Elizabeth’s theology is intended to build on the contributions of these substantial historical scholars. It demonstrates that Elizabeth was neither a *politique* nor “odd” nor “old,” but an engaged evangelical believer with her own substantive theology. Following Doran’s suggestion that Elizabeth’s spirituality may be further discovered in her prayers, poetry, and translations, “which were more private modes of self expression,” I have freely utilized those resources. I also utilize Elizabeth’s more public expressions, such as her speeches, which scholars have sometimes downplayed. Elizabeth considered herself a public person and was confident regarding the rightness of her views, so her private religious opinions were intentionally revealed in public ways.

Literary scholars have increasingly concluded that Elizabeth was intimately involved in the construction and presentation of her own image in pageant and portrait<sup>14</sup> as well as in translation and publication.<sup>15</sup> Following this trend in literary studies, there seems little reason to divide her public proclamations from her personal theology. The idea that Elizabeth’s personal beliefs must be distinguished from her public beliefs may have a conceptual basis in her doctrine of two wills, but the distinction may not be expanded to

<sup>10</sup>Norman Jones, *Faith by Statute: Parliament and the Settlement of Religion*, 1559 (London: Royal Historical Society, 1982).

<sup>11</sup>Roger Bowers, “The Chapel Royal, the First Edwardian Prayer Book, and Elizabeth’s Settlement of Religion, 1559,” *Historical Journal* 43.2 (2000): 321.

<sup>12</sup>Susan Doran, “Elizabeth I’s Religion: The Evidence of Her Letters,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 51.4 (2000): 720.

<sup>13</sup>Christopher Haigh, *Elizabeth I* (London: Longman, 1998), 31.

<sup>14</sup>Susan Frye, *Elizabeth I: The Competition for Representation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

<sup>15</sup>Lysbeth Benkert, “Translation as Image-Making: Elizabeth I’s Translation of Boethius’s *Consolation of Philosophy*,” *Early Modern Literary Studies* 6.3 (2001): 1–20; Linda S. Shenk, “To Love and Be Wise’: The Earl of Essex, Humanist Court Culture, and England’s Learned Queen,” *Early Modern Literary Studies* Special Issue 16 (2007): 1–27; Jennifer Clement, “The Queen’s Voice: Elizabeth I’s *Christian Prayers and Meditations*,” *Early Modern Literary Studies* 13.3 (2008): 1–26.

a yawning chasm by historians. Moreover, Elizabeth's public professions, especially with regard to political theology were, like her devotions, quite stable in content. This suggests that her private beliefs and public professions were not entirely antithetical and that the latter were not politically malleable.

### **Elizabeth as Theologian**

Unusually for a woman in her day, Elizabeth was trained in theology. In some frank remarks to a special gathering of representatives from the Commons and the Lords in 1566, she quipped, "It is said I am no divine. Indeed, I studied nothing else but divinity till I came to the crown, and then I gave myself to the study of that which was meet for government, and am not ignorant."<sup>16</sup> Elizabeth's training in "divinity" was at the hands of men such as Edmund Allen, a chaplain with evangelical Lutheran leanings,<sup>17</sup> and Roger Ascham, a humanist tutor who scheduled her day to begin with the New Testament in the Greek.<sup>18</sup>

According to Ascham, she was taught the classics in Greek and Latin, and read among the fathers with a focus on Cyprian, and among contemporary theologians with a focus upon the *Loci Communes* of Philip Melanchthon, Martin Luther's humanist colleague at Wittenberg. The method of her education entailed translating from an original language—including Italian, French, and Spanish in addition to Greek and Latin—into English, followed later by a retranslation back into the original language.<sup>19</sup> In her early years, Elizabeth translated Margaret of Navarre's *Mirror of the Sinful Soul*; Katherine Parr's *Prayers or Meditations*; book one, chapter one of John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*; Erasmus's *Dialogue of Faith*; and, Bernard Ochino's *Sermon on the Nature of Christ*. We know of some translations because she presented them as gifts to Katherine Parr, Henry VIII, or Edward VI, but there were probably others.<sup>20</sup> In her later years, she translated Boethius's *On the Consolation of Philosophy*, Plutarch's *On Curiosity*, and part of Horace's *On the Art of Poetry*. She is also said to have translated portions of Cicero, Sallust, Euripides, Isocrates, and Xenophon.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>16</sup>Speech to Parliament Delegates (5 November 1566), second version, in *ECW*, 96.

<sup>17</sup>Bowers, "The Chapel Royal," 320–21; Doran, "Elizabeth I's Religion," 711.

<sup>18</sup>Anne Boleyn had appointed Matthew Parker to be her tutor, and William Grindal also functioned in that capacity. Maria Dowling, *Humanism in the Age of Henry VIII* (London: Crook Helm, 1986), 233–35.

<sup>19</sup>David Starkey, *Elizabeth: The Struggle for the Throne* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 80–82; John Schofield, *Philip Melanchthon and the English Reformation* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 160, 196.

<sup>20</sup>*ECW*, 6, 9, 10; Starkey, *Elizabeth*, 86; Dowling, *Humanism in the Age of Henry VIII*, 235.

<sup>21</sup>*Queen Elizabeth's Englishings*, ed. Caroline Pemberton, EETS O.S. 113 (London: Keegan Paul et al, 1899), vii–viii; *ECW*, 327n1. Cf. "Elizabeth I revealed as the translator of Tacitus into English," Reuters (2018).

The translations of the works by Margaret, Katherine, and Boethius seem particularly important, as they mark critical junctures in Elizabeth's life: First, her mother, Anne Boleyn, was influenced by the French evangelical humanist school surrounding the queen of Navarre. Elizabeth was likely aware of this poignant and significant parental reality as she translated Margaret's *Mirror*.<sup>22</sup> Second, her father, Henry VIII, a conservative theologian when it came to the Reformation doctrine of justification, received only one letter of which we know from Elizabeth. This letter accompanied the translation of Katherine Parr's prayers. Parr, an evangelical, was Henry's last wife and took a special interest in Elizabeth's education. And third, Elizabeth translated Boethius about the time she became dismayed by Henry IV's conversion to Roman Catholicism. The French King's conversion left the English queen with the potentially dangerous dilemma of a Catholic France and Catholic Spain uniting against her. In each crisis, Elizabeth resorted intellectually and religiously to an evangelical humanism.

It may be objected that Elizabeth's theology, much of which came as translation, was not very creative. Yet, to her credit, Elizabeth was always more concerned with established truth than with speculative theology. Her motto was, after all, *semper eadem*, "always the same," a fact her Calvinist subjects took some time to discern. As one modern biographer put it, "For her, as for Ascham, repetition held no disgrace: if a thing had been said once supremely well, why ever say it differently?"<sup>23</sup> Elizabeth's theology may have been garnered through translation, but it remained nonetheless Elizabeth's theology, and we shall see that she forwarded her own faith.

Elizabeth's divinity was more than merely received. As a child, she considered the contemplation of God through the activities of translation, prayer, and meditation to be "*opus animi*," "a work of the soul." The *opus animi* of divine contemplation lifts a person into heaven by recasting earthly existence; literally "*in carne divinos facit*," "it makes one divine in the flesh," and thus able to endure worldly pain while experiencing heavenly bliss. The idea of salvation as deification—by participation rather than by nature—for Elizabeth was also intimately connected with her own view of her royal parentage and the divine appointment of monarchs. This passage concerning the work of her soul came in a letter to her father, wherein she also noted that philosophers teach that a king is "*deum in terris*," "a god on earth."<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup>It has been speculated as to whether Elizabeth may have used Anne's own copy of the book. James Kelsey McConica, *English Humanists and Reformation Politics: Under Henry VIII and Edward VI* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965), 8.

<sup>23</sup>Starkey, *Elizabeth*, 82.

<sup>24</sup>Elizabeth to Henry VIII (30 December 1545), in *Elizabeth I: Autograph Compositions and Foreign Language Originals [ACFLO]*, ed. Janel Mueller and Leah S. Marcus (London: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 8.

### Elizabeth according to History and Theology

Because of the obfuscating layers that have been placed by historical commentary over this early modern woman, pure history must be advocated in order to enable rediscovery. Past history and present theology must be kept distinct. The past must be allowed to speak its own word, just as the present must be allowed to speak its own word. If commentators of today desire respect from those who come tomorrow, and we do, then certainly the commentators of yesterday must be given like courtesy. The voices of history, male and female, must be heard within their context and understood first according to their purposes. Critical evaluation may only follow empathetic recitation. The historiographical axioms laid down by Leopold von Ranke and Herbert Butterfield must surely be taken into account.<sup>25</sup>

Nevertheless, theology claims a truth beyond history. Maurice Wiles noted that the problem with the Antioch hermeneutical tradition was that it suffered from theological myopia due to its severe restriction to history.<sup>26</sup> Trying to maintain historical honesty and theological integrity at the same time is difficult yet necessary for the historical theologian. While planting one foot firmly in the field of history and the other in the field of theology, the historical theologian must restrain both theological speculation and the historicist bias against speculative thought. We tread a royal road between the ditches of ideological speculation and historical myopia in reviewing this important sixteenth-century monarch's theology.

A dialectic seems to be required. On the one hand, a claim to discern faith in the writings of another person certainly requires an act of faith that goes beyond the strictest parameters of technical history into the spheres of philosophy and theology. On the other hand, it must also be recognized that the polar opposite, the utterly dismissive claim that Elizabeth's frequent references to God and his gracious providence are "merely politic" or that her "sincerity" is "doubtful,"<sup>27</sup> is as much a statement of faith that transcends the

<sup>25</sup>I follow Herbert Butterfield's definition of technical history here. Herbert Butterfield, *Writings on Christianity and History*, ed. C.T. McIntire (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 172–82; C.T. McIntire, *Herbert Butterfield: Historian as Dissenter* (London: Yale University Press, 2004). When Butterfield criticized the Whig tradition and Lord Acton in particular with regard to the historian's moral judgments, he demonstrated that any evaluation, positive or negative, as to a historical figure's inner disposition is simply beyond the historian's ability ultimately to decide. Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History* (London: Norton, 1965), 107–32.

<sup>26</sup>Theodore's commentary on John, for instance, "as a whole is a disappointing book. He has attempted to expound the meaning of the Gospel too narrowly within the confines of his own way of thought. To borrow a phrase from Origen, it is as if he has never lain upon the Evangelist's breast; his mind has never found the spiritual communion with the mind of St. John, and therefore he cannot reveal the Gospel's most precious secrets to us. His work never does full justice to the whole range and depth of the theological meaning of the Gospel." Wiles, *The Spiritual Gospel: The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel in the Early Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), 159.

<sup>27</sup>Allison Heisch, "Queen Elizabeth I: Parliamentary Rhetoric and the Exercise of

bounds of technical history as the former, even if the latter is a faith statement of a particularly negative kind. In the evidence reviewed below, due to the dearth of substantive evidence to the contrary, we have taken Elizabeth's theology at face value.<sup>28</sup>

My hope for the historians reading this essay is that reviewing Elizabeth's theology will aid in measuring her impact upon the religion of her day. Elizabeth's theology is worth studying in its own right, but also for the sake of discerning why her reign resulted in the English church's contested yet longstanding "Settlement." Perhaps it will also bolster the idea that this unusual woman might have actually operated out of personal theological integrity. An historian may not like the religion Elizabeth promulgated, but he may not, without reference to the available facts, heedlessly cast doubt upon her religious integrity. (As a Baptist, this historian certainly does not like parts of her theology, but one must respect a person before criticizing her.) My hope for the theologians reading this essay is that we will develop an appreciation for this woman's powerful, critical, and subtle mind.

### **Elizabeth's Foundational Theology**

One of the necessities in writing historical theology is discerning a paradigm by which to present the theology of a person or movement located in history. Out of respect for Rankean historiography—seeking “only to show what actually happened,”<sup>29</sup> and respect for the academic discipline known variously as “prolegomena,” “Fundamentaltheologie,” “development of doctrine,” or perhaps best “foundational theology,” it seems appropriate to discover the foundation from which Elizabeth developed her theological views.<sup>30</sup> Foundational theology is useful because it seeks to define the bases from which the rest of a theology develops.

Three theological concepts, each of which reflects upon authority, are generally conceived as constitutive of any foundation: philosophy of revelation, soteriology, and ecclesiology. By identifying the particular construal of those three concepts through the careful reading of a theologian's own thought, one may perhaps approach the central thrust of a figure's theology.

Power,” *Signs* 1.1 (1975): 35, 36.

<sup>28</sup>One might infer personal impiety from a maid of honor attending Elizabeth at her death. Elizabeth Southwell was a convert to Catholicism who freely weaved magic with medicine and theology. Southwell's manuscript contradicts the majority of reports concerning her deathbed conversations with her prelates. Catherine Loomis, “Elizabeth Southwell's Manuscript Account of the Death of Queen Elizabeth,” *English Literary Renaissance* 26.3 (1996): 483, 486, 491.

<sup>29</sup>Cf. Marnie Hughes-Warrington, *Fifty Key Thinkers on History* (London: Routledge, 2000), 256–63.

<sup>30</sup>The discipline of *Fundamentaltheologie* had its beginnings in the continental Catholic faculties of the nineteenth century and reached its height with a practitioner who recently sat in the chair of Peter. On the theological method of Benedict XVI, see Malcolm B. Yarnell, *The Formation of Christian Doctrine* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007), 34–42.

Foundational theology from a historical and systematic perspective may be conveniently divided into two large questions, that of theological foundation and that of doctrinal development.

What was the basic worldview from which Elizabeth learned to think about God in his relation to humanity? What was her *Fundamentaltheologie*? What was her view of the development of doctrine? What did she consider authoritative in theological construction? Was there a particular philosophical paradigm from which she operated? What are the ethical principles that drove her political and ecclesiological conclusions? From an academic perspective, a theological foundation should not be imposed upon an historical figure but derived from her thoughts. What follows is an attempt to define the theological method of Elizabeth I on the basis of her own statements and actions, rather than imposing an alien paradigm upon her.

### **Elizabeth as Evangelical**

It has been claimed that Elizabeth's fundamental religion was "evangelical," being "a religion bibliocentric, Christocentric."<sup>31</sup> Certainly, Elizabeth was evangelical in her convictions, rather than Catholic, when the term "evangelical" is taken in its humanistic, pre-Protestant sense.<sup>32</sup> As she explained to Katherine Parr, in the cover letter to her translation of *The Mirror or Glass of the Sinful Soul*, "she (beholding and contemplating what she is) doth perceive of herself and of her own strength she can do nothing that good is or prevaleth for her salvation, unless it be through the grace of God, whose mother, daughter, sister, and wife by the scriptures she prooveth herself to be." The reference to the church's mediatorial role through its priesthood and sacraments is striking by its absence, in the preface as in the book.

Moreover, the medieval sense of salvation as involving a semi-Pelagian *facere quod in se est*, "doing what is in oneself," as a precondition to receiving divine grace, is entirely missing. Salvation for the young Elizabeth is entirely by grace through faith: "Trusting also that through his incomprehensible love, grace, and mercy she (being called from sin to repentance) doth faithfully hope to be saved."<sup>33</sup> Subsequently, the ideas of personal sin and utter dependence upon divine grace for personal salvation are repeatedly encountered in her prayers and speeches. Take, for instance, this glancing statement in a speech to parliament in 1586, important precisely because it was

<sup>31</sup>Collinson, *Elizabeth I*, 10.

<sup>32</sup>"'Evangelicalism' is the religious outlook which makes the primary point of Christian reference the Good News of the *Evangelion*, or the text of scripture generally; it is a conveniently vague catch-all term which can be applied across the board, except to the very small minority of English religious rebels who proceeded further towards Continental radicalism." Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer: A Life* (London: Yale University Press, 1996), 2.

<sup>33</sup>Elizabeth to Katherine Parr, 31 December 1544, in *Elizabeth's Glass: With "The Glass of the Sinful Soul" (1544) by Elizabeth I, and "Epistle Dedicatory" & "Conclusion" (1548) by John Bale*, ed. Marc Shell (London: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 111–12.

haphazardly thrown into a seemingly unrelated discussion regarding, of all things, the succession: “Although I may not justify, but may justly condemn my sundry faults and sins to God.”<sup>34</sup> Elizabeth understood intimately the doctrines of creation, the Fall, and justification.

Then again, consider this prayer, written originally in Italian and published in 1569, “My God and my Lord, humbly and with a soul full of infinite displeasure at having offended Thee and offended Thee all day long, I, Thy humble handmaid and sinner, present myself before Thy divine majesty to confess my sins candidly and freely to ask pardon of Thee.” Further, “On the other side, Thou hast planted, by Thy infinite mercy, a lively faith in my heart that Christ is my true and certain Salvation, and that through Him every soul washed in His blood will be received of Thy mercy. Behold, I come with assurance and certain faith to find pardon at the judgment seat of Thy mercy through the same Jesus Christ.”<sup>35</sup>

Like other evangelicals, Elizabeth also revered the Bible as God’s Word. During her passage through London prior to her coronation, she received the Bible “at the little conduit in cheape. For when her grace had learned that the Byble in Englishe should there be offered, she thanked the citie therefore, promised the reading thereof most diligentlye.” She then, to the evangelical crowd’s delight, took the Bible and kissed it before holding it to her breast.<sup>36</sup> Of course, Elizabeth did not care for convoluted and distressing arguments about what the Word meant, beyond the evangelical doctrines generally acceptable to all Protestants. She especially disdained the dissensions that arose among the people when their private interpretations endangered her royal supremacy. The Bible was best interpreted through the homilies issued by authority under Edward VI and herself.<sup>37</sup>

Elizabeth was not only an evangelical in the sense of defining faith as the passive reception of divine grace and in respect for God’s Word, but in the sense of promoting the gospel. She thanked God for, “aboue all this, making me (though a weake woman) yet thy instrument, to set forth the glorious Gospel of thy deare Sonne Christ Ihesus.”<sup>38</sup> Part of her task in setting forth the gospel was to protect it from attack by hostile Catholic forces. She said that her attempt to unite European Protestants was driven by her concern that the enemy wished to rout out “such as profess the gospel.”<sup>39</sup> From birth to death, Elizabeth’s convictions were consistently evangelical in the sense of relying upon grace through faith in Christ for personal salvation and in displaying a passion for preserving and proclaiming the Word.

<sup>34</sup>ECW, 202.

<sup>35</sup>ECW, 152–53; ACFLO, 138–39.

<sup>36</sup>The Passage of our most drad Soueraigne Lady Quene Elyzabeth through the citie of Lond to Westminster the daye before her coronacion (London, 1558).

<sup>37</sup>Speech to Clergy (27 February 1585), in ECW, 178, 181.

<sup>38</sup>ACFLO, 45. Cf. ECW, 311–13. See the note regarding the dispute over this text’s assignment to Elizabeth ACFLO, 44n.

<sup>39</sup>Elizabeth to Robert Beale (21 August 1577); in Doran, “Elizabeth I’s Religion,” 708.

### Theocentric Providence as Theological Foundation

Yet Elizabeth's evangelical convictions are of a particular type. From the weight of references in her speeches, letters, and prayers, there should be little doubt that she referred overwhelmingly to divine providence more than to any other potential foundational Christian doctrine. Although in her prayers she affirmed the Trinity and the atoning work of Jesus Christ on the cross, as well as the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit,<sup>40</sup> she most often referred to the providence of God the Father. The Son and the Spirit certainly share in the one deity and receive common glory, but the Father, with his title of "God" and in his leading role of guiding history, is referred to more often than the other persons of the Trinity. This suggests Elizabeth was "theocentric" rather than "Christocentric," looking not only to salvation by grace but also to the order of creation and her appointment within it.

Keith Thomas considered the doctrine of providence central in the development of the early modern mind.<sup>41</sup> Alexandra Walsham deepened our knowledge in this area, indicating providence was considered one of "the first principles of Religion" by John Calvin, Zacharius Ursinus, and William Pemble, among many other Reformed theologians.<sup>42</sup> The doctrine of providence was "a prominent theme" in both "academic theology and practical divinity."<sup>43</sup>

However, providence was construed in different ways. Ronald J. VanderMolen shows how providence was treated in the theologies of John Calvin, representing the continental Reformed; of George Hakewill, representing the "Anglicans"; and, of Thomas Beard, representing the Puritans. Calvin, displaying caution, preserved the uniqueness of special revelation by downplaying historical speculations regarding divine providence. Hakewill read more authority into the interpretation of history as the display of providence but retained some sense of mystery in discerning all its ways. Hakewill wrote in order to undergird simultaneously English nationalism and religious conformity. The Hakewill brand of providence was also intended to bring personal comfort. The Puritan Beard, however, turned providence into a means of direct revelation, forsaking almost any sense of the mystery of providence. Through the moral judgments of history, Beard emphasized the evil nature of tyranny. Beard's doctrine of providence encouraged social and religious change.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>40</sup>E.g. a Latin prayer, organized in a Trinitarian format, with lengthy addresses to the Father, the Spirit, and the Son. *ACFLO*, 49–50; *ECW*, 317–18.

<sup>41</sup>Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, ch. 4.

<sup>42</sup>William Pemble, *A Treatise of the Providence of God*, in *The Workes of William Pemble* (1635), 261; cited in Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 8.

<sup>43</sup>Pemble, *A Treatise of the Providence of God*, 9.

<sup>44</sup>Ronald J. VanderMolen, "Providence as Mystery, Providence as Revelation: Puritan and Anglican Modifications of John Calvin's Doctrine of Providence," *Church History* 47.1 (1978): 27–47.

Elizabeth's own treatment of providence echoes the picture that VanderMolen drew of the Anglican theologian, Hakewill. Providence is discernible in the public sphere of the nation and in the private spheres of its people, but it necessarily retains a certain aspect of incomprehensibility. She was careful when stating the case for providence, for instance with regard to her own blessings: "I cannot attribute this hap and good success to my device without detracting much from the divine Providence, nor challenge to my own commendation what is due to His eternal glory."<sup>45</sup>

After the plotting of Mary Stuart was exposed, she told Parliament, "When I remember the bottomless depth of God's great benefits towards me, I find them to be so many or rather so infinite in themselves as that they exceed the capacity of all men, much more of any one, to be comprehended."<sup>46</sup> Elizabeth's reserve contained a subtle warning: Ascribing too much to providence is a sign of human pride.

Yet providence is nonetheless discernible, entire, and comforting. For Elizabeth, providence arranged her entire life. In her first speech before Parliament in 1559, she noted she was "born a servitor of almighty God."<sup>47</sup> In a prayer delivered at Bristol in 1574, Elizabeth thanked God for providentially guiding every aspect of her life: "my creation, preservation, regeneration, and all other Thy benefits." God protected and preserved her "from the beginning of my life unto this present hour," and she desired to return to God what she had received from him in her life. Specifically, she referred to "the government of this Church and kingdom," and expressed her hope to return to God "a peaceable, quiet, and well-ordered state and kingdom, as also a perfect reformed Church."

Elizabeth considered her entire life destiny to be for the furthering of God's glory, and was willing to accept from him whatever he providentially allotted.<sup>48</sup> In that swan song delivered to the Commons in 1601, known as the "Golden Speech," she pictured God ruling her life from her accession to her impending death. She kept the account she would have to give God at the final judgment always before her, believing she would be judged on the basis of how she fulfilled her "kingly duty."<sup>49</sup>

Providence brought Elizabeth comfort. Whenever she reflected upon her life, whether in private prayer or in public parliament, she drew strength from the fact that her entire history was in God's hands. She reminded a Parliament nervous for the succession that God's provision for her and her nation "may be made in convenient time."<sup>50</sup> She prayed, "*Omnipotens, aeterne deus, Dominus dominantium, Rex regum, a quo omnis potestas, qui me tui populi principem constitueristi, ac ex sola tua misericordia sedere fecisti in throno patris*

<sup>45</sup>Speech before Convocation (15 March 1576), in *ECW*, 168.

<sup>46</sup>Speech before Parliament (12 November 1586), first version, in *ECW*, 186.

<sup>47</sup>*ECW*, 56.

<sup>48</sup>Prayer at Bristol (15 August 1574), in *ECW*, 310–11.

<sup>49</sup>The Golden Speech (30 November 1601) [two versions], in *ECW*, 339, 341–42.

<sup>50</sup>Speech before Parliament (10 February 1559), in *ECW*, 58.

*mei.*<sup>51</sup> “All-powerful, eternal God, Lord of lords, King of kings, to whom belongs all power, who has constituted me ruler of your people, and who by your mercy alone made me to sit in my father’s throne.”

The comfort of providence appeared again, when she gave Parliament an answerless answer regarding Mary’s execution: “And yet must I needs confess that the benefits of God to me have been and are so manifold, so folded and embroidered upon one another, so doubled and redoubled towards me, as that no creature living hath more cause to thank God for all things than I have.”<sup>52</sup>

While the benefits of her life were due to divine providence, she also drew comfort from the fact that even death was due to divine providence. “Wherein as I would loath to die so bloody a death, so doubt I not but God would have given me grace to be prepared for such an event, chance when it shall, which I refer to His good pleasure.”<sup>53</sup> God shows his care in the giving of life and its blessings, even of death.

Exercising a cure of souls, she reminded a number of her noble subjects that the deaths of favored sons were thankfully due to God’s provision. For instance, she consoled her ambassador to France, when she learned that “God of late hath called your son to His mercy.” At first, she was “inwardly sorry,” “But seeing it was the good pleasure of God that he should no longer tarry in this world, being meeter for heaven than earth, it is our part and yours also to refer all things to His holy will.” Or, as she comforted the Earl of Shrewsbury, regarding his son’s death, “how well God in His singular goodness hath dealt with you, in that he left you behind other sons of great hope.” “[Y]ou are to remember that of four sons that He hath given you, He hath taken only one to Himself.” Or, to Lady Norris upon her son’s death, “let that Christian discretion stay the flux of your immoderate grieving [for] nothing of this kind hath happened but by God’s divine providence.”

From a modern counseling viewpoint, these applications of providence may seem cold, even callous, but Elizabeth was genuine and caring in her sentiments. She comforted herself in similar terms upon Leicester’s death.<sup>54</sup> The queen grounded her ways of thought and action upon a theocentric doctrine of divine providence.

### The Order of “The Middle Waye”

Although providence is all-encompassing, discernible, and comforting, there is a limit to human speculation regarding this mystery. Books 4 and 5 of Elizabeth’s “Englishing” of Boethius’s *De Consolatione Philosophiae* treat

<sup>51</sup> *Precationes priuate. Regiae E.R.* (London, 1563); reprinted in ACFLO, 118.

<sup>52</sup> Speech before Parliament (12 November 1586), first version, in ECW, 188.

<sup>53</sup> Speech before Parliament (12 November 1586), second version, in ECW, 193.

<sup>54</sup> Elizabeth to Amyas Paulet (January 1579), Elizabeth to George Talbot (5 September 1582), and Elizabeth to Margery Norris (22 September 1597), in ECW, 231, 257, 389; Doran, “Elizabeth I’s Religion,” 715–16.

the subject at length. It should be kept in mind that the Reformed found the ruminations of Boethius antithetical to a proper doctrine of providence.<sup>55</sup> But Elizabeth had a different view. In those books, she considers the philosophical problems of theodicy, of relating providence to fate and luck, and of relating divine foreknowledge to divine predestination and free will to determinism.

As for the first problem, that of theodicy, answering why God allows the righteous to suffer, she concluded that God will finally prosper the good and punish the wicked, but understanding his temporal judgments is ultimately “unkownen.” “But thou, although thou knowest not the cause of so greate an order, yet because a good guyder the world tempers, doubte thou not all thinges rightly orderd be.”<sup>56</sup>

As for the second problem, she sees fate and luck, or destiny and chance, as human descriptions of problems which find their unity in divine providence. “For Prouidence is Godes pleasure, appoyned by him that all rulith & all disposith.” Lesser beings concern themselves with the microcosmic problems of their divided fates and destinies, seeking to influence outcomes by exercising their own wills.

The Elizabethan worldview is partially discerned in the idea of moving and interconnecting spheres, circles, or wheels, finally bounded by God and properly centered by cooperation with providence.<sup>57</sup> “For as of all Circles the inmost that turnes themselves about one rounde, coms neerest to the purenes of the midst, and as a steddy stay of all that rolles about, doth circuite the same, but the vttmost by wyder bredth rolled, the more hit goes from the vndeuided midst of the poynte, so much the more hit is spred by larger spaces, but whatsoeuer drawith neere & accompanith the midst, & with his pureness is ruled, ceassith to be stopt or ouerrun.”<sup>58</sup>

The concepts of “order” and “rashness” are also key to Elizabeth’s worldview. God oversees all of history, putting all things in their proper order. He possesses a vision unavailable to created beings, so that events often seem confused rather than ordered to us. It is best to submit to providence, draw close to his will, and allow oneself to be properly placed. However, some human beings seek to change their fortune and overturn the ways of providence. Others err by attempting to comprehend providence, but “peruers is the confusion of opinion her self.”<sup>59</sup> However, God guides the lives of men in diverse ways, providing further opportunity for confusion.

Divine order determines the way things should be; human rashness seeks to unsettle it. “For order keeps ech thing, so as what so doth leave his assigned way of order, the self same tho it hap to an other, falles in rule, lest

<sup>55</sup>Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England*, 21–22.

<sup>56</sup>Queen Elizabeth’s *Englishings*, 90.

<sup>57</sup>E.M.W. Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture* (1943; reprinted, New York: Pelican, 1972).

<sup>58</sup>Queen Elizabeth’s *Englishings*, 92–93.

<sup>59</sup>Queen Elizabeth’s *Englishings*, 94.

in Providences kingdom, Rashnes should prevayle.”<sup>60</sup> Rather than changing fortune or comprehending providence, human beings serve themselves better by cooperating with providence. Such cooperation is usually found in love and in “the middle waye.”

Regarding the middle way, Elizabeth allows her persona to speak as the goddess of philosophy, “For you cam not to vs in the aduancement of vertue, to make vs ouerflow with delites, or drownd in pleasure, but that we should make a sharp battell against all fortune, and that neyther the sowre oppresse yow, nor pleasant corrupt you; the middle waye with steddy force maynteyne you.” It is a virtue to submit to providence, which is found in steadily holding to the middle way between opposing errors. Elizabeth’s worldview gives explanatory power to why she was so adamant against changes in the religious formulae legislated in 1559, a settlement reflecting her own upbringing.

Perhaps she altered the *Book of Common Prayer* in the ways she did in 1559 so that she might reclaim the sense of profound religiosity she most likely first discovered in the early part of Edward’s reign. There, with Henry’s terrible presence removed, and with her younger brother, her “*Serenissimo Regi*,”<sup>61</sup> on the throne, she found peace in her chapel, where the Lutheran-leaning Edmund Allen was her priest. The 1544 *Litany* approved by her father, and the 1549 *Book of Common Prayer* containing Thomas Cranmer’s lyrical prayers, would certainly look like a golden age to her during the trials of the following years.

It will also be remembered that the first major crisis in her young adult life occurred in 1549 with the Privy Council’s examination of her dealings with Thomas Seymour. She went from signing her letters to the Lord Protector, “my power,” to the more humble, “my little power.”<sup>62</sup> Having survived that frightening spiritual and political ordeal, she turned inward, finding solace in her religion, renewing her focus upon theology and the classics. In a prayer from her imprisonment in the Tower under Mary, she cried out, “Help me now, O God, for I have none other friends but Thee alone. And suffer me not (I beseech Thee) build my foundation upon the sands, but upon the rock, whereby all the blasts of blustering weather may have no power against me, amen.”<sup>63</sup>

The 1552 revision of the prayer book came forth about the time Edward began to fall ill. In “My device for the succession,” Edward indicated that a woman could only play a “transmissory role” in the succession, rather than a receptive role.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, the evangelical bishops influential in its revision and dissemination demonstrated their prejudice against a woman, principally Mary but tangentially Elizabeth, sitting upon the throne. Nicholas Ridley,

<sup>60</sup>Queen Elizabeth’s *Englishings*, 96.

<sup>61</sup>Elizabeth to Edward VI (1548), in *ACFLO*, 18.

<sup>62</sup>Starkey, *Elizabeth I*, 65–75; Elizabeth to Edward Seymour (September 1548) and Elizabeth to Edward Seymour (28 January 1548), in *ECW*, 22, 24.

<sup>63</sup>Thomas Bentley, *The Monument of Matrons* (London, 1582), 35–36; in *ECW*, 48.

<sup>64</sup>Starkey, *Elizabeth I*, 110–11.

the bishop of London, declared publicly that Mary and Elizabeth were “illegitimate and not lawfully begotten in the estate of true matrimony according to God’s law.” Elizabeth recalled this traumatic event years later, when she reminded the “*Domini Doctores*” that they had proclaimed her and her sister “bastards.”<sup>65</sup>

When Mary came to the throne, Elizabeth temporized her outward worship in order to comply with Mary’s demands. During her imprisonment at Woodstock, she had asked for the English Bible. Displaying her belief in conformity coupled with a tolerance for conscientious but conforming Nicodemism, Elizabeth worshiped according to the Catholic forms. However, she continued to use the English *Litany* approved by Henry. Mary demanded that she switch to Latin prayers. Elizabeth, again, conformed, but only after defending her use of the *Litany* because of its petitions for “mercy upon us miserable sinners” and its approval by Henry VIII.<sup>66</sup> Elizabeth’s appreciation for the *Litany* surfaced again in 1558, when she approved its use in both the Chapel Royal and in the nation’s churches prior to Parliament’s official passage of the Act of Uniformity.<sup>67</sup>

The order of religion from the central part of Edward’s reign thus seems to provide a center upon which Elizabeth’s personal religious sense could rest. And since she believed in the “middle waye,” which “steddy force” should “maynteyne”—and certainly her father’s late religion and her brother’s early religion were midway between Edward’s strident Reformism and Mary’s persecuting Catholicism—there was little need for further development in her religious doctrine. Her worldview simply would not allow it, for God had providentially determined the way things were to be, and it is best to cooperate with them; the circles of life cannot move far from their set course anyways, and the rashness of change is in reality sin against God.

Elizabeth’s stasis of life and doctrine in a “middle waye” brought no end of consternation to her Puritan subjects as much as to her Catholic subjects. If they had listened to her closely, they would have realized that her doctrine of providence discountenanced both a return to Rome and a radical reformation in the arenas of church polity and church doctrine. She might speak of tradition and reformation, but she was determined that the church should never move far from the center point previously established by divinely-ordained authority.

### Elizabeth’s Sacred Office

Divine providence taught that God also utilized “instruments” or “second causes” by which to bring about his will in history. This brought a certain

<sup>65</sup>Starkey, *Elizabeth I*, 117; Speech to Parliamentary Delegation (5 November 1566), in *ECW*, 97.

<sup>66</sup>Starkey, *Elizabeth I*, 162–63.

<sup>67</sup>Bowers, “The Chapel Royal,” 323–25; *A booke containing all such proclamations as were published during the raigne of the late Queene Elizabeth* (London, 1618), fol. 3.

dignity to his creatures, but our English divine also noted this did not grant the instrument some type of mystical divinity.<sup>68</sup> Elizabeth definitely believed she was “His instrument to preserve” the people.<sup>69</sup> Elizabeth was a divinely-ordained monarch above the nation and a humbly submissive handmaid under God.

In a Spanish prayer, she identified herself as “an instrument of Thy glory, an instrument with which Thou mayst be glorified in constituting me as head and governess of Thy wealthiest kingdom in these most unhappy times in which Thy Church, Thy only spouse, is in so great a manner oppressed by the tyranny of Satan and his ministers.”<sup>70</sup> Because she was an instrument of God, she was due obedience. The identification of her instrumentality with the Creator could appear quite strong. In one prayer, she implied that to fail to obey God was to fail to obey her. Moreover, upon her death, her kingdom would become the kingdom of heaven.<sup>71</sup>

The exact relationship between Elizabeth and God might appear ambiguous to the unwary, but Elizabeth was always careful to state she was a creature and a sinful one at that. Her position was definitely due to God, who has “miraculously set me up in this kingdom.”<sup>72</sup> Her rule was the result of her elevation within the church “*par ta prouidence admirable*.”<sup>73</sup> Her favorite designation for herself seemed to be that of a divine “handmaid.” For instance, “Thou art the King of heaven and earth, King of kings. O King, may I Thy handmaid and Thy universal people committed to me be readied by Thy grace in all things to proclaim Thy glory and to acknowledge Thy supreme sovereignty, through Jesus Christ, amen.”<sup>74</sup>

And yet, there were times she could ascend to the dizzying heights of apotheosis. The Golden Speech was such an affair. Sir John Croke addressed her in a flurry of divine analogies. The word “sacred” was used at least five times, and Croke admitted he was ascribing to her divine attributes and activity. His language mirrored that of a worshipper praying for access to a deity in her temple: She has granted the Commons “access to your sacred presence.” “[W]e acknowledge your sacred ears are ever open and ever bowed down to us.” “[W]e acknowledge that before we call, your preventing grace and all-deserving goodness doth watch over us for our good.” He ended by bowing three times before his “sacred sovereign.”<sup>75</sup>

<sup>68</sup>Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England*, 12–13.

<sup>69</sup>Speech to Parliament (30 November 1601), in *ECW*, 337. Cf. Speech to Parliament (19 December 1601), in *ECW*, 348.

<sup>70</sup>Spanish Prayer, in *ECW*, 156; *ACFLO*, 142.

<sup>71</sup>Greek Prayer, in *ECW*, 163; *ACFLO*, 149.

<sup>72</sup>Private Prayer of 1563, in *ECW*, 137.

<sup>73</sup>French Prayer of 1569, in *ECW*, 145; *ACFLO*, 131.

<sup>74</sup>Private Prayer of 1563, in *ECW*, 136.

<sup>75</sup>Croke’s Speech to Elizabeth (30 November 1601), in *ECW*, 336.

Elizabeth, playing along, received such flattery as an acceptable “sacrifice;” however, she did not allow herself to be overwhelmed for long.<sup>76</sup> “For myself, I was never so much enticed with the glorious name of a king or royal authority of a queen as delighted that God had made me His instrument to maintain His truth and glory.” “But to God only and wholly, all is to be given and ascribed.”<sup>77</sup> Elizabeth was merely a handmaid, but more than any mere handmaid, she was providentially ordained to rule. In her letter to her father, Elizabeth noted that Henry was “a king, whom philosophers regard as a god on earth.”<sup>78</sup>

And the philosopher she translated, Boethius, began his consolation with the divine figure of philosophy. Philosophy was a woman “of stately face, with flaming yees, of insight aboue the comun worth of men; of fresche coulor and unwon strength, thogh yet so old she wer, that of our age she seemed not be one; her stature such as skarse could be desernd.” For a time she appeared to walk the earth, but “strait she semed with croune of hed the heauens to strike, and lifting vp the same hiar, the heauens them selues she enterd, begiling the sight of lookars on.”<sup>79</sup>

Her Englishing of Boethius may have been prompted by the tribute Elizabeth received from Sir Henry Lee, the retired master of the royal pageants, only the year before in Ditchley. The larger-than-life Ditchley portrait, by Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger, now in London’s National Portrait Gallery, portrays Elizabeth striding above the provinces of England, feet squarely planted upon Oxfordshire. On both sides of her head, the clouds in the heavens indicate either peace or wrath. The inscriptions hint of her grace, her mercy, and her magnanimity. The fragmented sonnet concerns the “prince of light” who rules. The celestial sphere she wears as an earring reminds Roy Strong of the genre of the sphere with the world resting upon the Word of God.<sup>80</sup> It reminds me of the spheres in Boethius. In the Ditchley portrait, Elizabeth holds a fan and gloves; in Boethius, philosophy holds a “booke” and a “sceptar,” a memento that philosophy is also a queen.<sup>81</sup>

The queen of light of 1592 and the philosopher queen of 1593 unite earth with heaven. The medieval coronation ceremony accomplished much the same. Unfortunately, we do not possess the actual rubrics used in the late Tudor ceremonies, but there are a number of accounts, especially for that of Elizabeth. At the coronation of Edward, Cranmer referred to him as “God’s Vicegerent, and Christ’s Vicar within your own Dominion.” Cranmer denied the physical anointing accomplished anything; rather, a king’s

<sup>76</sup>The Golden Speech (30 November 1601), third version, in *ECW*, 343.

<sup>77</sup>The Golden Speech (30 November 1601), second version, in *ECW*, 342.

<sup>78</sup>Elizabeth to Henry VIII (30 December 1545), in *ECW*, 9.

<sup>79</sup>*Queen Elizabeth’s Englishings*, 2–3.

<sup>80</sup>Strong, *Gloriana: The Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I* (London: Pimlico, 1987), 135–41.

<sup>81</sup>*Queen Elizabeth’s Englishings*, 3.

anointing came directly from God. As a result, “any bishop may perform this ceremony.”<sup>82</sup>

Edward was also named a second Josiah. Both before and after her coronation, Elizabeth was deemed “the worthy Deborah as iudge among them sent,” and “a very Debora, to execute justice, equity, and truth.”<sup>83</sup> In a Spanish prayer, Elizabeth compared herself, not only with Deborah, but with Judith and Esther, too.<sup>84</sup> Whether king, prophet, or priest, the biblical model called for the visible anointing of one sanctified to God. The monarch literally became a Christ, an “anointed one.”

According to Edward Smith, her coronation ceremony’s “liturgical actions and formulae were intended to place the monarch ever more closely to the center point where the terrestrial and the celestial converge. The cosmic activity of the Spirit was channeled toward the prince.”<sup>85</sup> The sacred nature of the coronation is no doubt true for the medieval *ordines* as understood by canon law, civil law, and common law. Moreover, the high elevation of the throne constructed for Elizabeth would certainly have fostered a sense of deification in Westminster Abbey.<sup>86</sup>

However, Richard McCoy and Roy Strong correctly note a shift beginning with Edward’s coronation. The theology of the Reformation, with its emphasis on salvation by faith replacing the medieval efficacy of sacramentalism, resulted in the monarchy becoming “desacralised.”<sup>87</sup> This “demystification” took some time to realize, and both the Tudors and the Stuarts did everything possible to retain the ethos of hierarchical order that was part and parcel of the medieval worldview, especially as it pertained to the sacred monarchy, even while they embraced the new doctrines undermining it.<sup>88</sup>

The shift in understandings is evident in Elizabeth’s own coronation, although she was probably unaware of the import of that shift with regard to political ethos. On the one hand, Elizabeth refused to participate in the

<sup>82</sup>Thomas Cranmer, “The Archbishop’s Speech at the Coronation of Edward VI,” in *Miscellaneous Writings and Letters of Thomas Cranmer*, ed. John Edmund Cox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1846), 126–27.

<sup>83</sup>*The Passage of our most dread Soueraigne Lady Quene Elyzabeth*, John Prime (1585); cited in Alexandra Walsham, “A Very Deborah? The Myth of Elizabeth I as a Providential Monarch,” in *The Myth of Elizabeth*, ed. Susan Doran and Thomas S. Freeman (London: Macmillan, 2003), 145; John N. King, *Tudor Royal Iconography: Literature and Art in an Age of Religious Crisis* (Princeton University Press, 1989), 223–41.

<sup>84</sup>Spanish Prayer of 1569, in *ECW*, 157.

<sup>85</sup>Edward O. Smith, Jr., “Crown and Commonwealth: A Study in the Official Elizabethan Doctrine of the Prince,” *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 66.8 (1976): 14.

<sup>86</sup>Roy Strong, *Coronation: A History of Kingship and the British Monarchy* (London: HarperCollins, 2005), 211.

<sup>87</sup>Richard C. McCoy, “The Wonderfull Spectacle’: The Civic Progress of Elizabeth I and the Troublesome Coronation,” in *Coronations: Medieval and Early Modern Monarchical Ritual*, ed. Janos M. Bak (Oxford: University of California Press, 1990), 217–23; Strong, *Coronation*, 228.

<sup>88</sup>McCoy, “The Wonderfull Spectacle’,” 231.

elevation of the mass, for she rejected the doctrine of transubstantiation it represented. She also apparently wanted to receive the elements in both kinds. The reports conflict as to which type of Eucharist was celebrated: mass or communion. Haugaard believes she concocted a ceremony that would satisfy the consciences of all the participants.<sup>89</sup> According to McCoy, Elizabeth solved her religious dilemma by confusing the actual coronation ceremony at the critical point of the mass and played to her strength by shifting attention away from the relatively private coronation proper toward the public pageantry.<sup>90</sup>

On the basis of her understanding of the predominant position accorded to her by God, Elizabeth worked out various principles that enabled her to lead the nation. The sacred monarchy entailed three political principles. These principles concerned a proper ordering, the proper means of bonding, and the way to bring the people to believe in and serve God. They may be described systematically as a Christological political theology, a Pneumato-political political theology, and a Pastoral theology.

### **Elizabeth's Christological Political Theology**

The Christ-likeness of the monarch created room for medieval and early modern speculation regarding the monarch's two bodies, a political theology utilized even by Elizabethan common lawyers and ably explored in the classic work by Ernst Kantorowicz.<sup>91</sup> Elizabeth herself affirmed the conception of the two bodies. Her communications with Mary were submissive yet dangerous. On the one hand, she noted that only "devilish" Christians rebel against "their oincted king."<sup>92</sup> On the other hand, she subtly reminded Queen Mary of the two bodies doctrine: "I never practiced, counseled, nor consented to anything that might be prejudicial to your person any way or dangerous to the state by any mean."<sup>93</sup> At Hatfield, she told the assembled lords, "I am but one body naturally considered, though by His permission a body politic to govern."<sup>94</sup>

<sup>89</sup>The scholarly debate over exactly how Elizabeth's coronation service was conducted is itself a convoluted subject, due to the various eyewitness accounts. C.G. Bayne, "The Coronation of Queen Elizabeth," *English Historical Review* 22 (1907): 650–73; H.A. Wilson, "The Coronation of Queen Elizabeth," *English Historical Review* 23 (1908): 87–91; G. Lockhart Ross, "Il Schifanoya's Account of the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth," *English Historical Review* 23 (1908): 533–34; C.G. Bayne, "The Coronation of Queen Elizabeth," *English Historical Review* 24 (1909): 322–23; A.F. Pollard, *English Historical Review* 25 (1910): 125–26; C.G. Bayne, "The Coronation of Queen Elizabeth," *English Historical Review* 25 (1910): 550–53; William P. Haugaard, "The Coronation of Elizabeth I," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 19.2 (1968): 161–70.

<sup>90</sup>McCoy, "The Wonderfull Spectacle," 222–25.

<sup>91</sup>Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton, 1957).

<sup>92</sup>Elizabeth to Mary I (2 August 1556), in *ECW*, 43.

<sup>93</sup>Elizabeth to Mary I (16 March 1554), in *ECW*, 41.

<sup>94</sup>Elizabeth to the Lords (20 November 1558), in *ECW*, 52.

Elizabeth also took another clue from classic Christology, the doctrine of the two wills. In her commission to William Cecil, she made a distinction between her private will and her public will. In her fourfold charge, she demanded of her leading councilor, “that without respect of my private will, you will give me that counsel that you think best.”<sup>95</sup> This distinction between the private and the public was an important one to maintain in the early modern period. It set limits upon one’s ability to speak freely to an issue. Private persons were restricted in their ability to act, but the monarch was the public person extraordinaire. This was both a blessing and a danger for the monarch. In Elizabeth’s case, she recognized that whatever her personal feelings regarding marriage, she had a public office to fulfill. “For though I can think it best for a private woman, yet do I strive with myself to think it not meet for a prince.” She informed the House of Lords they must put out of their mind the “heresy” that she could act as anything but a public woman, especially with regard to marriage.<sup>96</sup> Like Jesus, the anointed one, Elizabeth’s private human will must submit to her divinely-given public will.

But other persons could not claim such a Christological anointing from God that resulted in their possessing two bodies with two wills. Even the clergy, who were also anointed, never claimed to possess two bodies with two wills, as far as I am aware. Moreover, Cranmer’s *Ordinal* of 1550 undermined the traditional understanding of priestly ordination as the granting of a sacerdotal character, replacing it with an emphasis upon the office of the clergy. The language of “priest” was retained, and the threefold order of bishop, priest, and deacon was promoted, but it is difficult to argue that the ancient sacerdotal understanding was Cranmer’s understanding.<sup>97</sup> As far as Elizabeth was concerned, her bishops’ consecrations would not prevent her ordering them to their tasks or deposing them if they failed in such. She could display this attitude most aggressively.

She called the clergy to appear before her during the 1584–1585 Parliament regarding attempts in the House of Commons to reform the church. She had heard that “the Nether House” were meddling “with matters above their capacity not appertaining unto them.” She indicated that she would fix the problem of “some intemperate and rash heads in that House,” and yet there were some wise men there, who had found causes of grievance with the clergy. She listed the problems she saw with the clergy, beginning with the ordination of corrupt ministers, then proceeding to the problem of men who need “to be brought to conformity and unity.”

While putting the clergy through the grinder, she came to the subject of how many educated preachers there should be. When John Whitgift, her third Archbishop of Canterbury, her “little black husband,” replied there were thirteen thousand parishes in England, Elizabeth cut him off. “Jesus!”

<sup>95</sup>Elizabeth to William Cecil (20 November 1558), in *ECW*, 51.

<sup>96</sup>Speech to the House of Lords (10 April 1563), in *ECW*, 79.

<sup>97</sup>For Cranmer’s theology of priesthood, see Malcolm B. Yarnell, *Royal Priesthood in the English Reformation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

quod the queen, ‘thirteen thousand! It is not to be looked for.’” More than learned ministers, Elizabeth believed England needed honest and discerning ministers who could “read the Scriptures and Homilies well unto the people.”<sup>98</sup> As Haigh quipped, “She *was* bossy.”<sup>99</sup> Elizabeth’s willingness to dominate the church by calling her bishops to task or by suppressing the wilder sources of preaching in the prophesying movement was an attitude her second Archbishop of Canterbury famously tested and more famously failed to overcome.

Elizabeth not only considered herself ruler of the clergy, but of the laity, too. As she explained to the Lords gathered at Hatfield near the beginning of her reign, she was submitting to divine providence, for “I am God’s creature, ordained to obey His appointment.” Divine appointment and its consequent accountability extended not only to the ruler but the ruled. “I shall desire you all, my lords (chiefly you of the nobility, everyone in his degree and power), to be assistant to me, that I with my ruling and you with your service may make a good account to almighty God.”<sup>100</sup> If “princes be set their seat by God’s appointing,”<sup>101</sup> then the people are also given a certain “degree and power.”

Elizabeth drew upon the tradition of hierarchy so clearly defined by Pseudo-Dionysius, whose works were considered authoritative in the Middle Ages. Elizabeth demanded that her people remember the proper ordering of society. “Kings were wont to honor philosophers, but if I had such I would honor them as angels, that should have such piety in them that they would not seek where they are the second to be the first, and where the third to be the second, and so forth.” Concluding her exhortation, she reminded the assembled representatives of the three estates of the horrors of a world turned upside down by revolt. “For it is monstrous that the feet should direct the head.”<sup>102</sup>

In *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, Elizabeth asserted that “order it self” comes from “the fountayne of prouidence, [which] disposith all in their place & tyme.”<sup>103</sup> In her private prayers, she placed herself under God; the “councillors” of the state and the “shepherd” of the church under herself; and finally, the people under them. Succinctly, she wrote, “Under Thy sovereignty, princes reign and all the people obey.”<sup>104</sup> Among the Greek prayers, there is this one intended to be said by the people on her behalf. “[A]nd that day by day she may continue faithfully to teach us, the people who are subject to her, remembering always that sovereign rule is not hers, but that the governance of the whole kingdom has been given to her as heir to the kingdom, or rather

<sup>98</sup>Speech to the Clergy (27 February 1585), in *ECW*, 178.

<sup>99</sup>Haigh, *Elizabeth I*, 31.

<sup>100</sup>Speech to the Lords (20 November 1558), in *ECW*, 51–52.

<sup>101</sup>*The Passage of our most drah Soueraigne Lady Quene Elyzabeth*, Sig. Eiiii\_.

<sup>102</sup>Speech to Parliament Delegates (5 November 1566), second version, in *ECW*, 96,

98.

<sup>103</sup>*Queen Elizabeth’s Englishings*, 103.

<sup>104</sup>Private Prayer of 1563, in *ECW*, 138–39.

as servant, by Thee as sovereign, on condition that she revere Thee absolutely, defend the virtuous, and seek vengeance on the wicked and lawless.”<sup>105</sup> “The Chain of Being”—a term coined by modern scholars to describe the Dionysian hierarchies between God, angels, elements, men, and animals—was definitely held by Elizabeth.<sup>106</sup>

### Elizabeth’s Pneumatological Political Theology

In her work on the consolation of philosophy, Elizabeth delivers a poem that reveals much about her ethical principles. It builds on the idea of order already delineated:

The Order that now stable keeps  
Disseuerd all from Spring would fayne.  
Such is of common loue of all,  
That with returne, for end of good be kept.  
In other sorte endure they could not,  
Unless agayne by loue returnd  
Back to the cause them made bend.

The editor of Elizabeth’s translation noted, “This metre is in several places incorrectly translated by the Queen.”<sup>107</sup> Perhaps there is good reason, for her work of “translation” was, in 1593, likely intended to reinforce what she already believed rather than reflect an academically accurate translation. Note the emphasis on a stable order, a common love of all things, and the procession from and return to the source of all things who is also the final good, God. Moreover, the direction of love is both vertical and horizontal, directed towards creation and towards God.

The idea that love binds persons together goes back to the Trinitarian speculations of Augustine, where the person of the Holy Spirit is the bond of love between the persons of the Father and the Son. In a 1563 invocation upon God to send his Spirit, Elizabeth drew upon this Augustinian tradition for binding her people to one another and herself with her people. “Send from heaven the Spirit of Thy wisdom, that He may lead me in all my doings.” Moreover, regarding her clergy, she prays, “Impart Thy Spirit to them that I may administer justice in Thy fear without acceptation of persons.” And for “all the ranks of this Thy kingdom,” she asked that they “may devote themselves to one another in charity.” Moreover, “That I myself may rule over each one of them by Thy Word in care and diligence, infuse the spirit of Thy love, by which both they to me may be joined together very straitly, and among themselves also, as members of one body.”<sup>108</sup>

<sup>105</sup> Greek Prayer, in *ECW*, 161.

<sup>106</sup> Tillyard, *The Elizabethan Worldview*, 33–90.

<sup>107</sup> *Queen Elizabeth’s Englishings*, 98 and 98n.

<sup>108</sup> *ECW*, 138.

From the day before her coronation through her last speech to Parliament, she emphasized the love between her and the people over which she was granted rule. Richard Mulcaster's account of her passage is filled with displays of great affection between the queen and her people. She declared "her selfe no lesse thankfullye to receiue her peoples good wyll, than they louingly offred it vnto her." Elizabeth believed the reciprocation of love between people and monarch would ensure God's blessings. As Mulcaster reports, "This her graces lousing behauior preconceiued in the peoples heades vpon these consideracions was then throughly confirmed, and in dede emplanted a wonderfull hope in them touchyng her woorthy gouernement in the reste of her reygne." Mulcaster's treatise came soon after the coronation "*cum priuilegio*," indicating the queen approved its message for wider dissemination.<sup>109</sup>

A month later, she answered Parliament's petition for her to marry, by stating, "I am already bound unto an husband, which is the kingdom of England, and that may suffice you."<sup>110</sup> She said much the same to Mary Queen of Scots' ambassador in 1561, indicating her coronation ring.<sup>111</sup> Even when the marriage between Queen and people was rocked by distrust and fits of anger, usually when Parliament was in session and ignoring her demand that religious innovation cease, she was careful to recollect their binding love.

In 1585, after heated discussions, she boldly reminded Parliament that God had made her "overruler" of the church, warned the bishops that she meant to depose them if they did not fulfill their charge, and cautioned the people against using private Bible interpretation as a "veil and cover" for judging the validity and piety of her government. However, she was careful to end her exhortation by reminding them of their love for her and her care for them.<sup>112</sup>

In 1586, she interpreted the Oath of Association, even with its potential support for an interregnum government, as a sign of their love for her, binding them even closer to one another.<sup>113</sup> In the speeches between her and the Parliament in late 1601, it was a virtual love fest. "For above all earthly treasure, I esteem my people's love, more than which I desire not to merit. And God that gave me here to sit, and set me over you, knows that I never respected myself, but as your good was concerned in me."<sup>114</sup>

<sup>109</sup> *The Passage of our most drah Soueraigne Lady Quene Elyzabeth, Sig. Aii.*

<sup>110</sup> Speech to Parliament (10 February 1559), second version, in *ECW*, 59.

<sup>111</sup> Cited in Strong, *Coronation*, 227.

<sup>112</sup> Speech to Parliament (29 March 1585), in *ECW*, 183.

<sup>113</sup> Speech to Parliament (12 November 1586), second version, in *ECW*, 195. Cf. "[A]fter twenty-eight years reign I do not perceive any diminition of my subjects' good love and affection towards me." Speech to Parliament (12 November 1586), first version, in *ECW*, 186. Cf. "And now, as touching you, I must needs say and confess that there was never prince more bound to his people than I am to you all. I can but acknowledge your great love and exceeding care of me to be such as I shall never be able to requite." Speech to Parliament (24 November 1586), first version, in *ECW*, 198.

<sup>114</sup> The Golden Speech (30 November 1601), second version, in *ECW*, 341.

Elizabeth believed the monarch could hold together the various factions in her kingdom through their love for her. This was a lesson taught by her father. When he made his famous speech concerning religious divisions between “old Mumpsimus” and “newe Sumpsimus,” Henry also appealed for a return to fraternal “charity.”<sup>115</sup> After the initial honeymoon between Elizabeth and her Protestant subjects, she discovered that her worst problem might not be the papists but the Puritans. “There is an Italian proverb,” she told a gathering from Parliament advocating religious reformation, “From mine enemy let me defend myself, but from a pretensed friend, good Lord deliver me.”<sup>116</sup>

With the “Romanists” seeking her death on one side and “newfangledness” undermining her regime on the other, Elizabeth was assiduous to cultivate the love of the bulk of her people.<sup>117</sup> Because of the bonding quality of human love, she considered “the hearts and true allegiance of our subjects” to be “the greatest riches of a kingdom.”<sup>118</sup> The love she saw between herself and her people was the glue binding the kingdom. Pneumatological charity was the second religious principle of her politics.

### **Elizabeth’s Pastoral Theology**

Providence placed Elizabeth upon her throne and providence called her to lead the people closer to God in faith and service. It will be remembered that the Act of Supremacy granted Elizabeth the title of “supreme governor” of the Church of England. Whatever the sensitivities of her Protestant and Catholic subjects, the question of her headship was never in doubt to the queen herself. Her self-proclaimed titles and self-considered duties combine to grant a picture of God’s handmaid being called to bring the people of England to God.

She prayed with the Trinity in 1563 regarding her subjects, “That I myself may rule over each one of them by Thy Word in care and diligence, infuse the spirit of Thy love.”<sup>119</sup> She prayed again in 1569, in French, referring to “*ma charge*”: “And as you otherwise require among all your children zeal for your house, create grace in me to purge your people of all sects, heresies, and superstitions, to the end that the churches under my charge may profit and increase from day to day in the truth of the gospel for all justice and holiness.”<sup>120</sup>

<sup>115</sup>Peter Marshall, “Mumpsimus and Sumpsimus: The Intellectual Origins of a Henrician *Bon Mot*,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 52.3 (2001): 512.

<sup>116</sup>Elizabeth to Clergy (27 February 1585), in *ECW*, 179.

<sup>117</sup>Speech to Parliament (29 March 1585), in *ECW*, 183.

<sup>118</sup>Speech in Norwich (August 1578), in *ECW*, 176.

<sup>119</sup>*ECW*, 138.

<sup>120</sup>“Et d’autant que tu requirs en tous tes enfans le zele de ta maison, fay moy la grace de repurger en mon people toutes sects, heresies, et superstitions, a fin que tes Eglises soubz, ma charge profitent et accroissent de iour en iour en la verite de ton Euangile a toute iustice et saintete.” *ACFL*, 135. Cf. *ECW*, 148–49

In an Italian prayer of the same year, she referred to the church as “*mio gregge*,” “my flock,” suggesting a pastoral role for herself.<sup>121</sup> In a Latin prayer, she claimed that “*ministerio meo*,” “my ministry,” was to return Christ to the realm of England from which he had been “*exulantem*,” “exiled.”<sup>122</sup> In a public prayer delivered in Bristol in 1574, she affirmed her stewardship of God’s church.<sup>123</sup> In a later French prayer, she referred to herself as “*Mere et nourice*,” “mother and nurse” of the children of God.<sup>124</sup>

In a speech before Oxford University in 1592, she addressed her divinely ordained cure of souls. “For indeed, you do not have a prince who teaches you anything that ought to be contrary to a true Christian conscience. Know that I would be dead before I command you to do anything that is forbidden by the Holy Scriptures. If, indeed, I have always taken care for your bodies, shall I abandon the care of your souls [*curam ... animarum*]? God forbid! Shall I neglect the care [*curam*] of souls, for the neglect of which my own soul [*anima*] will be judged? Far from it.” She concluded by calling upon the university not to exceed God’s law as compelled by her laws, “but to follow them.”

Elizabeth also taught a doctrine of conscience, a conscience formed correctly by the Word of God. Moreover, the conscience according to the Word of God constrained her subjects through obedience to her shepherding of the church. The key to her nation’s survival would be unity and obedience to the established hierarchy.<sup>125</sup> Although we may not ascribe too much to poetic license, it is also interesting that the song issued in celebration of the victory over the Spanish Armada pictured her as a priest offering a sacrifice to God.<sup>126</sup>

The pastoral role of Elizabeth was worked out in her exercise of the royal supremacy, which included royal injunctions and royal proclamations. Although she generally left it to her bishops to address the reformation of the clergy, she could intercede when she discerned any rashness or disquiet opposing her desire for conformity and unity in religion. After her royal injunctions were hastily employed for iconoclasm at the beginning of her reign, she made it a contravening point to set up a cross and candles in the

<sup>121</sup>ACFLO, 141; ECW, 154. Cf. ACFLO, 146; ECW, 160.

<sup>122</sup>ACFLO, 145. Cf. ECW, 159.

<sup>123</sup>Prayer at Bristol (15 August 1574), in ECW, 311.

<sup>124</sup>ACFLO, 46.

<sup>125</sup>Speech to the Heads of Oxford University (28 September 1592), in ECW, 328.

<sup>126</sup>Look and bow down Thine ear, O Lord.

From Thy bright sphere behold and see  
Thy handmaid and Thy handiwork,  
Amongst Thy priests, offering to Thee  
Zeal for incense, reaching the skies;  
Myself and scepter, sacrifice.

The subsequent stanzas refer to Elizabeth’s ascent into God’s temple. Song on the Armada Victory (December 1588), in ECW, 410–11.

Chapel Royal, to the extreme consternation of her Protestant bishops.<sup>127</sup> In the 1560s, she left it to Archbishop Parker to enforce his “Advertisements” regarding the use of vestments.

To the House of Commons in 1576, after further agitation, she replied that she had discussed their concerns with the bishops and “such as she thought were best disposed to reform these errors in the Church. From whom, if she shall not find some direct dealings for the reformation, then she will by her supreme authority, as with th’advice of her Council, direct them herself to amend; whereof her majesty doubteth not but her people shall see that her majesty will use that authority which she hath, to the increase of th’honor of God and to the reformation of th’abuses in the Church.”<sup>128</sup>

In spite of her apparent pastoral rule over the church—an irregularity of which both Catholic controversialists and the hotter Protestants took note—she nonetheless placed conceptual limits upon her leadership. Apologists for the Church of England drew upon canon law’s distinction between *potestas iurisdictionis* and *potestas ordinis*. Ostensibly, the queen could exercise *potestas iurisdictionis*, by disciplining the church, but not *potestas ordinis*, by celebrating the sacraments or preaching doctrine. In “A Declaration of the Queen’s Proceedings Since Her Reign,” an unpublished set of manuscripts among Burghley’s notes containing her corrections, Elizabeth also addressed the extent and limits of her royal *potestates*. These notes were written in early 1570, soon after the northern rebellion.

Her general goal “in the ordering of our Realm and people” was “to cause them to live in the fear and service of God, and in the profession of the Christian religion.” In the process of setting “Ecclesiastical external policy,” there are certain practices that will differ from nation to nation.<sup>129</sup> These indifferent matters, referred to by the theologians as *adiaphora*,<sup>130</sup> had been given into her authority “by the laws of God and this Realm.” She appealed to the precedence of centuries, but especially of the recognition granted to her father and brother “as recognized by all the estates of the Realm.” She denied that she decided church doctrine, changed any ancient ceremony, or “the use of any function belonging to any ecclesiastical person being a minister of the

<sup>127</sup>This activity, along with her German diplomacy and respect for Melanchthon, has led some to wonder whether Elizabeth possessed Lutheran sentiments. Hirofumi Horie, “The Lutheran Influence on the Elizabethan Settlement, 1558–1563,” *The Historical Journal* 34.3 (1991): 519–37; Schofield, *Philip Melanchthon and the English Reformation*, 203–04.

<sup>128</sup>Elizabeth to the House of Commons (March 1576), in *ECW*, 174.

<sup>129</sup>*Queen Elizabeth’s Defence of her Proceedings in Church and State*, ed. William Edward Collins (London: SPCK, 1958), 44.

<sup>130</sup>On the source of the conception of *adiaphora* and the different ways in which theologians treated it, see Thomas F. Mayer, “Starkey and Melanchthon on Adiaphora: A Critique of W. Gordon Zeeveld,” *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 11.1 (1980): 39–50. Mayer believes Thomas Starkey treated *adiaphora* as determinable by the government, while the early Reformers spoke of them as free and unfixed matters. My own reading of Melanchthon’s revisions of the *Loci Communes* is that he moved towards Starkey’s position.

Word and Sacraments.”<sup>131</sup> Her power was restricted to directing the estates to live as Christians, to enforcing the laws, and to ensuring the clergy were properly governed by the episcopate.<sup>132</sup>

There exists no record that Elizabeth dispensed the sacraments, and the argument that she changed ceremonies continues unabated. However, she most certainly did participate in the deciding of doctrine. She was influential in steering the revision of the thirty-eight confessional articles approved in the 1563 convocation away from an anti-Lutheran bias, especially with regard to the Lutheran teachings on “the corporeal presence, the *communicatio infidelium* and the ubiquity.”<sup>133</sup> And when she discovered that Whitgift approved the Calvinistic Lambeth Articles, she reacted immediately. Through Robert Cecil, she informed the Archbishop that “she disliked much that any allowance had been given by his Grace and the rest, of any such points to be disputed: being a matter tender and dangerous to weak ignorant minds. And thereupon she required his Grace to suspend them.”<sup>134</sup>

Elizabeth had two problems with the Lambeth Articles: First, Whitgift and his colleagues were acting without proper authority from Crown and Parliament. Second, the strong predestinarianism of the Lambeth Articles was debatable, even dangerous. Having worked through these matters as recently as 1593 with Boethius, she felt competent to arrive at that theological conclusion, a conclusion that contradicted university and ecclesiastical Calvinism, on her own.<sup>135</sup>

Elizabeth did not like doctrinal novelty, nor did she care for doctrinal extremism. As Doran discovered, she preferred a broad Protestant definition that allowed for national unity and international cooperation among Protestants.<sup>136</sup> Her view of the real presence, a controversial subject in its own right, was probably because she believed it an indifferent matter. As she indicated to William Maitland in 1561, “but as in the sacrament of the altar some thinks a thing, some other, whose judgment is best God knows. In the meantime, *unusquisque in sensu suo abundant*,” [“let each one fulfill his own sense”].<sup>137</sup> For Elizabeth, some matters, such as whether there was a real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, were to be left to the individual conscience. This is certainly supported by the addition of the 1549 rubric to that of 1552 in the presentation of the elements. Of course, one’s ability

<sup>131</sup> Queen Elizabeth’s *Defence of Her Proceedings*, 45.

<sup>132</sup> Queen Elizabeth’s *Defence of Her Proceedings*, 46.

<sup>133</sup> Horie, “The Lutheran Influence on the Elizabethan Settlement,” 531. The Thirty-Nine Articles were subsequently approved in 1571.

<sup>134</sup> Cecil to Whitgift (5 December 1595), in Elizabeth Gilliam, W.J. Tighe, “To ‘Run with the Time’: Archbishop Whitgift, the Lambeth Articles, and the Politics of Theological Ambiguity in Late Elizabethan England,” *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 23.2 (1992): 328.

<sup>135</sup> Queen Elizabeth’s *Englisings*, 102–20.

<sup>136</sup> Doran, “Elizabeth I’s Religion,” 706–14, 716–18.

<sup>137</sup> Elizabeth to Maitland (September and October 1561), in *ECW*, 62–63.

to express one's private conscience was limited by the need to conform to proper public authority.

Elizabeth knew that working against one's conscience would bring one to judgment before God.<sup>138</sup> She also recognized that the conscience is best conformed to the Word of God. She was ready to appeal to Mary's conscience with regard to her suspicions of Elizabeth's treason.<sup>139</sup> She could speak of "liberty of conscience" concerning religious conversion, too, but only with regard to the decision of another noble in somebody else's realm.<sup>140</sup> She recognized the heavy obligations of taking an oath on the conscience.<sup>141</sup> She could grant a commission of her nobles to speak their conscience freely to her for a time.<sup>142</sup> But these were the external limits of her doctrine of freedom of conscience.

Ideally, Elizabeth, the former Nicodemite, believed her subjects could even hold to different religious opinions according to their various consciences and remain free of external coercion. However, such liberty of conscience was available only if they affirmed the general truths of the Christian faith and stayed otherwise "quiet and conformable."<sup>143</sup> In spite of her support for the idea of liberty of conscience, Elizabeth placed strict limits upon its practice, limits demanded by her providentially ordered world. This helps explain why she allowed her council to persecute the Jesuits and seminarians on the one hand<sup>144</sup> and personally suppressed the "prophesings" or "exercises" on the other.<sup>145</sup>

## Conclusion

There should be little doubt that Elizabeth I was a theologian who sought to apply her faith to everything around her. From a foundation of theocentric providence settled in a world ordered according to a "middle waye," this evangelical queen developed her beliefs. Her political theology placed the divinely appointed sacred monarch at the fulcrum between God and nation. Elizabeth's divine appointment required her to enforce the existing hierarchy, to bond her people with love, and to seek the nation's religious

<sup>138</sup>Elizabeth to Edward Seymour (28 January 1549), in *ECW*, 24. Cf. French Prayer of 1569, in *ECW*, 151.

<sup>139</sup>Elizabeth to Mary I (16 March 1554), in *ECW*, 41.

<sup>140</sup>Regarding the daughter of the Duke of Montpensier. Elizabeth to Valentine Dale (1 February 1574), in *ECW*, 223.

<sup>141</sup>Speech to Parliament (12 November 1586), two versions, in *ECW*, 189, 195.

<sup>142</sup>Speech to Parliament (24 November 1586), two versions, in *ECW*, 199, 201,

<sup>143</sup>*Queen Elizabeth's Defence of Her Proceedings*, 46–47.

<sup>144</sup>Cf. William Cecil, *The Execution of Justice in England for the maintenaunce of publique and Chrsitan peace, against certeine stirrers of sedition, and adherents to the traytors and enemies of the Realme, without any persecution of them for questions of Religion, as is falsely reported and published by the fauors and fosterers of their treasons* (London, 1583).

<sup>145</sup>Elizabeth to the Bishops (8 May 1577), in Claire Cross, *The Royal Supremacy in the Elizabethan Church* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1969), 190–92.

welfare through unity and conformity while still allowing respect for individual consciences.

On the basis of this review of the queen's own words and actions, we must permanently bury the historiographical canard that this woman was a mere *politique*, a religious oddity. Her life and writings reveal that Elizabeth Tudor was a capable, confident, and conscientious evangelical theologian. Further research into Elizabeth's theology is warranted, in both its social and personal dimensions. At a social level, by virtue of her royal tenure and famous tenacity, one might argue that her theological influence upon the post-Edwardian Church of England remains even today without peer. At a more personal level, Elizabeth I exercised a theological subtlety and strength that, shorn its social structure, will appeal to many evangelicals today, especially among our sisters.



# *What Remains of Our Lament? Exploring the Relationship between Death, Memory, and Grief in the Christian Life and in Recent Cultural Texts*

Ched Spellman

Associate Professor of Biblical and Theological Studies  
Cedarville University

“I think we’ve been surrounded by death for so long that we’ve just gotten used to it. What kind of family finishes building the cemetery before building the house?”<sup>1</sup>

“So strange that we go to such lengths to bury death, something so very ordinary, inevitable. It’s as if we conspire to hide death, because we have no answer for it.”<sup>2</sup>

“How is it that the clouds still hang on you?”<sup>3</sup>

“Until death, mourning and cheerfulness.”<sup>4</sup>

## **Introduction**

Consider three scenarios to orient our study:

On Saturday evening, I finish playing a video game where everyone dies. One of the main themes of the story is death, it speaks directly of death, it makes me think about death, and it forces me to consider the death of others. And yet, by the end of the game, I have also considered the meaning of life, the memory of family members who have died, and have revisited moments of my own personal grief.

<sup>1</sup>Edith Finch in *What Remains of Edith Finch* (Giant Sparrow, 2017).

<sup>2</sup>Senua in *Hellblade: Senua’s Sacrifice* (Ninja Theory, 2018).

<sup>3</sup>King Claudius to Hamlet in *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, Act I, Scene II.

<sup>4</sup>Paul Ricouer, *Living up to Death* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 3.

These words were found on a file that Ricouer used to store notes for a study he was working on that included his reflections on death around the time his wife died.

On Sunday morning, I'm in a corporate Christian setting where two deaths are announced. One is due to old age and the other is more tragic in nature. However, if I had not been familiar with the particular set of euphemisms that Christians often use when speaking about death, I would not immediately understand that anything bad has happened. This person is with Jesus now. They are in a better place. We rejoice that they are no longer suffering. We will celebrate their life later this week. In fact, my daughter beside me senses a bit of tension in the room and asks me about it, and I simply bend down and whisper, "Someone has died." "Oh," she says, "that makes me sad."

On Monday, I see a discussion on social media where a pastor is asking a group of prominent leaders whether or not it is theologically permissible to sing songs of lament in the corporate worship gathering. After all, he reasons, we believe in the gospel and the hope of resurrection, so is it really appropriate to sing about death in the church? The group of pastors respond by making the positive case for singing songs of lament in the church, but the bevy of ensuing back-and-forth responses illustrates the considerable difference of opinion on this topic within the contemporary Christian community.

In what follows, I explore the way the themes of death, memory, and grief are treated in some recent cultural texts and bring these themes into dialogue with the function that lament plays in the Christian life.<sup>5</sup> In particular, I consider the form and message of the video games *What Remains of Edith Finch*, *That Dragon, Cancer*, and the biblical genre of lament.

This study seeks to be substantive but also preliminary. In other words, each of the areas covered here has been discussed to varying degrees elsewhere, but not often in the way they are connected here. What follows is an attempt to open up lines of inquiry and provide some initial thoughtful reflection. Further, this brief study participates in the broader field of examining the relationship between theology and popular culture.

The study of video games, the stories they tell, and the experiences they invoke share a family resemblance to theological engagement with movies, television, and other cultural texts. However, there are also aspects of games in general and video games in particular that require unique consideration. Player involvement and participation being at the center of

<sup>5</sup>On the definition of a "cultural text," see Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Everyday Theology: How to Read Cultural Texts and Interpret Trends*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, et al (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 15–59. Vanhoozer argues that a cultural text is "a *work* of meaning because someone or some group has produced it," and also "a *world* of meaning because its work is precisely to provide form and shape to our world" (44). Accordingly, cultural texts are "communicative acts that achieve diverse aims through a variety of means" and are a form of "cultural discourse" (44).

these considerations. Though there is a wide-ranging scholarly discussion about the nature of video games and their relative value for academic study (or for actually playing them for that matter), I will simply note that for the purpose of this study, I am assuming that certain games in particular bear qualities and depth that make them capable of careful analysis.<sup>6</sup>

### **Only Death Remains? The Theological Themes of Death, Grief and Memory**

As an entry point to this discussion, I will briefly note that the themes of death and the memory of death are present in biblical literature, throughout church history, and in recent cultural texts.

#### **The Memory of Death as a Theme in Biblical Literature**

These themes are present in biblical literature. Further, statements about death, expressions of suffering, and the memory of death are often present in the same literary context. Though this collection of themes could be approached in different ways, poetic images utilized by biblical authors connect death, grief, and memory.

In Psalm 39, the psalmist provides an extended reflection on the limited nature of human existence in the context of guarding himself from sin and thinking rightly about God's character.<sup>7</sup> The psalmist declares, "O Lord, make me know my end and what is the measure of my days" (39:4). Drawing out the implication of this request, he continues, "let me know how fleeting I am!" (39:4). The psalmist then connects this prayer to an articulation of God's revealed truth about the human condition. "Behold," he says, "you have made my days a few handbreadths, and my lifetime is as nothing before you" (39:5). Because of this reality, "all mankind stands as a mere breath!" and humans live their lives "as a shadow!" (39:5–6). Later in the psalm, the

<sup>6</sup>As Millsap argues, "video games are a narrative medium deserving of theological engagement." He explains, "Because video games have progressed from electronic playthings to cultural texts capable of vibrant storytelling, they should be thoroughly examined and critiqued theologically, thus creating a beneficial dialogue between theology and video games on par with what already exists between theology and other artistic, narrative media such as literature and film." See Matthew C. Millsap, "Playing with God: A Theoludological Framework for Dialogue with Video Games" (PhD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014), 5. He also clarifies: "By 'dialogue,' I mean a conversation between theology and video games which allows for input from both sides, yet still allows for theological primacy" (5n12). See also Millsap's extended argument for viewing video games as "cultural texts" alongside artistic works such as film and literature (58–89). Similarly, note Kevin Schut's discussion of these issues in Kevin Schut, *Games & God: A Christian Exploration of Video Games* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2013), 1–49. Moreover, for an introduction to the academic study of "serious games," see Simon Egenfeldt-Nielson, et al., *Understanding Video Games: The Essential Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 229–54.

<sup>7</sup>Note the language that emphasizes extended reflection in 39:1–3 ("I said," indicating a personal reflection, v. 1; "I was mute and silent," "I held my peace to no avail," and "my heart became hot within me," indicating a process of contemplation, vv. 2–3; and "As I mused," indicating his words in 39:4ff result from his sustained reflection).

psalmist exclaims again, “Surely all mankind is a mere breath!” (39:11). Undergirding his plea for the Lord’s mercy is that, in contrast to the Lord’s permanence, the psalmist is “a sojourner” with the Lord and “a guest” like the rest of humanity (39:12). As the psalmist strives to persevere and contemplate his temporary life, his departure remains in view.<sup>8</sup>

Similarly, in Psalm 90, the psalmist contemplates the nature of God who is “from everlasting to everlasting” and compares him to humanity who will inevitably hear the Lord say, “return, O children of men” to the dust of the earth (Ps 90:3). After noting the relatively limited timespan of even lengthy lives, the psalmist writes, “So teach us to number our days, that we may present to you a heart of wisdom.” Within the flow of this psalm, the phrase “teach us to number our days” is found in a section designed to invite readers to contemplate their mortality and consider that death is assuredly on its way.<sup>9</sup>

By speaking in this manner, these psalmists locate the reader within the textual world of the Bible. The creation narrative that begins the biblical storyline grounds human reflection on the nature of humanity. From the dust of the earth, God formed human life (Gen 1–2). Subsequent reflections on returning to the dust draw upon this narrative portrayal of God’s creative activity. This allusion to dust as a way to demonstrate the inevitable and finality of death is a powerful intertextual image. If this connection is true, there is no escape from death or the dust.

The book of Ecclesiastes begins with the preacher’s declaration, “Vanity of vanities! All is vanity” (Eccl 1:2). “What does man gain,” the preacher asks, “from all the toil at which he toils under the sun?” (1:3). The inevitability of death informs this question: “A generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever” (1:4). At the end of the book, the preacher returns to this theme by urging, “Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, ‘I have no pleasure in them’” (12:1). After a poetic description of the aging process, the preacher concludes “the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it” (12:7). “Vanity of vanities,” the preacher repeats, “all is vanity” (12:8). Though the message of Ecclesiastes relates to the book’s final call to “Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man” (12:13), these echoes of the Genesis creation

<sup>8</sup>The psalm ends with the psalmist’s somber request: “Look away from me, that I may smile again, before I depart and am no more!” (39:13).

<sup>9</sup>See also Ps 78:39, where the psalmist says of the Lord, “He remembered that they were but flesh, a wind that passes and comes not again.” Similarly, in Psalm 102, the psalmist exalts God’s eternity by way of comparison with humanity: “Of old you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you will remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will change them like a robe, and they will pass away, but you are the same, and your years have no end” (102:25–27). In this psalm, the psalmist also characterizes an early death as a tragedy: “He has broken my strength in midcourse; he has shortened my days. ‘O my God,’ I say, ‘take me not away in the midst of my days—you whose years endure throughout all generations!’” (102:23–24).

accounts prompt a searching reflection on human mortality even for those who ultimately find meaning in obedience to God's will.

In his New Testament epistle, James also speaks about the inevitably brief human lifespan when considered in light of eternity. James writes, "Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.' Yet you do not know that your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that'" (James 4:13–15). This poetic word picture communicates both presence and transience. The presence of the vapor is real but momentary, established but ephemeral, present but in the process of passing away. For James, an ongoing dependence on the Lord and perspective on life with the proper amount of humility is engendered by reflecting upon the uncertainty of the future, the inevitability of death, and the impermanence of human existence in relation to God's existence.

The exhortations in these biblical passages ("teach us") show that the theme of death is connected to the present function of the memory of death for the believer ("to number our days"). *Remembering* both the dust of your past and the dust of your future enables you to reorient the drawn breaths of your present.

Of course, in each of these contexts there is a broader discourse at work that connects these reminders of human mortality with broader theological purposes. However, the point here is that this theme is utilized directly by biblical writers and connected to theological reflection upon the human condition.<sup>10</sup>

### **The Memory of Death as a Theme in Church History**

This theme of remembering death surfaces directly at various points in the history of the church as well. There are many ways to highlight this topic, so we will focus here on a few ways that reflection on death appears in different times and in different mediums.

The phrase *memento mori* ("remember death") is sometimes used to describe this movement in artistic depictions of objects, like a skull, that were designed to remind the viewer of the ever-present reality of death. A complementary concept to *memento mori* is the *vanitas* theme in art in the seventeenth century and beyond. This theme draws upon the phrase "vanity of vanities" from Ecclesiastes and seeks to illustrate the transitory nature of life and also the meaninglessness of material possessions as an end in themselves. This theme can be seen in the still life portraits produced in Europe in the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries. These paintings included objects that visually reminded viewers of death (a skull), the inevitability of future

<sup>10</sup>See also, e.g., Eccl 3:2 ("A time to give birth and a time to die"); Isa 40:6–6/1 Pet 1:24–25 ("All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flowers of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever").

loss of life (a plucked flower), the pervasive presence of present loss (an extinguished candle), the inexorable passage of time (an hour-glass), or the fleeting nature of one's life (bubbles in the air).<sup>11</sup>

This emphasis can also be found in the writings of pastors and theologians. For example, among the Puritans, there was often an emphasis on remembering death as a means of developing in Christian maturity and the hope of the resurrection.<sup>12</sup> Related to the theme of “remembering death” (*memento mori*) is the notion of the “art of dying” or “dying well” (*ars moriendi*). This impulse showed up in tombstones, woodcuts, treatises, and sermons. For example, a tombstone in this period reads, “Death which came on man by the fall / cuts down father child and all.”<sup>13</sup> A characteristic example of these exhortations can be seen in Cotton Mather’s reminder that his readers will “die shortly.” He therefore urges, “Let us look upon everything as a sort of Death’s Head set before us, with a *memento mortis* written upon it.”<sup>14</sup>

Depending on the theological outlook of the person discussing this topic, these works varied in what they focused on and what elements they viewed as central to the concept of death.<sup>15</sup> There is also some diversity and internal tension within the strong statements about the hope of the

<sup>11</sup>A famous example of this is by Philippe de Champaigne, a Belgium artist living in France, who produced “Still-life with a skull” (1671) which features a close-up of a simple table with three objects side-by-side: a skull in the center, a recently picked tulip in a vase on the left, and an emptying hour-glass on the right.

<sup>12</sup>For a critical historical overview of this emphasis, see David E. Stannard, “Death and Dying in Puritan New England,” *The American Historical Review* 78.5 (1973): 1305–1330. Stannard observes that “the vision of death and the act of dying were to the Puritans profoundly religious matters” (1305). See also the many germane primary sources gathered in Dewey D. Wallace, *The Spirituality of the Later English Puritans: An Anthology* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1988).

<sup>13</sup>Cited in Stannard, “Death and Dying,” 1313. Cf. Elisabeth Roark, *Artists of Colonial America* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2003), who notes that “the most common inscriptions on Puritan gravestones prior to about 1710 are the Latin ‘fugit hora’ (time flies) and ‘memento mori,’ which translated means ‘remember death’ but also refers to the popular epitaph, ‘As you are now, so once was I; as I am now you soon shall be. Remember death and follow me’” (60).

<sup>14</sup>Cotton Mather, *Death Made Easie & Happy* (London, 1701), 94. In another work, Mather urges, “Tis to live Daily under the power of such Impressions, as we shall have upon us, when we come to Dy ... Every Time the Clock Strikes, it may Strike upon our Hearts, to think, thus I am one Hour nearer to my last! But, O mark what I say; That Hour is probably Nearer to None than to such as Least Think of it” (*The Thoughts of a Dying Man* [Boston, 1697], 38–39).

<sup>15</sup>See, for example, Nicholas Byfield, *The Cure of the Fear of Death* (London, 1618); and English pastor Richard Baxter’s *Dying Thoughts* (Edinburgh, UK: Banner of Truth, 2004), originally published in 1683. A recent example of a reflective work in this tradition is Matthew Levering, *Dying and the Virtues* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018). Cf. also Christopher P. Vogt’s analysis in *Patience, Compassion, Hope, and the Christian Art of Dying Well* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004); and Allen Verhey, *The Christian Art of Dying: Learning from Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011). Both Vogt and Verhey reflect on possible contemporary practices but also survey the historical origin and development of *Memento Mori* and *Ars Moriendi* as a discrete area of emphasis (taking into account events like the “black death” that killed a large portion of Europe’s population in the fourteenth century).

resurrection and the doubts provoked by suffering and the thought of dying. In this theological and emotional dynamic, these writers not only glory in the *answer* to death (the gospel), they also grapple with the *anguish* of death.<sup>16</sup> Whichever direction a given articulation takes, the pervasive presence of these works demonstrate the long history of literary and theological reflection on death and the function that a memory of death has for the meaning of life.

In many ways, the contemporary cultural mindset neglects or outright rejects this “reminder of death” as a valued component of everyday life. Much of our celebrity culture and current social context is designed to *mute* our sense of *mortality*, to make us less mindful about the looming specter of death, the inevitability of age, and the reality of our finitude.

An enduring strand of contemporary culture seeks to produce, market, and monetize products and approaches to life that fixate on making you look and feel young and project an image of the good life that does not include sober reflection on mortality.<sup>17</sup> Recognizing the inherent value of healthy living patterns, some of these approaches pursue these ends as a therapeutic tool to also engender a psychological well-being that seeks to slow the path to death at all costs and mask the appearance of age. Collectively, these orienting practices function as “some of the most important and powerful cultural myths of our day.”<sup>18</sup> In these cases, rituals of remembrance are replaced by a liturgy of forgetfulness.

Within the context of this particular social scenario, cultural texts that cut against this death-denying grain stand out all the more. Many current cultural texts display or address violence that involves death and killing;

<sup>16</sup>Cotton Mathers, for instance, writes, “Tis very certain that *at the Last*, when you are taking your leave of this *World*, you will be full of Disdainful Expressions concerning it, and Express yourselves to this purpose: *Vain World! False World! Oh! that I had minded this World Less, and my own Soul more, than I have done!*” He also observes that it is “no rare thing” when believers come to die to express, “*The Loss of Time, is a Thing, that now Sits heavy on this Poor Soul of mine!*” Ordinarily, Mathers reflects, dying people utter with tears, “How much time have I to repent of! And how little time to do it in!” (*Thoughts of a Dying Man*, 27–28).

<sup>17</sup>For a brief overview of some of the historical factors that have led to this scenario and an analysis of some of the possible effects of this cultural situation, see the orienting discussion in Matthew McCullough, *Remember Death: The Surprising Path to Living Hope* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2018), 31–56.

<sup>18</sup>See Kevin J. Vanhoozer’s exploration of “the well-documented North American obsession with the health, fitness, and well-being of our physical bodies” in *Hearers and Doers: A Pastor’s Guide to Making Disciples through Scripture and Doctrine* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2019), 13–42. Vanhoozer uses the concept of “social imaginary” which refers to the “taken-for-granted story of the world assumed and passed on by a society’s characteristic language, pictures, and practices” (9). “To the extent,” he reflects, “that it has become an ideal picture that orients people’s hopes and lives and encourages self-help salvation, wellness has become an American idol, a false gospel” (20). Vanhoozer also considers the historical reasons why this shift in the cultural mindset has occurred (e.g., when people pursued fitness primarily “for an aesthetic or therapeutic purpose: to look or feel better” rather than only physical wellness, 33–35). Note also, for our purpose, Vanhoozer’s critical interaction with Barbara Ehrenreich’s work, *Natural Causes: An Epidemic of Wellness, the Certainty of Dying, and Killing Ourselves to Live Longer* (New York: Twelve, 2018).

however, the focus here are works that treat death and the memory of death as an object of serious reflective analysis.

### **The Memory of Death as a Theme in What Remains of Edith Finch**

The video game *What Remains of Edith Finch* is a single-player mystery adventure released in 2017. The player controls Edith Finch, a young woman who is the last living member of her family. The story begins when she returns to the house she grew up in and begins to explore. As the player progresses through the game, the life and death of each member of the Finch family is told.

The game has been well-received and has won several awards, including “Best Narrative” and “Innovative Narrative” and nominations in several other categories as well.<sup>19</sup> Perhaps most surprising, though, at the high-profile awards show hosted by the British Academy of Film and Television Arts, *What Remains of Edith Finch* won the coveted Best Game award for 2018 (beating the much bigger games *Super Mario Odyssey* and *Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild*). There are several characteristics of the game that help explain how it could win such a prestigious award and also lay the groundwork for a theological dialogue.

#### **1. The Quality of the Story.**

When you play *What Remains of Edith Finch*, you encounter a quality story. As the publishers describe, the game as a whole is a “collection of short stories about a cursed family in Washington State.”<sup>20</sup> The designers even signal this focus as the credits begin to roll as it characterizes the game simply as “a story by Giant Sparrow.”

There are several strategic narrative layers introduced into the structure of the game’s storyline that you encounter as you play. You begin by seeing a young child holding a journal and flowers on a ferry. The child opens the book and starts reading, prompting Edith’s dialogue. At this moment, you immediately transition to Edith’s point of view walking toward the house and the game begins. Later, once Edith herself eventually encounters a memory of one of the Finch family members, the player transitions further into that person’s past. Then you the player play out the final moments of that person’s life. At the climax of each shorter episode, the transition back to Edith’s point of view is typically to pan out to Edith holding the object that prompted the memory, her putting the object down, and then her making a sketched entry in her journal. With this device, we are able to see Edith fill out her family tree. As Edith makes these sketches, the player is also able to

<sup>19</sup>These include “best narrative” at the Game Awards in Los Angeles (2017) and “Innovative Narrative” at the South by Southwest Game Awards in Austin (2017). On the initial reception of the game, see Matt Peckham, “Review: What Remains of Edith Finch is a Powerful Elegiac Mystery,” *Time* (April 24, 2017); and Christopher Byrd, “What Remains of Edith Finch: A High-Water Mark of Narrative Video Game Design,” *Washington Post* (May 4, 2017).

<sup>20</sup>See <http://www.giantsparrow.com/games/finch/>

see how far they have progressed in the game and in the story.<sup>21</sup>

As Edith is recording each of her own stories in her journal, the player eventually and progressively realizes that what they have been playing and watching has been Edith's own entry in that same journal. Edith has been recounting and interpreting these stories in her journal; and it turns out, her own story is part of this short story collection.

You as a player realize that the narrator you've been following is part of the narration. Your interpreter, then, must now be interpreted. The small narrative arcs that you play through with Edith produce a creative tension that gives you a bit of forward momentum as you walk through the Finch house alone. This series of stories within a story set within a broader story setting gives the game a layered narrative richness.

## 2. The Depth of the Themes.

A second feature of the game is the depth of its themes. As the individual stories unfold and as the broader storyline plays out, several distinct thematic elements emerge. The most pervasive theme in the game is death. After all, each of the memories that Edith recounts and the episodes that you play through end in the death of the main characters.

Much of the imagery of the game also reminds the player of death and the memory of death. From the mini-memorials that Edith's grandmother sets up throughout the house, to the gravestones outside the house, to the sketches Edith makes in her notebook, the player is constantly prompted to contemplate mortality. While this may seem overly dour, each episode has a voice and character of its own. Sometimes the mood is light, sometimes dark; sometimes comic, sometimes tragic.<sup>22</sup> As varied as the lives and personalities of each of the Finches, so too are the accounts of their deaths. Through these diverse stories, the theme of death is deepened and developed.

Not only the theme of death itself, but also highlighted here is the ever diverse *responses* to these deaths by those around them. This particular aspect is an example of how a primary theme of the game branches off into several sub-themes. Death reaches into each corner of the Finch house, but that dark reality casts its shadow differently from room to room and from life to life.

Within this minor key, several subthemes contribute to the game's thematic orchestra: Family dynamics. Loneliness. Fear. Relationships. Addiction. Happiness. Abuse. Marriage. Divorce. Psychology. Religion. Doubt. Faith. Mystery. Blessing. Curse. Beauty. Grief. Guilt. Memory. Maybe even

<sup>21</sup>On this feature of the game's design and progression, see Ian Dallas's presentation "Weaving 13 Prototypes into 1 Game: Lessons from Edith Finch," at the Game Developer's Conference, San Francisco, CA, 2018. Available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0xVYVP0hxME>

<sup>22</sup>For example, one of the stories involves a hunting accident, one relates a young boy on the beach during a thunderstorm, one relates to a serious illness, and one relates to a criminal act. Depending on the person's character and the nature of their death, the tone of the episode varies.

Magic. These types of subthemes are interwoven into the brief but gripping stories of the Finch family as they experience and respond to the vagaries of life and death. The depth of these themes and subthemes give the game a strong reflective quality.

### **3. The Web of Inter-connections.**

As you play through *What Remains of Edith Finch*, you also experience a web of inter-connections. Some of these are visual and literary interconnections between the scenes that you play through. Visually, there are connections between rooms or places on the property you have been. As mentioned above, though, each of these spaces and places are embedded with story and thematic content. A well-placed visual, thus, becomes a reminder not only of a different room but of an entire story and that story's overarching theme.

For example, an image you see straightaway on the path to the house is a large deer. You come upon this buck right in the middle of the path. The deer looks at you and then runs off into the woods. This visual encounter also introduces a major theme of animal life that runs throughout the game. Toward the middle of the game you play as Edith's grandfather Sam, on a hunting trip with Edith's mom, where the entire episode revolves around hunting a deer. Finally, one of the last sequences where Edith recounts the memory of her grandmother's vision, there is an image of the same buck that Edith sees on the path at the beginning of the game. By this point in the game, this image echoes both the memory of the grandfather's hunting trip and also the opening sequence of the game. This type of connection is direct and difficult to miss.<sup>23</sup>

The opening sequence of the game illustrates the web of interconnections that await you when you play the game. The first thing you see is the child holding Edith's journal with the flowers in his hand. This child and Edith represent two layers of the story and the gameplay. The child's hand and the cast on his hand represent one of the first visual connections between these two layers. As the player, one of your first actions will be to directly reach for the journal as the child, placing the hand in your direct field of vision. As Edith's point of view begins, you will walk toward the house and see a mailbox. One of your first actions in this part of the game will involve a prompt to open the mailbox, once again placing a hand in your direct field

<sup>23</sup>Some connections share a similar mechanism but are more subtle. For example, early in the game, you explore a brightly colored pink bathroom. One minor detail of this scene is a small rubber green frog sitting on the vanity beside the sink. If you have played through the rest of the stories, you know this foreshadows one of the most disturbing accounts in the entire game. The placement of this type of simple detail is one strand of the web of connections that makes the game feel rich and full. The first time I played the game I didn't even really notice this little hopper; on my second time through, it's something I immediately focused on when I walked into the room. Whereas before, all I heard was thin narration and awful interior design; With eyes that had seen the rest of the Finch home and heard that part of the Finch story, now, that little water closet was fraught with background and loaded down with emotional weight.

of vision. This time it's Edith's hand, and her right hand is covered by her sweater in a similar way that the child's hand is covered by a cast. This visual echo of physical detail and physical movement creates an interesting bit of resonance between the two scenes.

This subtle visual connection is echoed at the end of the game as the relationship between that child and Edith becomes paramount. The relationship between these two hands is no longer inferred by the player but directly asserted by the story. Furthermore, those flowers we saw the child's hands holding return at the end of the game, and now they are laid at the grave of Edith herself. So, right there at the beginning of the game, the first thing you see as a player are striking visual images that capture the core themes that the game will go on to explore at length: first, death, and second, the relationship between Edith and the family members that she can only communicate with through memory and the written word.

#### **4. The Blend of Gameplay with Story and Themes.**

Something that enhances the experience of playing this game is the way the story and the themes blend with the gameplay mechanics.<sup>24</sup> In each episode, you encounter different types of movements and gameplay elements that you have to figure out in order to move the game forward.

These aren't overly technical and none of the mechanics are difficult. However, they are different enough to make you concentrate. As a player, by the time you figure out what you're supposed to be doing with your controls to open a door, slide a hook, turn a crank, or grab a ladder or a tree branch, you're already moving on to the next bit of the story. Typically, once you have figured out a transition mechanism, you trigger the next part of Edith's voiceover narration.

In each story, you take the perspective of a different person at a different life stage. Sometimes you're an infant, sometimes a child, sometimes a teenager, sometimes an elderly woman, and in one case, a collection of animals. The quick shifts to new characters give freshness to the story but also keep you engaged as a player. Though you essentially are simply walking through the Finch house for the duration of the game, it *feels* like a varied and wide-ranging journey.

These transitions are interesting, but it's within the self-contained stories themselves that this feature truly comes into focus. In order for the story to continue, you as the player must set certain actions in motion. In each of the recollected vignettes, the unique gameplay element blends into the account that is being enacted.

<sup>24</sup>For an overview of the game's mechanics, see Alex Wiltshire, "Creating the 30 Different Control Schemes of *Edith Finch*," at *Gamasutra* (July 12, 2017). After discussing many technical details, Wiltshire remarks that the game "consistently proves over its three-hour running time that converging compelling stories, compelling game design, and controls that anyone can wordlessly grasp is a delicate art."

This technique engages and draws you into the narrative as a player. This feature also showcases one of the ways that video games can tell stories that other mediums cannot: interactivity. You yourself are tasked with carrying the story along. Your movements have meaning, even if you are not changing the content of the story. The fact that you are participating in the forward momentum generates an effect and impacts the way you experience the story.<sup>25</sup>

Sometimes the movement is delightful, and you do not want it to end. Sometimes the movement is disturbing, and you don't want to have to do what you know you have to do to move the story along. Sometimes the movement is repetitive, and you are not sure where it will lead to next. Sometimes the movement is confusing, and you are not quite sure where to go. Sometimes the movement is mesmerizing and monotonous, and you find yourself getting pulled into another dimension entirely.

When the game succeeds (and it often does), the seemingly spontaneous feeling or experience provoked by this movement has been carefully curated and woven into the total gameplay and storytelling strategy. This feature allows you to experience the satisfaction of self-discovery alongside an appreciation for the recognized guidance of good design.

### **5. The Lingering Effect of the Gaming Experience.**

The final characteristic to note here is the lingering effect of the gaming experience. Part of “what remains” of this game is the meaningful effect it has on its players. If you read user reviews of this game, you will encounter anecdotes. In addition to people talking about the game itself, you'll also see people telling about themselves. Something about the story of this game prompts players to tell their own stories. First, they might tell about how they were playing the game and which parts impacted them the most. But, second, they might tell further stories about their own life. Something about playing through these stories evokes strong associations with the lives of the people playing the game.

Upon analysis of the design of the game, we can see that this particular effect is no accident. It is *through* the quality of the story, the depth of the themes, web of interconnections, and the blend of gameplay that pulled these elements together that created this type of experience.

This, of course, is the most subjective aspect of this whole discussion. Everyone experiences art and media differently. But, for many players, playing this game will be an experience that will linger with them. It may at

<sup>25</sup>On the crucial importance of the participatory element of video games (“player agency”), see Millsap, *Playing with God*, 80–89, 197–207. Millsap defines player agency as “the ability to perform intentional actions that result in meaningful changes within a game” (83). He also clarifies that “in all respects of video games being participatory narratives, there is both freedom and limitation: the player is free to act, yet he is bound by the authorial intent of the designers” (87). As Millsap argues throughout his work, player agency is one of the defining characteristics of video games that directly shape both the way they generate meaning and also meaningfully impact players.

first seem like this is the case only because these stories are personable and various people will connect with different stories in unique or special ways. Perhaps a particular story will resonate strongly with someone. They experienced something just like that, for example. While this is almost certainly true, again, I think that it is the carefully crafted story, the optimized game-play mechanics, and the tightly interconnected pattern of themes that has achieved this effect for most players.

The game as a whole has a way of making these touchpoints with a wide variety of people but also drawing those experiences together into a shared experience for those who have played the game. *What Remains of Edith Finch* allows you to *explore* the stubborn beauty of life and the relentless mystery of death with Edith as she seeks to understand the curse that seems to rest upon the Finch family. In her pursuit of meaning, you as the player are pressured to join her on this quest. You imperceptibly begin to ask these same questions yourself as you invariably detect touchpoints with certain aspects of the characters you encounter. How has death touched you? How have you responded? How do you grapple with this reality?

The message of the game is not overly didactic. Edith does provide a voiced narration at the end of the game that gives her perspective on the deaths that she has recounted. And, throughout the stories, she has made comments that have sought to make sense of all that she is remembering. However, as mentioned before, there is a meta-structure that bookends Edith's point of view. The bulk of the gameplay and all of her voiced narration is itself one of the stories in her own journal. This leaves you the player at the end of the game standing over Edith's own gravestone, placing flowers at her grave, journal in hand. There you stand. The house, the graves, the story-world of the game in front of you.

In your hands is the journal that contains a narrative framework that "houses" the memories and stories that are represented by the stones and structures before you. Within the scope of the game, Edith's point of view has given you an interpretive framework for understanding death, life, sorrow, grief, and the nature of endurance in the face of inexplicable hardship.

The drama of the final moments of the game's narrative is this: "Will the child accept Edith's answer? What will he make of her story?" The genius of the game's design is that these questions linger with you the player as well. What will you decide?

So ends the flow of the game itself.<sup>26</sup>

### **What Remains of Our Lament? The Function of Lament in the Christian Life**

In Shakespeare's play, *Hamlet*, the first time you meet Hamlet himself he is being asked a question by King Claudius. The king inquires, "How is it that the clouds still hang on you?" Hamlet is still grieving the death of his

<sup>26</sup>But not of the article! *Thank you, reader, but this article's conclusion is in a different castle.*

father who had died 2 months prior. The new king wants Hamlet to move on. In the play, this scenario is connected to all kinds of intrigue, but I have often thought of this question when contemplating the nature of grief. Does grief have an expiration date? If you have ever grieved in a community, you may have felt the pressure of these questions approach at some point (at first far off, but then increasingly closer): “How is it that the clouds still hang on you?” “Why is your soul still downcast?” “Isn’t it time to move on?”

Should we remember the dead? How often? In what way? What about death itself? Is it something we should be mindful of but not meditate on? Aside from specific loss, does talk of death have a place in the Christian community? When we do talk about death and the memory of death in the Christian community, what should guide us?

As noted in the overview, *Edith Finch* develops several theological themes that are worthy of further analysis. In particular, the game’s storyline homes in on the theme of death and the memory of death. Each short story in the collection combines this central thematic focus with the varied ways other family members grapple with the grief generated by a given death. Within the scope of the story, Edith’s journal represents her own quest to make meaning from the seemingly meaningless deaths of the entire family. From beginning to end, on a large scale and on a small scale, the game presents a sustained consideration of the theme of death and the memory of death.

A serious theological examination of a game like *What Remains of Edith Finch* can also prompt a dialogue about the role of lament in the Christian life.

The final message of *Edith Finch* is that death is a mystery, the threads of one’s life are connected, but death and suffering are ultimately inexplicable. This realization allows us to appreciate the life we do have; allowing us to live in the moment. The overarching message is that the memory of death is not always negative but has a constructive function in one’s life. This is true for the characters in the game as Edith slowly realizes this as she sketches in her journal.

An important moment in the game occurs around the half-way point. After going outside and looking at the gravestones, Edith considers the way her grandmother and her mother approached and responded to death in widely divergent ways. Mom, Edith reflects, was “always trying to move on, but for Edie, the past never went away.” The gravestones all include “memorials” and monuments. Edie turned each person’s room into a memorial to that person’s life and death. Edith’s Mom, in turn, eventually sealed each of these doors, cutting Edith off from any form of physical or mental exploration. This foregrounds dueling approaches to death, grief, and the memory of death: What is the relationship between the past and the present, the memory of death and the memory of life? As Edith walks the house, she contemplates these two positions on death, memory, and grief. “Move on,” or “memorialize”? What does the middle position look like? Edie’s position

was always easier for her to understand. As she has gotten older, her mom's position has made more sense.<sup>27</sup>

Edith seems to represent another approach that navigates the hidden, experienced, and revealed aspects of her family's history and the nature of life and death. Some of Edith's last words of dialogue to her own child are these: "If we lived forever, maybe we'd have time to understand things, But as it is, I think the best we can do is try to open our eyes, and appreciate how strange and brief all of this is ... It's a lot to ask, but I don't want you to be sad that I'm gone. I want you to be amazed that any of us ever had a chance to be here at all."

This is also the message of the game as a whole, which has you as a player considering these themes directly as you play as Edith. In interviews, creative director for the game Ian Dallas sometimes describes what he hoped to accomplish for the game. He typically responds that he wanted to remind players of a "sense of their own mortality" and also to give players a "sense of wonder" about the world around them.<sup>28</sup> Dallas seeks to prompt the question in players, "What does it feel like to come up against a universe that is stranger than I imagine?"<sup>29</sup>

If we were to evaluate this aim and the final message of these themes in *Edith Finch* from a theological perspective, what might we say?

The Christian response must say *more* than this, but I think I want to submit that it should not say *less* than this. In other words, a game like *Edith Finch* embodies the notion of *memento mori* (remember death). It allows a player to explore the way that death reaches every corner of life, is constantly around us, and is inescapable. The playing of the game itself provides a kind of conceptual space in order to process thought, memories, and emotions that may have lain dormant.

As mentioned above, the contemporary avoidance of reflection on death is sometimes shared by Christian communities. Certainly, this is in part because of the influence of a general cultural milieu that avoids talk of death. However, within the Christian community, often a focus on the reality of death and suffering is eclipsed by an understandable focus on the hope of the gospel, future glory, and the believer's pursuit of faith-filled trust in

<sup>27</sup>There are several indications throughout the game that Edith's mother did in fact want her to eventually discover and contemplate this part of her life's story. As Edith notes, "There are so many questions I wish I could ask her ... Part of me thinks this is what she wanted ... For me to come back some day and find everything out for myself." After all, Edith's mom was the one who gave her the key to the house and instructed her to return to the house.

<sup>28</sup>For example, in an interview with Drew Dixon, GameChurch, (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KVkzKM-eaRg>). The game is also dedicated to Dallas' mother, who died of cancer during the production of the game. End game credits begin: "for Shirley Dallas (1948–2013)."

<sup>29</sup>See, for instance, Dallas's interview found here: Bryant Francis, "Why *What Remains of Edith Finch* doesn't give player all the answer," *Gamasutra* (May 4, 2017). Dallas elaborates by reflecting, "We are incapable of understanding the universe fully, and the best we can do is try to make peace with that, and have a relationship with the universe, but we can't solve it." See also the lengthy discussion in Dallas, "Lessons from *Edith Finch*," GDC (2018).

the Lord. These two features, though, sometimes create a church culture that leaves only a limited amount of “space” for the memory of death, the articulation of grief, and the vagaries of lived-out suffering over long periods of time.

This leads many in the churches to ask directly: Is an awareness of death (*memento mori*) in general and lament more specifically appropriate in the Christian life and as a feature of corporate worship?

My contention is that the churches need to find ways to “embed” space for grieving believers and unbelievers in their midst. One of the reasons for this is because this process is a necessary element of the human condition. A deeper reason is because within the context of the Scriptures and the Christian community, there are already deeply integrated resources that can guide and govern the task of remembering death and practicing lament in personal, corporate, and public life.<sup>30</sup>

### **What Lament Requires: Time, Space, and Training**

Here we’re shifting into thinking about the practical or applied realm of reflection. What would it take in order to remember death and practice lament in personal and corporate Christian settings?

Three components seem to be necessary: Physical time, conceptual space, and theological training. A quick word about each: Physical time is necessary in order for this type of reflection to take place. This is this type of reflection that requires *time* to process. However, second, this extended period of reflection requires the conceptual *space* in order to explore death, actually experience grief in its full-bodied expression, and then be able to connect it to the nature of life and the hope of the gospel. But also third, *theological training* is necessary that allows a believer the freedom to explore both the horror of human pain and the hope of the gospel in that same conceptual space.

In practice, sometimes the Christian community has offered counsel or encouragement to grieving people without the time or space required in order to process grief and the memory of death. This sometimes manifests as hastily spoken cultural clichés (like, “time heals all wounds”) or well-intentioned biblical phrases that stand-in for meta-explanations for all pain and this pain in particular (“all things happen for a reason,” “All things work together for good”). While phrases spoken in these moments have varying levels of helpfulness (and truthfulness in some cases), in light of our discussion here, what oftentimes renders these sentiments ineffective (and perhaps offensive in some instances) is that they are delivered apart from a conceptual

<sup>30</sup>For some recent evangelical reflections on the strategic role of lament, see J. Todd Billings, *Rejoicing in Lament: Wrestling with Incurable Cancer & Life in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2015); and Mark Vroegop, *Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy: Discovering the Grace of Lament* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2019). Vroegop defines lament as “a prayer in pain that leads to trust” (28). See also the wide-ranging collection of substantive essays in *Finding Lost Words: The Church’s Right to Lament*, ed. G. Geoffrey Harper and Kit Barker (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2017). These essays cover the history, theology, exegesis, practice, and demonstration of lament.

space that also affirms the full-bodied affirmation and validation of their feeling of loss.

They only put a band-aid on our brokenness. We may need to shift the metaphors: Something is not only slightly out of place; something is gone. A limb has been lost. It's helpful sometimes to rush to a new situation with ways to stop the bleeding. But after the bleeding stops, you have to learn how to walk again without that limb. While they serve a temporary purpose, theological band-aids are not capable of helping heal wounds that last a lifetime.

Here is a touchpoint with our earlier discussion of cultural texts that have the ability to communicate both complex meaning and engage a range of human emotions. One of the reasons that *What Remains of Edith Finch* is able to communicate its strong collection of themes and sub-themes is due to its genre. The game is a First-Person Interactive game, sometimes called a “walking simulator.” Part of what this type of game does is intentionally subvert the power fantasy that is at work in some other types of games. Consequently, this genre is particularly suited to conveying coherent messages capable of genuine theological reflection.

In large scale action games like the recent *Spiderman* or *God of War*, first person shooters like *Call of Duty*, *Halo* or even *Fortnite*, the game is designed to enable the player to fly or be a God-like figure or conquer a field of fierce and challenging foes, constantly leveling up to higher levels of power, and gaining the feeling of being larger than life while playing. This is certainly not the only feature of these games, and titles like the most recent *Spiderman* and at least the most recent *God of War* combine action packed sequences with compelling narratives. However, the “power fantasy” is typically a component of both large-scale action/adventure games and first person shooters.

First person interactives, by contrast, force the player to walk, to investigate mysteries, to find hidden objectives, and to listen to voiced narration. In direct contrast to the *power* fantasy, the player in these games voluntarily chooses to imagine themselves *weak*, slow, even vulnerable to outside forces. The end game in this genre is often *discovery* rather than *domination*; *exploration* rather than *exploitation*; To “win” is often *to wander* and then *to wonder*. If games are a communicative medium, this genre has a potential impact that far outweighs its relative size or length (which is typically short).

*What Remains of Edith Finch*'s main themes are death, grief, and the role that a memory of death has for the meaning of life. The intensity of these themes, the density of the gameplay itself, and the relatively short length of the game has the dynamic feature of both forcing you to gradually and progressively explore each of these themes but also abruptly conclude the exploration. This jolting dynamic, too, is part of the design of the genre and one of the aspects of the game that *Edith Finch* does well. The story concludes in a way that naturally invites further reflection. Does the player accept the way the game has both surfaced and juxtaposed the themes of death, grief, and memory?

### Slaying that dragon, cancer—playing *That Dragon, Cancer*

Another game that functions in a similar way but from an explicitly Christian standpoint is *That Dragon, Cancer*, a first-person interactive that follows the story of Joel, a young child's diagnosis and death from cancer.<sup>31</sup> Like *Edith Finch*, death is central to this game, but in this case it is the approach of a single character's death and its immediacy within the context of a family that prompts the internal contemplation for the characters in the game and the player as the game progresses. Obviously, this game's narrative is emotionally charged and so understandably has impacted players.<sup>32</sup> However, the overtly Christian themes create a further dynamic to consider for those who choose to play. While there are many facets to explore with this game, I will focus on a few aspects that resonate with our current discussion.

The game has been widely received by believers and unbelievers.<sup>33</sup> Part of the way it has achieved this reception and had this outsized effect is through allowing the player to consider the same event and the same tragic scenario from multiple viewpoints. For instance, a pivotal moment in the game is when the family receives Joel's final diagnosis ("I'm Sorry Guys, It's Not Good"). The setting for this scene is a small room and the diagnosis conversation is repeated several times from different vantage points: the perspective of the child himself, and then from each of the doctors, then from the father, and then from the mother. As the mother finishes her thoughts, the doctor's office begins to fill with water even as the dialogue continues, symbolizing the sense of the family drowning in wake of this diagnosis. The

<sup>31</sup> *That Dragon, Cancer* (Numinous Games, 2016). The depth of the game's message and design has been noted from a variety of viewpoints. For example, see Chris Casberg, "'That Dragon, Cancer': A Video Game on Death, Grief, and Our Living Hope" (<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/that-dragon-cancer>); Keith Stuart, "That Dragon, Cancer and the Weird Complexities of Grief," *The Guardian* (January 14, 2016); Gavin Craig, "Terrible Fascination | That Dragon, Cancer," *Heterotopias* (November 2017); Timothy Haase, "That Dragon, Cancer and the Limits of Catharsis," *Eidolon* (June 2016); John W. Auxier, "That Dragon, Cancer Goes to Seminary: Using a Serious Video Game in Pastoral Training," *Christian Education Journal* 15.1 (2018): 105–17.

<sup>32</sup> For example, the framing of many reviews of the game (from both Christian and secular viewpoints) highlight this emotional response: Chris Suellentrop, "This Video Game Will Break Your Heart," *The New York Times* (February 5, 2016); Richard Clark, "Playing with Empathy: How Video Games with a Christian Twist are making their way into the Industry," *Christianity Today* 59.4 (May 2015): 62–63; and Tom Hoggins, "That Dragon, Cancer review: A remarkable piece of work that challenges everything I thought I knew about grief, hope and faith," *The Telegraph* (January 15, 2016). Further illustrating this function are the studies that suggest this game can be used to teach doctors in medical school to consider the strategic importance of empathy. For example, see the research and argument to this effect in Andrew Chen, et al, "Teaching Empathy: The Implementation of a Video Game into a Psychiatry Clerkship Curriculum," *Academic Psychiatry* 42.3 (June 2018): 362–65; and Sean F. Timpane, "New Media: That Dragon, Cancer—An Interactive Video Game," *Journal of Palliative Medicine* 20.3 (2017): 308.

<sup>33</sup> The awards the game has won include "Best Emotional Indie Game" (2016), "Most Innovative" at the Games for Change Awards (2016), "Games for Impact" at The Game Awards (2016), "Cultural Innovation Award" at SXSW Gaming Awards (2017), and "Game Innovation" at BAFTA (2017).

water imagery never goes away for the rest of the game. This creates a dynamic that is also explored throughout the duration of the narrative.

The game's storyline provides a framework within which the player hears and must consider multiple ways of understanding the way the Christian hope relates to an affirmation of human suffering. As Joel's death approaches, you experience life events of the father and mother but also hear their thoughts and listen to their explanations and their exasperated frustrations. They speak to one another and they speak to God. You see flashes of the mother floating in a boat on the surface of the water (she believes it is God's will that Joel will be healed), while you see flashes of the father sinking deep beneath the surface of the water (he does not believe Joel will be healed). The game progresses in creative ways and there is emotional development for both the mother and the father.<sup>34</sup>

Toward the end of Joel's journey toward death, there is a scene where the mother and father find themselves on the same bench. In some ways, this setting implies that they are now "on the same page." However, even while they sit close to one another, the father says, "he hopes," but he does not "know" that Joel will be healed (a contrast with the mother's continued insistence that Joel *will* be healed).

The game's ultimate message affirms several Christian truths about the reality of God's existence and the certainty of life after death; however, the game also forces the player to consider the *relationship* that *future* hope has to *present* suffering in the life of a believer.

All of the explicitly stated language about the meaning of life, death, and God's role in both is spoken by figures in the game. The effect of this dynamic within the scope of the gameplay is that the player is now forced to consider the relationship between these truth claims and also between these complementary and sometimes competing perspectives on life, death, and the role of lament in the Christian community. This particular feature of the game's design has enhanced its impact in both Christian and non-Christian contexts.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>34</sup>One of the central ways the game communicates its message is through its vibrant and gripping imagery/settings. As Haase notes, the "game's dazzling symbolic imagery" is a "combination of fantasy and menace" ("Limits of Catharsis"). Along these lines, Craig notes that the game is oriented around "the spaces in which we encounter the holy" ("Terrible Fascination"). Craig showcases the way the space of the hospital (low ceilings and horizontal lines, where the family descends into a hellish darkness) contrast directly with the final scenes in the chapel sanctuary (high ceilings and vertical lines, where the family lifts prayers toward heavenly light). Craig also argues that there is "a tension between space and story in *That Dragon, Cancer* because there is a tension between the story the Greens want to be able to tell themselves and the experience they are forced to inhabit."

<sup>35</sup>On the game's treatment of death as an embodied theme, see Schott Gareth, "That Dragon, Cancer: Contemplating Life and Death in a Medium that has Frequently Trivialized Both," *Proceedings of the 2017 DIGRA International Conference* 14.1 (2017): 1–10. See also Simon Parkin's interaction with the game's depiction of death in *Death by Video Game: Danger, Pleasure, and Obsession on the Virtual Frontline* (Mellville House, 2016), 215–36. Parkin observes that "many video games are power fantasies" while this game is a "puzzle without a

### Exploring the Biblical Genre of Lament

This issue of genre is another possible path of dialogue with the theological concept of lament. From a theological perspective, by examining and combining the themes of death, grief, and memory, games like *What Remains of Edith Finch* and *That Dragon, Cancer* function in a similar way to the biblical genre of lament. In particular, these cultural texts set these theological themes within a narrative framework where guided exploration of the dark mysteries of death and grief are connected to the possibility of an enduring hope of life. The combination, though, of the theological themes mentioned here is particularly significant.

One of the distinctive features of biblical literature is the mixed and varied genres that a reader encounters within the canonical collection.

Lament in biblical literature is predominantly found in poetic form. One of the effects of poetry is that it is designed to slow readers down and force them to consider the relationship between sentences, lines, words, images, and metaphors. Further, most biblical poetry is either found within collections of poetry or embedded within larger narratives. In both of these canonical contexts, readers are asked to make sense of lament in light of a broader assortment of theological and textual realities. As a reader of the Psalter, for instance, you will read Psalm 23's "the Lord is my shepherd I shall not want" alongside of Psalm 22's "My God, My God, Why have you Forsaken me?"

If we take the arrangement of the Psalter seriously and seek to accept its interpretive guidance as we read and re-read it as a complex compositional whole, one of the questions that will continually confront us is this: How do soaring expressions of praise and worship relate to sinking articulations of sorrow? What about when they stand side by side in the Psalter? What about when they stand side by side within the same psalm? What about when they reside side by side within the same reader of those psalms?

Another example is the phrase "His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning" which is often utilized in times of suffering. Consider, though, its textual location in the book of Lamentations as a whole and its canonical location within the Writings of the Hebrew Bible. Lamentations 3:21–42 is indeed a soaringly beautiful and deeply comforting passage of Scripture. However, it is set within a book-length lament that begins in chapter 1, "How lonely sits the city that was full of people! How like a widow she has become, she who was great among the nations! ... She weeps bitterly in the night with tears on her cheeks," and ends in chapter 5 with phrases like, "The joy of our hearts has ceased; our dancing has been turned

solution" and in many ways a "disempowerment fantasy" (215). Several reviews of the game have the title "a game you can't win" referring both to some of the designed "fail states" but also the game's focus on a terminal disease. For a secular perspective that rejects the confessional stance of the game's message but nevertheless notes the clear effect of the story's narrative progression, see Emily Short, "Wanting to Believe: Faith in *That Dragon, Cancer*," *Gamasutra* (February 2, 2016).

to mourning. ... Why do you forget us forever; why do you forsake us for so many days?" The final words of the book are a plea, "Restore us to yourself, O Lord, that we may be restored! Renew our days as of old—unless you have utterly rejected us, and you remain exceedingly angry with us" (5:21–22).

The textual location of the phrase, "his mercies never come to an end," then, force the reader of the book of Lamentations to consider the relationship between articulations of pain and grief from loss of life and sorrow over acknowledged sin and the hope of enduring mercy from the Lord. The genre of lament provides both physical time (the actual reading of a book and the processing of poetic images) and conceptual space for a reader (both types of theological affirmations being present).

Consider also the relationship between narrative and poetry in the book of Samuel. One of the textual strategies of the book as a whole seems to be the strategic placement of three poetic sections of poetry at the beginning, middle, and end of the book. At the beginning of the book, Hannah's song comes within the context of her barrenness. At the center of the book, capturing one of the main themes of the rise of David and the fall of Saul, David laments for Saul and Jonathan. "Oh how the mighty have fallen." At the end of the book, David's last words reflect on the Lord's promises to him and his house, praise for the work of God's provision, but occur within the context of some of David's final sins and their consequences for the nation at the end of his life. In each of these textual locations, there is a poetic reflection that involves acknowledgment of human emotion and pain, the presence of hope in the form of promise, and also a connection between these two concepts (at the very least, they are connected at broad level, by the narrative shape of the book as a whole).

In some of Paul's letters, the relationship between death and life are at the center of his discussion of persevering through suffering. For example, in 2 Corinthians 4, he speaks of having the treasure of the gospel in "earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves" (4:7). He continues with a string of unexpected juxtapositions: "we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body" (4:8–9). These statements are obviously connected to the argument Paul is making in this section of his letter, but the point here is that Paul seems to be homing in on this dynamic of the continual presence of some form of suffering, the given of human frailty, and simultaneously the ongoing certainty of gospel truth.

Life is finite. The body is decaying. Death is coming. But God's life is infinite. Salvation in Christ is real and connects us to that hope even now. To our point here, Paul extends this dynamic through to the next chapter's discussion of "the earthly tent" which will be torn down and in which we currently groan (2 Cor 5:1–10). He seems to be describing not only a temporary state of affairs but rather an element of the human condition that any

articulation of hope must take into account. In a similar vein in Romans 8, Paul declares that nothing will separate us from the love of God in Christ and immediately connects this assertion to the statement that “we are being put to death all day long” (8:36).

Finally, the biblical storyline as a whole that is envisioned at the end of Isaiah and the end of the Revelation, seem to draw together both a vision of paradise restored but also a sober acknowledgement of the suffering that always marks life on earth between Eden and the New Jerusalem (Isa 65–66; Rev 21–22). As the voice from heaven says in Revelation 21, “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no *longer* be any *death*; there will no *longer* be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away” (21:5). On that day, tears will be wiped away. On this day, they continue to flow forth.

These are just a few examples of the way biblical texts oftentimes closely draw together full acknowledgements of human suffering with certain conviction of gospel hope. We could add more, and there is certainly more to say about these passages. However, these illustrate the theme at hand.

My goal here is to suggest that these textual and canonical features are important resources in creating time and space for lament in the Christian community. The biblical-theological themes of the certainty of death and the certainty of hope sit side by side within these textual locations. This seems to be an intended dynamic rather than a rearrangeable conception. Further, because biblical lament *contains* and *connects* both of these themes, we should continue to consider new ways to allow lament to guide and govern our response to a world teeming with both life and death.

In other words, the Christian community rightly emphasizes that believers grieve, but not as those without hope. Sometimes, though, we might need to be reminded that until he comes, we hope, but not as those without grief.

## Conclusion

Because we have covered several wide-ranging areas in this discussion, I will sum up the main lines of development by way of conclusion:

1. Games like *What Remains of Edith Finch* and *That Dragon, Cancer* are substantive cultural texts worth engaging both on their own terms and from a theological perspective.
2. Responses to these cultural texts by some players highlight the human need for processing grief and remembering death.
3. These responses also highlight the absence of this type of space and place sometimes available in the Christian community for an exploration of death and the grieving process.

4. This dialogue on the whole, can prompt reflection on the resources that the Christian community already possesses that would enable this type of meaningful exploration of death, grief, and memory in personal, corporate, and public life.



## *Adoption in Calvin's Soteriology: Basis for Redemption or Benefit of Union?*

Michael Wilkinson  
Associate Professor of Theology  
Scarborough College

Recent years have witnessed an interest in the meaning and significance of adoption in the theology of John Calvin. Nigel Westhead states that, historically, the doctrine of adoption has been neglected; however, this is no fault of Calvin who “made more of the Fatherhood of God than any other writer of the Reformation.”<sup>1</sup> Traditionally, adoption in Calvin’s theology has been viewed as one of the benefits received through engrafting into Christ. However, some authors have recently made claims that go beyond this; adoption is, for them, the controlling principle of Calvin’s soteriology. Howard Griffith, in an otherwise excellent article, asserts that the “adoption of believers is at the heart of Calvin’s understanding of the atonement.”<sup>2</sup> He goes further in saying that adoption is so comprehensive a theme in Calvin’s theology “that it forms a basis for his entire theology of redemption.”<sup>3</sup> Similarly, Julie Canlis argues that “adoption stands out as one [a soteriological metaphor] which well captures his vision of the saved life.”<sup>4</sup> Like Griffith, Canlis seems to move beyond viewing adoption as a benefit. She concludes her article by equating “union with Christ” with adoption: “Union with Christ as adoption—living as children with a benevolent Father—this is the essence of the justified life that Calvin desired for his flock.”<sup>5</sup> Such statements by Griffith and Canlis raise the question, “Have they gone too far in their claims about adoption in Calvin’s soteriology?”

The purpose of this paper is to challenge their claims and assert that, within Calvin’s soteriology, adoption is best viewed as one of the significant benefits of union with Christ, union with Christ being the actual controlling principle of Calvin’s soteriology. This will involve looking first at Calvin’s commentaries on the New Testament passages using the word *vioθεσία*,

<sup>1</sup>Nigel Westhead, “Adoption in the Thought of John Calvin,” *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 13 (1995): 102.

<sup>2</sup>Howard Griffith, “The First Title of the Spirit’: Adoption in Calvin’s Soteriology,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 73 (2001): 135.

<sup>3</sup>Griffith, “The First Title of the Spirit,” 136.

<sup>4</sup>Julie Canlis, “Calvin, Osiander, and Participation in God,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 6 (2004): 182.

<sup>5</sup>Canlis, “Calvin, Osiander, and Participation in God,” 184.

followed by an examination of Calvin's use of adoption in Books 2 and 3 of the Institutes, which deal particularly with the atonement and salvation.

### The Claims of Griffith and Canlis

#### Griffith's Assertion

Griffith wrote a very helpful article on adoption in Calvin's theology. He is certainly correct in observing that "the adoption of sons" is spread throughout the Institutes.<sup>6</sup> He asserts that adoption in Calvin's theology is "so comprehensive a theme ... that it forms a basis for his entire theology of redemption: in embryo in election, in his development of the history of redemption, and in his treatment of Christian experience."<sup>7</sup>

In support of his claim Griffith proclaims that a "quick count of the index to the Battles translation of the Institutes shows that Calvin referred to Rom. 8:14–33, where the apostle deals with the Spirit and privileges of adoption, in no fewer than fifty-one sections of Book III!"<sup>8</sup> This certainly sounds impressive; however, it is misleading. A count of the references to these verses in the McNeill-Battles index reveals forty-seven occurrences in Book 3 (not fifty-one) and fifty-nine occurrences in the entire *Institutes*. In Book 3 ten of the referred-to sections are repeated, so that the verses are referenced in only thirty-seven sections of Book 3. If Books 2 and 4 are included in this count (there are no references in Book 1 according to the McNeill-Battles index), then these verses are referenced in forty-nine sections of the *Institutes*. However, there are two problems with this approach. First, using this index of McNeil-Battles is not the most reliable method of discerning Calvin's teaching, as the index reflects McNeil-Battle's work rather than Calvin's.<sup>9</sup> The second problem is that Griffith's statistic leaves one with the impression that all the references deal with adoption. However, when the references are checked an interesting picture emerges. Of the thirty-seven references in Book 3, only sixteen actually deal with adoption.<sup>10</sup> Similar results follow when one considers the whole work; of the forty-nine sections containing these verses, only nineteen refer to adoption. Less than half of the references to Romans 8:14–33 in the *Institutes* refer to adoption. Rather than support Griffith's claim that adoption is the basis for Calvin's entire soteriology, such an analysis weakens his claim.

Using similar reasoning, one can make an alternative claim that reconciliation is the basis for Calvin's entire soteriology. Calvin refers to 2 Corinthians 5: 17–21, where the apostle deals with reconciliation, in twenty-four sections of Book 3, eighteen of which specifically mention reconciliation

<sup>6</sup>Griffith, "The First Title of the Spirit," 136.

<sup>7</sup>Griffith, "The First Title of the Spirit," 136.

<sup>8</sup>Griffith, "The First Title of the Spirit," 136.

<sup>9</sup>Anthony N.S. Lane, *John Calvin: Student of the Church Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), xii–xiii.

<sup>10</sup>Not all the instances use the word "adoption." Included in the concept of adoption are the filial terms "sons", "children", and references to God as "Father".

(seventy-five percent). If all four books of the Institutes are consulted, then twenty-five references specifically mention reconciliation in thirty-four sections (seventy-three and one half percent). Comparing reconciliation to adoption, reconciliation is actually mentioned slightly more often than adoption. This is not to suggest that reconciliation is the controlling image of salvation for Calvin; it is not. Doubtless, similar index statistics could be performed on other soteriological images. The point is that Griffith's claim is weakened by looking at the actual uses of Romans 8:14–33 from the McNeill-Battles index. He gives a misleading impression by leading the reader to assume that the references to these verses refer to adoption, when, in fact, adoption accounts for less than half of their use. Griffith is correct in stating that adoption is spread throughout the Institutes, but so are reconciliation, redemption, and expiation, to say nothing of emphasis placed on justification and sanctification/regeneration.

Griffith also expresses concern that general works on Calvin do not treat the issue of adoption, though he acknowledges that Calvin himself has no chapter on adoption in the Institutes. He specifically mentions that neither Wilhelm Niesel nor François Wendel deal with adoption in their works on Calvin's theology.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, Griffith states that works on Calvin's doctrine of the Christian life also lack any attention to adoption.<sup>12</sup> He describes such inattention as a major omission.

In light of what was said above, such criticism seems inappropriate. According to Wendel, "Communion with Christ, the *insitio in Chrsium*, is the indispensable condition for receiving the grace that Redemption has gained for us."<sup>13</sup> Niesel declares that "we do not receive gifts of grace but the one gift, Jesus Christ."<sup>14</sup> Because the Holy Spirit unites us to Christ, Calvin views "the communion of the Head with the members, the indwelling of Christ in our hearts, the hidden union and sacred marriage between Him and ourselves, as the basis for appropriation of the salvation which He has won for us."<sup>15</sup> As one of the editors of the *Calvini Opera Selecta* Niesel is in a good position to understand the basis of Calvin's soteriology. In a similar vein, Wallace comments that the power of sanctification resides in Christ's human nature, therefore, "it follows that our participation in the sanctification of Christ depends on our union with the human nature of Christ."<sup>16</sup> All

<sup>11</sup>Griffith, "The First Title of the Spirit," 135. See Wilhelm Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin*, trans. Harold Knight (London: Lutterworth, 1956); François Wendel, *Calvin: Origins and Development of His Religious Thought*, trans. Philip Mairot (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987).

<sup>12</sup>Griffith, "The First Title of the Spirit," 135. Griffith references Ronald S. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959) and John H. Leith, *John Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1989). Wallace, however, does not completely ignore adoption; he refers to it at least twice as a benefit of being engrafted into Christ.

<sup>13</sup>Wendel, *Calvin*, 235.

<sup>14</sup>Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin*, 122.

<sup>15</sup>Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin*, 125.

<sup>16</sup>Ronald S. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans,

three authors analyze union with Christ, followed by treatments of sanctification and justification, as Calvin does in the Institutes. For these authors, and many others, the controlling principle of Calvin's soteriology is union with Christ.

Oddly enough, Griffith says little about union with Christ, even though, at the end of his article, he has to admit that Calvin's doctrine of salvation is centered on union with Christ; yet he then blurs the distinction between basis and benefit by calling adoption "a fundamental structural category for the doctrine of salvation."<sup>17</sup> Rather than these Calvin scholars being at fault, it seems that Griffith has the weaker case. He rarely mentions union with Christ while elevating adoption beyond a benefit, making it a basis, or "fundamental structural category," for Calvin. He seems to criticize them for not seeing the emphasis the way he does. Again, there is much to be gained by studying Griffith's article; he provides a great treatment of an often overlooked aspect of Calvin's soteriology. Excellent though his treatment of adoption may be, his claim goes beyond what is warranted.

### **Canlis's Concern**

Though more tempered than Griffith in her conclusion, Julie Canlis also views adoption in Calvin's theology as more than a benefit of union with Christ. In fact, she seems to equate adoption and union with Christ when she writes, "Union with Christ as adoption-living as children with a benevolent Father-this is the essence of the justified life that Calvin desired for his flock."<sup>18</sup> Her concern stems from the tendency among Reformed theologians to deprecate union with Christ "as merely a method of appropriation-as that which brings us the benefits of Christ."<sup>19</sup> Though union-for-benefits is part of Calvin's soteriology, it is not the whole of it. When the Spirit unites us to Christ, His life of sonship becomes ours. This means that salvation is more than a transaction or exchange of our sin for Christ's righteousness.

This is the exchange not of good behavior for bad, but an exchange of sonship (raising ontological issues of the 'new creation' and the like). I would argue that sonship for Calvin is not one of many things exchanged, but rather is the category that incorporates and makes sense of all other things exchanged. It is a new identity for humanity that brings with it all the characteristics of sons. It is not a new title that we are given, but a concrete life in relation.<sup>20</sup>

1959), 17.

<sup>17</sup>Griffith, "The First Title of the Spirit," 152.

<sup>18</sup>Canlis, "Calvin, Osiander, and Participation in God," 184.

<sup>19</sup>Canlis, "Calvin, Osiander, and Participation in God," 177.

<sup>20</sup>Canlis, "Calvin, Osiander, and Participation in God," 180–81.

Canlis is certainly correct in asserting that salvation is more than the procurement of a package of benefits. She sees a danger in Reformed scholarship focusing too much on the benefits to the exclusion of true participation in Christ's sonship. She expresses concern that a transaction-based union with Christ will fail to explore the depths of *unio cum Christo* as Calvin understood it. Canlis sees Calvin's trinitarian teaching on adoption as a corrective to the Reformed emphasis on salvation as union-for-benefits. "Rather, *this is our salvation life*—the union of Father and Son. To highlight this, Calvin refers to salvation as our 'adoption'."<sup>21</sup> She adds that salvation is not a transaction, but "rather our inclusion into a form of God's own communion—our adoption."<sup>22</sup> Because salvation is relational rather than transactional, the essence of salvation is adoption.

One of the strengths of Canlis's article is her focus on Christ Himself as our salvation. However, one may ask if she has gone too far in her claim that adoption is the essence of the Christian life in Calvin's theology. At the beginning of Book 3 of the Institutes Calvin states that salvation involves being engrafted into Christ to "enjoy Christ and all his benefits (*Christo bonisque eius omnibus fruamur*)."<sup>23</sup> If the Reformed theologians have stressed union-for-benefits too much, Canlis seems to swing too far in the opposite direction by placing almost all the emphasis on communion. Calvin spoke of both Christ and His benefits, so salvation includes both vital and legal aspects. Canlis has focused on the relational aspect while treating the transactional aspect as secondary. Some of Christ's benefits are relational, such as adoption and reconciliation, while some are transactional, such as justification and sanctification. Canlis would doubtless agree that union with Christ is the controlling principle of Calvin's soteriology. The problem is her assertion that adoption is the meaning of that union, which seems to be somewhat of a stretch. Canlis has exalted one of the Christ's relational benefits and equated it with union with Christ. As noted in the previous section, the same argument could be made for reconciliation, which is also a relational benefit. Union with Christ in Calvin's theology means more than adoption, or reconciliation, or justification, or any other single benefit. Thus, like Griffith, Canlis seems to claim too much in asserting that adoption is the basic meaning of Calvin's doctrine of salvation.

<sup>21</sup>Canlis, "Calvin, Osiander, and Participation in God," 183.

<sup>22</sup>Canlis, "Calvin, Osiander, and Participation in God," 183.

<sup>23</sup>John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 3.1.1, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles. Library of Christian Classics, vols. 20–21 (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1960), 3.1.3. John Calvin, *Institutio Christianae religionis* [1559] 3.1.3, in *Ioannis Calvini Opera Selecta* [OS], ed. P. Barth and W. Niesel (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1931), 4:1.

## Adoption in Calvin's Commentaries

### **Romans 8:14–23**

In his Romans commentary Calvin ties adoption very closely to the Spirit's work of assurance of salvation. Beginning with verse fourteen (*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God*) Calvin notes that “Paul teaches us that only those are finally reckoned to be sons of God who are ruled by His Spirit, since by this mark God acknowledges His own.”<sup>24</sup> Calvin, then, specifically relates sonship to the Spirit's work of assurance. “The substance of his remarks amounts to this, that all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God; all the sons of God are heirs of eternal life; and therefore all who are led by the Spirit of God ought to feel assured of eternal life.”<sup>25</sup>

The Spirit's work of assurance continues as the dominant theme in Calvin's comments on verses fifteen through seventeen. What is interesting is that Calvin devotes the bulk of his attention to the Spirit rather than adoption. Understanding “the Spirit of adoption” ( $\piνεῦμα \nuιοθεσία$ ) as a title for the Holy Spirit, Calvin primarily addresses what the Spirit does in adoption rather than comment on the precise meaning of adoption. Regarding Paul's statement that we have not received a spirit of bondage, but the Spirit of adoption, Calvin explains that the Holy Spirit does not harass us with fear, but brings our minds to “a state of tranquility, and to stir us to call on God with confidence and freedom.”<sup>26</sup> Because the Spirit seals God's forgiveness in us, our adoption makes us bold in prayer. Under the old covenant the people of Israel also experienced adoption as God's children, but things were so obscured in the Old Testament that the law could do nothing but bind those subject to it and pronounce death on all who transgressed it. However, “under the Gospel there is the spirit of adoption, which gladdens our souls with the testimony of salvation.”<sup>27</sup> Calvin continues to focus on the Spirit and His assurance with his comments on verse sixteen (*The Spirit himself beareth witness*).

Paul means that the Spirit of God affords us such a testimony that our spirit is assured of the adoption of God, when He is our Guide and Teacher. Our mind would not of its own accord convey this assurance to us, unless the testimony of the Spirit preceded it. There is here also an explanation of the previous sentence, for while the Spirit testifies to us that we are children of

<sup>24</sup>John Calvin, *Romans and Thessalonians*, ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance, trans. Ross Mackenzie, Calvin's New Testament Commentaries, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), 167.

<sup>25</sup>Calvin, *Romans and Thessalonians*, 167.

<sup>26</sup>Calvin, *Romans and Thessalonians*, 166–67.

<sup>27</sup>Calvin, *Romans and Thessalonians*, 169.

God, He at the same time pours this confidence into our hearts, so that we dare invoke God as our Father.<sup>28</sup>

Again, Calvin focuses most of his attention on the Holy Spirit and His testimony of adoption as assurance of salvation.

In his comments on verse seventeen (*And if children, then heirs*), however, Calvin makes quite a strong statement about adoption: “salvation consists in having God as our Father.”<sup>29</sup> Immediately after this statement Calvin turns his attention to the meaning and purpose of our heavenly inheritance. The inheritance that awaits us is something that we share with Christ. He sums up Paul’s exhortation by explaining that we have this inheritance because we have been adopted as God’s children by His grace; possession of our inheritance “has already been conferred on Christ, with whom we are made partakers.”<sup>30</sup> This would seem to indicate that both adoption and inheritance are ours through our participation in, or union with, Christ.

Romans 8:23 states, “*And not only so, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for our adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.*”<sup>31</sup> Interestingly, Calvin comments that Paul uses adoption improperly to mean the enjoyment of our inheritance, but Paul is justified in doing so because God’s promised inheritance is connected to God’s certain decree of our promised resurrection.<sup>32</sup> He adds that by His decree “God has chosen us as His sons before the foundation of the world, He bears witness to us concerning it by the Gospel, and He seals the faith of it on our hearts by His Spirit.”<sup>33</sup> Here Calvin also ties adoption to election, though he does not comment on this further. His comments on the two following verses also focus attention on the hope of our future salvation and the patience such hope brings.

To sum up Calvin’s treatment of Romans 8:14–23, Calvin seems to place most of the emphasis on the Spirit’s work of assurance of salvation as well as on the value of our future inheritance for patiently bearing the troubles of the present world. Calvin also ties adoption and inheritance to union with Christ, making adoption a benefit.

#### **Romans 9:4**

In explaining the problem of Israel’s unbelief, Paul mentions the privileges they possessed: the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises. As members of the covenant, they were adopted as God’s people. Did their unbelief nullify their adoption? Calvin comments that, although “they were unbelievers and had broken His

<sup>28</sup>Calvin, *Romans and Thessalonians*, 170.

<sup>29</sup>Calvin, *Romans and Thessalonians*, 171.

<sup>30</sup>Calvin, *Romans and Thessalonians*, 171.

<sup>31</sup>The verse is the translation provided in Calvin, *Romans and Thessalonians*, 194.

<sup>32</sup>Calvin, *Romans and Thessalonians*, 175.

<sup>33</sup>Calvin, *Romans and Thessalonians*, 175.

covenant, yet their perfidy had not rendered the faithfulness of God void.”<sup>34</sup> God refers to Israel as His son and His first-born (Exod 4:22, Jer 31:9, 20). Calvin notes that by these expressions “he intends not only to commend his indulgence toward Israel, but rather to display the power of adoption, in which the promise of the heavenly inheritance is contained.”<sup>35</sup> Griffith explains that Calvin’s comments mean that membership in the covenant community is considered adoption, even though Israel stood in unbelief.<sup>36</sup> Calvin believed that God’s covenant with His ancient people (in the covenant with Abraham) was established by God’s gratuitous grace, which He continued to offer through new promises. “It follows that promises are related to the covenant as their only source.”<sup>37</sup> Calvin does not offer an *ordo salutis* here, but it seems safe to infer from his comments that membership in God’s covenant serves as the basis for Israel’s relationship to God, that of an adopted son; thus, Israel’s sonship was not the basis for the covenant, but an important result of covenant membership.

### **Galatians 4:5**

Paul, in Galatians 4:5, says God sent His Son “*that he might redeem them which were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.*”<sup>38</sup> Calvin refers to adoption as a privilege (*iure*) commenting simply that

Adoption, like redemption, in Rom. 8:23, is put for actual possession (*pro ipse possessione*). For as, at the last day, we receive the fruit of our redemption, so now we receive the fruit of our adoption (*fructum adoptionis*), which the holy fathers did not partake (*compones non fuerunt*) of before the coming of Christ.<sup>39</sup>

Two observations can be made that affect how adoption is understood in Calvin’s soteriology. First, in commenting on the Old Testament believers, he refers to their adoption as a privilege. *Iure*, related to the word, *ius*, can be translated “right” or “privilege,” which inclines one to see adoption as a benefit, rather than the essence, of salvation. Second, Calvin’s statement that the believers before Christ did not partake (*compones non fuerunt*) of the fruit of adoption certainly implies that believers in Christ do partake of adoption.

<sup>34</sup>Calvin, *Romans and Thessalonians*, 194.

<sup>35</sup>Calvin, *Romans and Thessalonians*, 194.

<sup>36</sup>Griffith, “The First Title of the Spirit,” 142.

<sup>37</sup>Calvin, *Romans and Thessalonians*, 195.

<sup>38</sup>The verse is the translation provided in John Calvin, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians*, ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance, trans. T.H.L. Parker, Calvin’s New Testament Commentaries, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 74. *ut eos qui sub lege errant, redimeret, ut adoptionem recipieremus* in John Calvin, *Commentarius in Epistolam Pauli ad Ephesios*, in *Ioannis Calvini Opera quea supersunt omnia*, ed. Wilhelm Baum, Eduard Cunitz, and Edward Reuss, vol. 51, Corpus Reformatorum [CR], vol. 79 (Brunswick, NJ: C. A Schwetschke and Son, 1895; reprint, Johnson Reprint Corp., 1964), 223.

<sup>39</sup>Calvin, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians*, 74. *Comm. Gal. 4.5* (CR 78:227).

Such language of participation seems to infer that adoption is a benefit of union with Christ.

Viewing adoption as a benefit in no way lessens its significance as a vital truth of salvation. Calvin's comments on the preceding and following verse bring out the richness of adoption. He comments on verse four that the Son of God became subject to the law so "that He might obtain freedom for us [*ut libertatum nobis acquireret*]."<sup>40</sup> He goes on to say that when Christ took our chains on Himself, He took them off of us, exempting (*immunitatem*) us from slavery to the law. Freedom is the privilege of sons. As in Romans 8, Calvin focuses attention on adoption as the Spirit's work of assurance. He presents the argument in Galatians 4:6 as follows:

Adoption by God precedes the testimony of adoption given by the Spirit. But the effect is the sign of the cause. And you dare to call God your Father only by the instigation and incitement of the Spirit of Christ. Therefore it is certain that you are the sons of God.<sup>41</sup>

The Spirit, as the earnest and pledge of our adoption (*arrham esse et pignus nostrae adoptionis*) gives testimony inwardly to us and assures us of "God's Fatherly attitude towards us."<sup>42</sup> The Holy Spirit also leads us to cry "Abba, Father." Calvin notes that the word "crying" (*κράζον, clamantem*) is an indication of certainty and unwavering confidence (*securitatis est indicium ac minime vacillantis fiduciae*).<sup>43</sup>

Commenting on "Abba, Father" Calvin asserts that since "the Gentiles are reckoned among the sons of God, it is evident that adoption comes, not by merit of the law, but from the grace of faith [*non ex merito legis, sed ex gratia fidei*]."<sup>44</sup> This is consistent with what he says in the *Institutes*. At the very beginning of Book 3 Calvin declares that to receive all the benefits which the Father has bestowed on Christ we must be engrafted into Him; "for, as I have said, all that he possesses is nothing to us until we grow into one body with him. It is true that we obtain this by faith."<sup>45</sup> If adoption is received through faith, and faith is what unites us to Christ and allows us to receive Christ's benefits, it seems reasonable to conclude that Calvin understood adoption as a benefit of union with Christ.

<sup>40</sup>Calvin, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians*, 74. *Comm. Gal.* 4.4 (CR 78:227).

<sup>41</sup>Calvin, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians*, 74. *Comm. Gal.* 4.6 (CR 78:228–29).

<sup>42</sup>Calvin, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians*, 74. *Comm. Gal.* 4.6 (CR 78:228–29).

<sup>43</sup>Calvin, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians*, 74. *Comm. Gal.* 4.6 (CR 78:228–29).

<sup>44</sup>Calvin, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians*, 76. *Comm. Gal.* 4.6 (CR 78:229).

<sup>45</sup>Calvin, 4. *Institutes* 3.1.1. *quia nihil ad nos (ut dixi) quaecunque possidet, donec cum ipso in unum coalescimus. Etsi autem verum est, hoc fide nos consequi.* (OS 4 [1931]: 1).

### Ephesians 1:4–5

In his comments on these verses Calvin could be understood to say that adoption means more than a benefit of union with Christ. Calvin explains that the certainty of salvation is based on the Gospel which reveals God's love to us in Christ. "But to confirm the matter more fully, he recalls them to the first cause [*primam causam*], to the fountain [*fontem*], the eternal election of God [*aeternum electionem Det*], by which before we are born, we are adopted as sons [*adoptamus infilios*]."<sup>46</sup> Shortly thereafter Calvin says of verse four (even as he chose us in him),

When he adds, in Christ, it is the second confirmation of freedom of election. For if we are chosen in Christ, it is outside ourselves [*Nam si in Christo sumus electi, ergo extra nos*]. It is not from the sight of our deserving, but because our heavenly Father has engrafted us [*inseruit*], through the blessing of adoption [*adoptionis beneficio*], into the body of Christ.<sup>47</sup>

These are very strong statements regarding the role of adoption in salvation. The first ties adoption very closely to election, sounding as if he equates election and adoption. The second could easily be taken to mean that adoption is the means by which we are engrafted into Christ, which would be the case if he understands adoption here to refer to election. However, Calvin later states that the formal cause of our salvation is the preaching of the Gospel, adding, "for by faith is communicated to us Christ, through whom we come to God, and through whom we enjoy the benefit of adoption [*adoptionis beneficio*]."<sup>48</sup> Calvin seems to be imprecise in his use of the term "adoption"; using it as both a synonym for election and as a benefit of *unio cum Christo*.

Two factors, however, indicate that it may be best to view adoption as a benefit of union rather than the basic essence of salvation. First, his somewhat ambiguous use of the term should give pause before concluding that Calvin understands adoption as so comprehensive a term that it sums up the basic meaning of redemption. Second, Calvin's over-arching concern in his comments on Ephesians 1:3–7 is election. He aims to demonstrate that salvation is a work of God's free grace alone from beginning to end, totally excluding human merit. In his comments on verse five (which contains *víoθεσία*) Calvin focuses his attention on predestination and the three causes of our salvation, giving most of his attention to the efficient cause: the good pleasure of God's will, which automatically nullifies all merit. Calvin

<sup>46</sup>Calvin, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians*, 124. *Comm. Eph.* 1.3 (CR 79:146).

<sup>47</sup>Calvin, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians*, 124. *Comm. Eph.* 1.4 (CR 79:147).

<sup>48</sup>Calvin, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians*, 128. *Comm. Eph.* 1.3 (CR 79:150).

spends the overwhelming bulk of his comments on these verses to explain the meaning of election and its value in providing assurance of salvation. Though he does make some strong statements about adoption, he is a little ambiguous in his use of the term. Thus, it may be safer not to understand adoption in these verses as the primary meaning of redemption for Calvin.

### **John 1:12 and 2 Corinthians 1:20**

Though John does not mention adoption in John 1: 12, he does speak of sonship through faith. Calvin notes that we become children of God when we are born of God. “But if faith regenerates us, so that we are *the sons of God*, and if God breathes [*inspirat*] faith into us from heaven, it plainly appears that not by possibility only, but actually—as we say—is the grace of adoption [*adoptionis gratiam*] offered to us by Christ.”<sup>49</sup> Calvin makes it clear that one is made a son of God through faith alone. In his comments on verses twelve and thirteen Calvin discusses the relationship of faith, regeneration, and the Spirit. C. Graafland summarizes Calvin’s slightly confusing *ordo* by explaining that he “points out that there is, first of all, the hidden, unknown influence of the Spirit through which faith is given to us. Afterwards, faith is effective and receives Christ and His blessings, the gifts of the Spirit.”<sup>50</sup> Calvin is not confusing, though, in stating that “Having been engrafted into Christ [*insiti in Christum*] by faith, we obtain the right of adoption, so as to be *the sons of God*.”<sup>51</sup> Here Calvin’s comments are far from ambiguous—adoption is the result of being engrafted into Christ through faith. He is also consistent with his teaching in the Institutes that faith is the means by which we are united to Christ.

In 2 Corinthians 1 :20 Paul writes that “*For how many soever be the promises of God, in him is the yea: wherefore also through him is the Amen, unto the glory of God through us.*” Calvin specifically mentions the promise of adoption in his comments on this verse. He asserts that all God’s promises depend solely on Christ, so that God is gracious toward us only in Christ.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>49</sup>John Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, trans. William Pringle (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1848; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 41. John Calvin, *Commentarius in Evangelium Ioannis*, in *Ioannis Calvini Opera quae supersunt omnia*, ed. Wilhelm Baum, Eduard Cunitz, and Edward Reuss, vol. 47, *Corpus Refonnatonun*, vol. 75 (Brunswick, NJ: C.A. Schwetschke and Son, 1892; reprint, Johnson Reprint Corp., 1964), 11.

<sup>50</sup>Comelis Graafland, “Hat Calvin Einen Ordo Salutis Gelehrt?” in *Calvinis ecclesiae Genevensis custos* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1984), 237. *Zusammenfassendweist Calvin darauf hin, daß es zuerst die verborgene, unbewußte Einwirkung des Geistes gibt, durch die uns der Glaube geschenkt wird. Danach wird der Glaube wirksam und nimmt Christus und seine Wohltaten, die Gaben des Geistes, an.*

<sup>51</sup>Calvin, *John*, 42. *Comm. John* 1.12 (CR 75:11).

<sup>52</sup>John Calvin, *2 Corinthians and Timothy, Titus & Philemon*, ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance, trans. T. A. Smail, *Calvin’s New Testament Commentaries*, vol. 10 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 21. John Calvin, *Commentarius in Epistolam Pauli ad Corinthos II*, in *Ioannis Calvini Opera quae supersunt omnia*, ed. Wilhelm Baum, Eduard Cunitz, and Edward Reuss, vol. 50, *Corpus Refonnatonun*, vol. 78 (Brunswick, NJ: C.A. Schwetschke and Son,

These promises give testimony of God's fatherly goodwill toward us, thus they could only be fulfilled in Christ. But, Calvin adds, "we are incapable [*non sumus idonei*] of possessing God's promises till we have received the remission of our sins and that comes to us through Christ [*per Christum consequimur*]."<sup>53</sup> Calvin adds that "the chief of all God's promises is that by which He adopts us as His sons and Christ is the cause and root of our adoption (*causa autem et redix adoptionis*)."<sup>54</sup> Clearly for Calvin adoption and sonship are extremely important-of all of God's promises he names adoption as the most important of all. Yet, as important as it is, adoption is still a promise rather than the comprehensive meaning of redemption. As a matter of fact, adoption is also dependent on the forgiveness of sins, which, along with the imputation of Christ's righteousness, is an essential aspect of justification.<sup>55</sup> Following his comment that adoption is the chief of God's promises, Calvin adds that "God is Father only to those who are members and brothers [*membra sunt et frates*] of His only begotten Son. Everything comes to us from this one source [*ex illo fonte*]."<sup>56</sup> Our adoption is a result, or benefit, of union with Christ.

Having examined Calvin's treatment of the New Testament passages in which Paul mentions *vioθεσία*, it would seem best to understand adoption as a benefit of union with Christ and not as the controlling image of salvation. It remains to be seen how Calvin uses adoption in the *Institutes*.

### **Adoption in the *Institutes***

Griffith is correct in stating that adoption is spread throughout the *Institutes*. To understand how Calvin uses adoption in the *Institutes* it may be helpful to look at the larger blocks of chapters in which it appears. For example, in Book 2, dealing with Christ's work of atonement, adoption appears a number of times relation to Christ's office as Mediator. In Book 3 on soteriology, Calvin includes references to adoption in the chapter about the Spirit's secret work of engrafting us into Christ as well as the chapter on the definition and properties of faith. The chapter on prayer contains a few references; the chapters on election also contain a number of references to adoption. The most occurrences appear in the chapters on justification.

### **Book 2: The Mediator and the Atonement**

General revelation does not reveal God as Father; if we wish to return to God and know Him as Father, we must embrace the cross with humility.<sup>57</sup> Our sonship (and, therefore, our adoption) is grounded in Christ's death on the cross. Nigel Westhead declares that our sonship is "redemptive sonship"

<sup>53</sup>1893; reprint, Johnson Reprint Corp., 1964), (CR 78:22).

<sup>54</sup>Calvin, *2 Corinthians*, 22. *Comm. Cor. II* 1.20 (CR 78:23).

<sup>55</sup>Calvin, *2 Corinthians*, 22.

<sup>56</sup>See, Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.11.2.

<sup>57</sup>Calvin, *2 Corinthians*, 22. *Comm. Cor. II* 1.20 (CR 78:23).

<sup>57</sup>Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.6.1.

because our adoption is grounded in the atonement.<sup>58</sup> Embracing the cross with humility, i.e. believing in Christ, brings one into union with Christ. Commenting on John 1:12 Calvin explains that “it is quite unfitting that those not engrafted [*non insiti sunt*] into the body of the only-begotten Son are considered to have the place and rank of children.”<sup>59</sup> It seems clear that engrafting, or union with Christ, makes sonship possible.

In relation to the law Calvin explains that the law is to be abrogated in the sense that, by Christ becoming a curse for us, it no longer condemns us. Because Christ has redeemed those under the law “we receive by adoption the right of sons [*Quo ius filiorum, adoptione receperimus*.]”<sup>60</sup> He elaborates that adoption means that we are no longer burdened by unending bondage [*ne perpetua servitude premeremur*], having our conscience agonized by the fear of death.<sup>61</sup> This is remarkably consistent with his comments on Galatians 4:4–5 that adoption means freedom as children and exemption from bondage to the law. Calvin makes a similar statement when dealing with the differences between the Old and New Testaments. “Scripture calls the Old Testament one of “bondage” [*servitutis*] because it produces fear in men’s minds; but the New Testament, one of “freedom” [*libertatis*] because it lifts them to trust and assurance [*fiduciam ac securitatem*.]”<sup>62</sup> Calvin asserts that this is the meaning of Romans 8:15. Again, Calvin is consistent with his remarks in his commentary on Romans 8:15: adoption provides both freedom and assurance of salvation. Westhead aptly observes that adoption “is the category Calvin used to describe the status one enters into upon release from the law.”<sup>63</sup>

In the chapters on Christ’s office as Mediator (2.12–14), Calvin explains that Christ’s task was to make the children of men into children of God. B.A. Gerrish thinks that “of all the good things God promises, adoption is the most important.”<sup>64</sup> In order to do this Christ had to take human flesh in order to “impart [*transferret*] what was his to us, and to make what was his by nature ours by grace.”<sup>65</sup> Calvin further explains that Christ partook of our nature so that we might become one with Him. As a result of this union with Christ, we have the assurance of our inheritance, which is ours because we have been adopted as Christ’s brothers.

Adoption is also used to contrast Christ’s sonship with ours. Calvin asserts that “to neither angels nor men was God ever Father, except with regard to His only-begotten Son; and men, especially hateful to God because of their iniquity, become sons by free adoption [*gratuita adoptione*]

<sup>58</sup>Westhead, “Adoption in the Thought of John Calvin,” 103–04.

<sup>59</sup>Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.6.1. (*OS* 3 [1927]: 321).

<sup>60</sup>Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.7.15. (*OS* 3 [1927]: 340).

<sup>61</sup>Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.7.15. (*OS* 3 [1927]: 340).

<sup>62</sup>Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.11.9. (*OS* 3 [1927]: 431).

<sup>63</sup>Westhead, “Adoption in the Thought of John Calvin,” 104.

<sup>64</sup>B.A. Gerrish, *Grace and Gratitude: The Eucharistic Theology of John Calvin* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993; repr. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002), 89.

<sup>65</sup>Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.12.2. (*OS* 3 [1927]: 438).

because Christ is the Son of God by nature [*natura*.].<sup>66</sup> Commenting on this statement Canlis says that the “Son’s union with the Father is not just the mechanism for our salvation, a hoop that Jesus jumped through so we could be saved. Rather, this is our salvation life—the union of Father and Son.”<sup>67</sup> She is surely right in stating that union with Christ is our salvation life. She adds, however, that Calvin “highlights” this by referring to salvation as adoption. However, Calvin uses adoption to differentiate our sonship-by adoption—from Christ’s-by nature. Our adoption to sonship is a result of being “founded [*in capite fundata eset*] upon the Head,” making us children of God because we are members of Christ the Son.<sup>68</sup> Calvin says essentially the same thing in 2.14.6: Christ, though a called “son” in human flesh, is the true and natural son, not like us who are children by adoption and grace. What Christ possesses by nature we receive as a gift. How? Through union with Christ. Westhead fittingly proclaims, “Clearly there is a union of God and humanity by virtue of the incarnation, but there is also required for sonship in its deepest signification an ‘engrafting’ into Christ. This engrafting is effected through faith”<sup>69</sup> Thus, apart from Christ there is no adoption, which argues for adoption being a benefit of union with Christ.

### **Book 3: The Spirit, Faith, and Justification**

Book 3 contains the greatest number of references to adoption. Calvin begins Book 3 by asking how we receive the benefits which the Father has bestowed on Christ for our sakes. He answers,

First, we must understand that as long as Christ remains outside of us [*extra nos*], and we are separated from him [*ab eo sumus separati*], all that he has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value for us. Therefore, to share [*communicet*] with us what he has received from the Father, he had to become ours and dwell within us [*in nobis habitare*]. For this reason he is called “our Head” [Eph. 4:15], and “the first-born among many brethren” [Rom. 8:29]. We also, in turn, are said to be “engrafted [*inseri*] into him” [Rom. 11:17], and to “put on Christ” [Gal. 3:27]; for as I have said, all that he possesses is nothing to us until we grow into one body with him [*donec cum ipso in unum coalescimus*].<sup>70</sup>

Clearly, union with Christ represents Calvin’s understanding of how we receive Christ and his benefits. Union with Christ is a dominant issue

<sup>66</sup>Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.14.5. (OS 3 [1927]: 465).

<sup>67</sup>Canlis, “Calvin, Osiander, and Participation in God,” 182–83.

<sup>68</sup>Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.14.5. (OS 3 [1927]: 465).

<sup>69</sup>Westhead, “Adoption in the Thought of John Calvin,” 106.

<sup>70</sup>Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.1.3. (OS 4 [1931]: 1).

throughout the entire book; this is critical in understanding how adoption is used in Book 3.

Because union with Christ is the secret work of the Spirit, Calvin mentions several titles for the Holy Spirit found in Scripture. “First, he is called the “spirit of adoption” [*Primo vocatur Spiritus adoptionis*] because he is the witness to us of the free benevolence of God with which God the Father has embraced us in his beloved only-begotten Son to become Father to us.”<sup>71</sup> The context of the title “Spirit of adoption” is couched within a great deal of language on union with Christ. Later in the same paragraph Calvin again emphasizes that Christ is of no good to us as long as He remains outside us; it is the Spirit who unites us to Christ. The paragraph before this (3.1.2) speaks of Christ’s endowment with the Spirit which is given to us to make us one with Christ. The focus of attention is more on the Spirit’s work of uniting us to Christ than on adoption; such union is the means by which we receive both Christ and His benefits. It would seem best to understand adoption as one of those benefits.

The Spirit’s secret work of engrafting us into Christ leads Calvin to the issue of faith: “the principle work of the Spirit” and the means by which He unites us to Christ. Graafland appropriately remarks that the “entire first part of Book 3 is determined by the thought that the way of faith consists in this, that we are united with Christ.”<sup>72</sup> First, in 3.2.8 he contrasts “that worthless distinction between formed and unformed faith” as a way of achieving salvation with the fact that faith can only occur through the Spirit’s “illuminating [*illuminando*] our hearts unto faith” which witnesses to our adoption.<sup>73</sup> Anthony Lane remarks that Calvin lays stress on the fact that faith can “more appropriately be seen as a belief in God’s good favour to us, in his adoption of us as sons.”<sup>74</sup> Calvin uses the concept of adoption to contrast the false faith of the reprobate with the elect in whom alone “does that confidence [*fiduciam*] flourish [*vigere*] which Paul extols, that they loudly proclaim Abba, Father.”<sup>75</sup> The reprobate have not received the Spirit of adoption so they have not truly tasted the goodness of God, “they grasp at a shadow.” In these instances, Calvin does seem to use adoption as a term for salvation, but he offers little or no elaboration on its meaning or implications. At other times he uses redemption or reconciliation to refer to salvation as a whole. Thus, it appears that these uses of adoption are far from serving as a comprehensive term for the whole of redemption.

<sup>71</sup>Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.1.3. (OS 4 [1931]: 3).

<sup>72</sup>Graafland, “Hat Calvin Einen Ordo Salutis Gelehrt?” 238. *Der ganze erste Teil des Buches III wird von dem Gedanken beherrscht, daß das Wesen des Glaubens darin besteht, daß wir mit Christus vereinigt werden.*

<sup>73</sup>Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.2.8. (OS 4 [1931]: 17).

<sup>74</sup>Anthony N. S. Lane, “John Calvin: The Witness of the Spirit,” in *Faith and Ferment: Papers presented at the 1982 Westminster Conference*, 1–17 (London: The Westminster Conference, 1982), 13.

<sup>75</sup>Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.2.11. (OS 4 [1931]: 21).

The chapter on justification contain the most references to adoption. In 3.11.1 Calvin establishes justification as a pivotal soteriological issue.

Let us sum these up. Christ was given to us by God's generosity, to be grasped and possessed by us in faith [*fide a nobis apprehendi ac possideri*]. By partaking of him [*participatinoe*], we principally receive a double grace: namely, that being reconciled [*reconciliati*] through Christ's blamelessness, we may have in heaven instead of a Judge a gracious Father; and secondly, that sanctified by Christ's spirit we may cultivate blamelessness and purity of life.<sup>76</sup>

Later, Calvin adds that justification "is the main hinge on which religion turns [*praecipuum esse sustinendae religionis cardinum*], so that we devote the greater attention and care to it."<sup>77</sup> Canlis interprets this to mean that "justification was the main hinge ... upon which Calvin's polemic turned ... but does not comprise the essence of his trinitarian theology of salvation."<sup>78</sup> However, these appear to be Canlis's words, not Calvin's. He never says justification is the polemic hinge of religion; he does add that justification by faith is the foundation for salvation and piety, which seems to indicate more of the essence of salvation than Canlis is willing to admit. But this raises the question of whether adoption is subordinate to justification. Griffith says no; "On balance it appears proper to say that for Calvin, adoption is too fundamental a category to be subordinated to justification."<sup>79</sup> Westhead provides more cautious advise by noting that, since Calvin does not have a separate chapter on adoption as a distinct locus for salvation, but does treat justification as such a locus (given the eight chapters devoted to it), one can infer that adoption is a central privilege and essential blessing, though it stands in deference to justification.<sup>80</sup> Despite his own strong statements about justification, Calvin seems to treat justification as one of the two most significant benefits of union with Christ (the other being sanctification or regeneration); it is part of the grace we receive from participation in Christ. If adoption is in deference to justification, then adoption must also be a benefit.

In 3.11.4 Calvin, referring to Ephesians 1:5–6, proclaims that we have been destined for adoption based on God's good pleasure by which He has made us acceptable [*acceptos*] and beloved, which he equates with God's free justification, offering no other comment on adoption.<sup>81</sup> In 3.11.6 Calvin states that when God receives someone by grace, He bestows the Spirit of adoption, who transforms the believer into God's image. Calvin, again, does not elaborate on adoption, but rather on the Spirit's work in remaking

<sup>76</sup>Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.11.1. (OS 4 [1931]: 182).

<sup>77</sup>Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.11.1. (OS 4 [1931]: 182).

<sup>78</sup>Canlis, "Calvin, Osiander, and Participation in God," 182n49.

<sup>79</sup>Griffith, "The First Title of the Spirit," 140.

<sup>80</sup>Westhead, "Adoption in the Thought of John Calvin," 112.

<sup>81</sup>Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.11.4. (OS 4 [1931]: 184).

the believer into Christ's image. The joy, peace, and assurance that come from justification by faith cause us to "open our mouth freely to cry, 'Abba, Father'."<sup>82</sup> The basis of such boldness and assurance for believers lies in the fact that, "being engrafted in the body of Christ [*insiti in Christi corpus*], they are freely accounted righteous [*iusti gratis reputantur*]."<sup>83</sup> Again, adoption seems to be treated as a benefit of engrafting into Christ.

Considering the issue of merit Calvin asserts that our good works testify that the Spirit of adoption has been given to us, thus strengthening our faith (3.14.18). Furthermore, in opposition to the Roman view of merit,

as soon as you become engrafted into Christ through faith [*per fidem insertus es Christo*], you are made a son of God, an heir of heaven, a partaker [*iustitiae particeps*] in righteousness, a possessor of life; and ... you obtain not the opportunity to gain merit but all the merits of Christ, for they are communicated to you [*siquidem tibi communicantur*].<sup>84</sup>

Such language certainly appears to include adoption as a benefit of union with Christ.

Adoption opens the door to God's Kingdom and give the believer a permanent standing in it. The Kingdom is the sons' inheritance [*filiorum esse haereditatem*], not the servants' wages [*non servorum stipendium*]—only those adopted as God's children will enjoy this inheritance.<sup>85</sup> Gerrish asserts that "the whole of Christian experience—the life of the new self—is then perceived as nothing but the life of God's adopted sons and daughters, and it is in its very essence a life of confidence and freedom."<sup>86</sup> But, in reference to Romans 8:23, Calvin states that "when a man is received into grace by God to enjoy communion [*communicacione*] with him and be made one with him [*unumque cum eo fiat*], he is transported from death to life—something done by the benefit of adoption [*adoptionis beneficio*] alone."<sup>87</sup> Calvin definitely sees adoption as a very significant aspect of salvation, but he also appears to regard it consistently as a wonderful benefit of union with Christ, rather than the essence of the justified life.

Calvin also mentions adoption in reference to prayer. Faith trains us to call upon God's name, that we might request all good things from Him. In

<sup>82</sup>Curiously, Westhead states that Calvin equates justification and reconciliation and concludes that "if Calvin can so mix the soteriological metaphors of justification with regeneration, reconciliation and sanctification, the impression created is that adoption and justification would hardly be separable in his mind" (Westhead, "Adoption in the Thought of John Calvin," 112). Possibly, but the better impression may be that, as Calvin sees justification and sanctification (it is sanctification and regeneration that he seems to equate) as distinct but inseparable, so he views justification and adoption as distinct but inseparable.

<sup>83</sup>Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.13.5. (OS 4 [1931]: 220).

<sup>84</sup>Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.15.6. (OS 4 [1931]: 245).

<sup>85</sup>Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.18.3. (OS 4 [1931]: 270).

<sup>86</sup>Gerrish, *Grace and Gratitude*, 100.

<sup>87</sup>Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.18.3. (OS 4 [1931]: 273).

this way the Spirit of adoption seals the Gospel in our hearts and leads us to cry “Abba, Father.”<sup>88</sup> In his comments on “Our Father” in the Lord’s Prayer, Calvin affirms that, because of our adoption, “God both calls himself our Father and would have us so address him. By the great sweetness of his name he frees us from all distrust, since no greater feeling of love can be found elsewhere than in the Father.”<sup>89</sup> Because the Spirit testifies to our adoption, we can pray boldly [*audacter*], without hesitation or fear.<sup>90</sup> Similar to his comments on Romans 8:15, our adoption as children should encourage us in our prayers and give us confidence and assurance in our salvation.

Calvin also connects adoption to election in a number of places. Griffith observes that Calvin often refers to election as God’s adoption of the believer.<sup>91</sup> God’s favor which has been denied to the reprobate “has been displayed in the adoption of the race of Abraham; yet in the members of Christ, a far more excellent power of grace appears, for, engrafted [*insiti*] to their Head, they are never cut off from salvation.”<sup>92</sup> The call to repentance and faith is issued to all through preaching, but the gift of repentance and faith is only given to the elect. It is the elect alone who are made sons through faith.<sup>93</sup> Griffith remarks that for Calvin “Christ is the focus of election; this protects us from speculation.”<sup>94</sup> He adds that Calvin collapses election and adoption, making them correlative terms. This may be true; however, Calvin employs the concept of union with Christ to bring election into reality and cause adoption to occur: “For since it is into His body the Father has destined those to be engrafted [*inserere*] ... we have a sufficiently clear and firm testimony that we have been inscribed in the book of life ... if we are in communion with Christ [*cum Christo communicamus*].”<sup>95</sup> Calvin again ties adoption to election when he teaches that, though the believer is already adopted by election, he does not come to possess adoption until he is called. When the believer is called, the Spirit gives the guarantee of the believer’s future inheritance and provides assurance of his adoption.<sup>96</sup> Those God has called have been designated His children; further, “by calling he receives them into his family and unites them to him so that they may together be one [*ac seipsum iis coadunare, ut simul unam sint*].”<sup>97</sup> Consistent with his other uses of adoption, Calvin’s language of engrafting and uniting into Christ usually accompany adoption and explain how it is achieved.

<sup>88</sup>Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.20.1.

<sup>89</sup>Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.20.36.

<sup>90</sup>Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.20.37. (OS 4 [1931]: 348).

<sup>91</sup>Griffith, “The First Title of the Spirit,” 138. Griffith references 3.22.1, 2, 7, 10 and 3.24.4, 5.

<sup>92</sup>Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.21.7. (OS 4 [1931]: 377).

<sup>93</sup>Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.22.10.

<sup>94</sup>Griffith, “The First Title of the Spirit,” 139.

<sup>95</sup>Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.24.5. (OS 4 [1931]: 416).

<sup>96</sup>Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.24.1.

<sup>97</sup>Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.24.1. (OS 4 [1931]: 411).

## Conclusion

There is no denying that Calvin sees adoption as very important for understanding salvation and the Christian life. He often refers to the Spirit as the Spirit of adoption who confirms the Gospel and assures us of our salvation. Adoption means freedom from the bondage of the law, living life as children enjoying the Father's gratuitous mercy. Because we are adopted as children through faith in Christ, we can pray boldly. Also, adoption guarantees us an incorruptible inheritance, providing us with hope and prompting us to persevere as we experience the afflictions and tribulations of this world. Thus, adoption is a critical and significant element of our salvation.

The question is whether adoption serves as the controlling image of salvation or as a benefit of our union with Christ through faith. Based on the expositions in his commentaries and his use of the term in the Institutes, it seems best to understand adoption as a benefit of being engrafted into Christ. Even Gerrish, who speaks very highly of adoption in Calvin's theology, must admit, "One cannot say, of course, that gratuitous adoption is Calvin's central dogma, as though everything else in his system were deduced from it."<sup>98</sup> One may say this about union with Christ. Calvin repeatedly treats adoption as a derivative of union. This should not be understood as reducing the significance of adoption in Calvin's soteriology.<sup>99</sup> Union with Christ does not reduce the significance of the benefits—it makes them possible. It must be remembered that, in Calvin's thought, salvation means receiving both Christ and His benefits, both of which can only be obtained through being engrafted into Christ and being made one with Him. Craig Carpenter, though focusing on the particular issue of justification by faith in Calvin, makes a point applicable to the subject of adoption as well: "The critical element of applied soteriology for him is one's becoming engrafted into the resurrected Christ, for to receive Christ by faith is also to receive all his benefits."<sup>100</sup>

<sup>98</sup>Gerrish, *Grace and Gratitude*, 123.

<sup>99</sup>Unfortunately, Canlis seems to see "benefit" as meaning a reduced status. For example, Canlis claims that "Calvin began with union with Christ (*unio cum Christo*), and in doing so displaced righteousness from a primary position to a secondary 'benefit' of a more important communion" (Canlis, "Calvin, Osiander, and Participation in God," 172). This is a curious statement given the fact that Calvin devoted eight chapters to the subject of justification; Calvin hardly displaces righteousness to a secondary status.

<sup>100</sup>Craig B. Carpenter, "A Question of Union with Christ? Calvin and Trent on Justification," *Westminster Journal of Theology* 64 (2002): 384.



## *An Assarion for Your Thoughts: The Challenges of Translating NT Numismatic Terms*

James Robert Wicker  
Professor of New Testament  
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

The penny is unique in US coinage. It is rich in lore (“a penny for your thoughts,” pennies from heaven, and penny loafers, to name a few) but has so little value that the US mint may soon stop making it. However, sometimes a penny is deceiving. In modern Bible translations, a “penny” or “cent” is actually *not* a penny. It is an assarion (also known as an as), lepton, or kodrantēs<sup>1</sup>—none of which are worth a penny today. Welcome to the confusing conundrum of translating numismatic terms in the New Testament, in which Bible translations are anything but clear and consistent.

For instance, what did the widow put in the temple treasury on Tuesday of the Passion Week (Mark 12:42; Luke 21:2)? Were λεπτὰ δύο actually “two pennies” (NLiv<sup>2</sup>), “two mites” (KJV), “two small copper coins” (ESV), “two very small copper coins” (NIV84), “two little copper coins” (GNT), “two tiny coins” (CSB), “two small coins” (GW), “two copper coins” (RSV), or “two coins” (CEV)? One might argue that most of these terms are similar, but what of the worth of the two coins? Here it is even more confusing. Did

<sup>1</sup>This paper will not italicize transliterated coin names but will italicize transliterated Greek text.

<sup>2</sup>The following abbreviations appear in this article: CEV: Contemporary English Version (New York: American Bible Society, 1995), ESV: English Standard Version (Wheaton: Crossway, 2001), GNB: Good News Bible: Today’s English Version, 2nd ed. (New York: American Bible Society, 1992), GW: GOD’S WORD Translation, Logos ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), CSB: Christian Standard Bible (Nashville: Holman Bible, 2017), KJV: King James Version (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, n.d.), LEB: Lexham English Bible, 4th ed., Logos ed. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2013), NET: NET Bible, 1st ed., Logos ed. (Biblical Studies, 2005), NASB95: New American Standard Bible (La Habra, CA: Lochman Foundation, 1995), NCV: New Century Version, Logos ed. (Thomas Nelson, 2005), NEB: New English Bible with the Apocrypha (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), NIV84: New International Version (Colorado Springs, CO: International Bible Society, 1984), NJB: New Jerusalem Bible (NY: Doubleday, 1973); NKJV: New King James Version (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), NLiv: New Living Translation, ref. ed. (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1996), NRSV: New Revised Standard Version, Logos ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1989), RSV: Revised Standard Version, Logos ed. (n.p., 1901), TNIV: Today’s New International Version, Logos ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), TNT: Tyndale New Testament (1534), BibleWorks 9 ed.; Voice, The Voice Bible (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2012), YLT: Young’s Literal Translation, Logos ed. (1898).

their total (κοδράντης) amount to more than a penny, such as “a few pennies” (CEV)? Or, was the value a “penny” (ESV)? Maybe they were worth “a fraction of a penny” (NIV84) or a “farthing” (KJV)?<sup>3</sup> The CSB opts for the worth as “very little.” “Very little” also aptly describes how much agreement modern Bible translations have in handling New Testament numismatic terms.

One might argue that a penny-or-two variation in translation makes little difference in correctly comprehending the previous verses, but the problem becomes more pronounced when a large sum is in question. For instance, what did the steward owe the king in the parable of the unforgiving steward in Matthew 18:23–35? Should one translate μισθίων τολάντων in v. 24 as “ten thousand talents” with no marginal note (NKJV)?<sup>4</sup> This is confusing because the modern reader has no clue about the monetary value of a talent. Should one translate it as “ten thousand talents” with a marginal note estimating the value (ESV)?<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, the marginal notes vary greatly in describing a talent, such as “more than fifteen years’ wages” (NASB95), “about twenty years’ wages” (ESV), “6,000 denarii, or twenty years’ wages for a laborer” (CSB), or “750 ounces of silver, which after five shillings the ounce is 187?” (KJV). Their calculated totals vary even more: “millions of dollars” (NIV84), “about \$10,000,000 in silver content but worth much more in buying power” (NASB77), or “\$60,000,000” (NJB). Some translations give the monetary value in translation with no marginal note: “fifty million silver coins” (CEV), “millions of dollars” (GW), or “millions of pounds” (GNT). Other translations state the value as “ten thousand bags of gold” (TNIV), “millions of dollars” (NLiv), or “millions” (NEB) and then give a marginal note that says it literally is “10,000 talents.”<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Here is a fuller list for λεπτὰ δύο: “two pennies” (NLiv), “two mites” (KJV, NKJV, YLT, TNT: “two mytes”), “two small copper coins” (ESV, NASB95, NCV, NET, NRSV, LEB), “two very small copper coins” (NIV84, TNIV), “two little copper coins” (GNT), “two tiny coins” (CSB, NEB), “two small coins” (GW, NJB, Vce), “two copper coins” (RSV), or “two coins” (CEV). For κοδράντης: “a few pennies” (CEV), “a few cents,” (NCV), “penny” (ESV, NET, LEB, NRSV, RSV), “cent” (NASB77/95), “about a penny” (GNT, NJB), “less than a penny” (NET), “less than a cent” (GW), “a fraction of a penny” (NIV84, TNIV), “a fraction of a cent” (Vce), or a “farthing” (KJV, NEB, YLT, TNT: “farthyngē”)? Only the NKJV uses the transliteration of the Latin term for the worth: a quadrans.

<sup>4</sup>Although talent was a weight and not a coin term, it did have monetary value. BDAG notes the value of this “unit of coinage” varied greatly in different places and times. It also varied as to the type of metal used: copper, silver, or gold. BDAG, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), s.v.: τάλαντον. See also LEB, RSV.

<sup>5</sup>See also CSB, KVJ, NASB95, NET, NIV84, and NRSV.

<sup>6</sup>Here are two more examples. First, great variety occurs in translating the debt that the servant in a parable owed the ungrateful steward (Matt 18:28): ἐκατὸν δηνάρια. It is translated as “one hundred denarii” (ESV, CSB, NASB95, NIV84, NKJV, NRSV, RSV), “an hundred denaries” (YLT), “one hundred silver coins” (CEV, NET, TNIV), “an hundred pence” (KJV), “a few thousand dollars” (NLiv), “hundreds of dollars” (GW), “a few pounds” (GNT, NEB), or “a few dollars” (NCV). There is a vast difference between “one hundred denarii” (wages for 100 days’ work for a common laborer) and “a few dollars” (which is about thirty minutes’ worth of flipping hamburger patties at a local McDonald’s restaurant today). Second,

The Bible is the Word of God, and every word is “God breathed” (2 Tim 3:16). Thus, one must take the utmost care when translating a biblical numismatic term so as to correctly communicate its historical context (an ancient coin), accuracy (the specific coin it was), and monetary worth in order to properly understand the meaning and message of the text. A proper translation of numismatic terms in the NT is important because comprehending the currency’s monetary value in context helps one to understand the parable or event in which it appears. This paper will demonstrate the best methodology for translating NT numismatic terms by examining twenty-one major English NT translations and critiquing their methodologies.<sup>7</sup> Four sections comprise the paper: (1) an introduction to the coins of Palestine in Jesus’ day, (2) a comparison of the translations of NT numismatic terms, (3) a brief description of the vast difference in monetary buying power between first-century AD Palestine and twenty-first-century AD United States, and (4) an evaluation of translation methodologies.

### A Short Primer on First-Century Biblical Coins in Palestine

Through most of the Old Testament era, the economic system depended on bartering and using weighted metals. Coins were first struck in the mid-seventh century BC in Lydia.<sup>8</sup> Thus, “shekel” in most OT references meant a specific weight rather than a coin.<sup>9</sup> However, by the first century AD, coins were well in circulation across the Roman Empire and used alongside the systems of bartering and the use of weighted measures. Thus, the first-century Palestinian Jew dealt with Jewish, Roman, and Greek coins. Only Roman imperial mints made the gold coins (*aurei*), used in large commercial and military transactions.<sup>10</sup> These coins were rare in first-century Palestine. Imperial mints also made the silver denarius, which was the standard daily wage for a common worker. In the eastern part of the Roman Empire it was also known by its Greek equivalent, the drachma. Four drachmae equaled one stater (the Greek term in Matt 17:27) as well as one shekel. The annual temple tax each Jewish male paid was one-half shekel, which equaled a didrachm. These coins were more common in first-century Palestine, but

translations do not even agree on how to translate the Greek word for “coin”! The English word “numismatics” derives from the term *vόμιστα*. This word appears in the NT only in Matt 22:19. However, it is translated “coin” (ESV, CSB, GNT, GWT, NASB95, NCV, NET, NIV84, NRSV, TNIV), “tribute-coin” (YLT), “tribute money” (KJV), “money” (NEB, RSV), “tax money” (NKJV), “one of the coins” (CEV), and “the Roman coin” (NLiv).

<sup>7</sup>As noted in footnote 2, all of the twenty-one translations are modern translations except for the TNT (16th century), KJV (17th century), and YLT (1898)—all three used for comparative purposes.

<sup>8</sup>Oded Borowski, “From Shekels to Talents: Money in the Ancient World,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* (Sept./Oct. 1993): 69.

<sup>9</sup>David Hendin, *Guide to Biblical Coins*, 5th ed. (New York: Amphora: 2010), 471. Hendin notes that post-captivity references such as Neh 5:15, 10:32 may refer to the *shekel* coin since it would have been in circulation by then.

<sup>10</sup>Hendin, *Guide to Biblical Coins*, 472.

bronze coins were by far the most common coins in use at the time—needed for purchasing food and various daily items.

These coin terms appear in the NT: ἀσσάριον, δηνάριον, δίδραχμα, δραχμή, κοδράντης, λεπτός, μνᾶ, and στατήρ. There is also a coin sum, τάλαντον, the general term ἀργύριον (silver), and the word for coin: νόμισμα. One can see in the chart below that these are a mixture of Roman and Greek coin terms.

The main coin smaller than a denarius was the as (or, assarion), and sixteen asses equaled a denarius. Half an as was a semi, and half a semi was a quadrans (Greek kodrantēs). Romans typically quoted everyday prices in dupondii and sestertii.<sup>11</sup> However, in Jesus' day the Jewish and Greek currency and terms were usually used in Palestine. The smallest coin was the lepton, and it was worth 1/128 of a denarius.

Interestingly, the mite—the most well-known NT numismatic translation (Mark 12:42a and Luke 12:59 in KJV, NKJV, YLT)—is *neither* the name of a first-century AD coin nor a coin in use in seventeenth-century England. Although the KJV normally used the names of current coins to translate the names of biblical coins, the translators either borrowed “mite” from mathematics or from the Tyndale translation, which likely used the name for a specific Flemish coin named mite. There were twenty-four mites to the Flemish penning.<sup>12</sup> The term is confusing today because the only mite people are familiar with is the dust mite—a critter, not a coin.

The following chart gives the coin values in relation to one another:

Roman		Greek		Jewish <sup>13</sup>
quadrans (bronze)		2 lepta (Mark 12:42)		
2 quadrantes	1 semi (bronze/copper)			
2 semis	1 as (assarion) (red bronze) (Matt 10:29; Luke 12:6)			
2 asses	1 dupondius (yellow bronze)			
4 asses	1 sestertius (bronze)			

<sup>13</sup>This chart is adapted from Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 93, as well as Lawrence E. McKinney, “Coins and the New Testament: From Ancient Palestine to the Modern Pulpit,” *Review and Expositor* 106 (Summer 2009): 474.

16 asses	1 denarius (silver) (Matt 20:2; 22:19; Rev 6:6)	1 drachma (silver) (Luke 15:8)	6 obols	
		2 drachmae (didrachm) (Matt 17:24a)		½ shekel (silver)
		4 drachmae (tetradrachm)	1 stater (Matt 17:24– 27; 26:15; Ex 30:13)	1 shekel (silver)
1 aureus (gold)	25 denarii			
		100 drachmae	1 mina (Luke 19:13)	
240 aurei (gold)	1 talent (Matt 25:14ff; 18:23–35)	6,000 drachmae		

### Comparison of Translating NT Numismatic Terms

Scripture translations use one of three primary translation methodologies. First, Formal Equivalence (hereafter, FE) is also called Essentially Literal<sup>14</sup> or “word for word” translation. In this method the translator, as much as possible, brings each word in the original language into a corresponding word in the receptor language. This process can lead to a stilted or wooden translation; however, it best preserves the original language structure, and it conveys the greatest amount of the original grammatical and syntactical meaning of each word. The ESV, KJV, NASB, NKJV, RSV, and YLT are examples of the FE approach.

Second, for some fifty years Eugene Nida championed the Functional Equivalence method (also called Dynamic Equivalence [DE]<sup>15</sup> or “thought for thought” translation), but the latter description is sometimes a misnomer. This translator examines the original grammatical and syntactical meaning of each word, clause, sentence, and paragraph. Then he decides how best to communicate that meaning into the receptor language. Thus, the word structure may be different in the receptor language, but the goal is accuracy in meaning. This method results in a more readable and less stilted text than

<sup>14</sup>See, Wayne Grudem, Leland Ryken, et al., *Translating Truth: The Case for Essentially Literal Bible Translation* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2005).

<sup>15</sup>This paper will use DE for Functional Equivalence for two reasons: (1) it makes it easier to distinguish from the abbreviation for Formal Equivalence (FE), and (2) Dynamic Equivalence was the original term for this method.

the FE method. The CEV, GNB, GW, NCV, NLiv, and NRSV follow the DE approach.<sup>16</sup> Yet, does it sacrifice accuracy for readability?

Some recent translations purposefully take a third, mediating or hybrid, approach (Mediating Equivalence, ME) in various guises.<sup>17</sup> The Christian Standard Bible (CSB) calls their hybrid approach the Optimal Equivalence method, noting that it is difficult to retain a pure FE or DE approach to translation. So, it starts with the FE approach but resorts to the DE method when necessary.<sup>18</sup> Somewhat similarly, the Voice translation names their hybrid approach Contextual Equivalence. Their translators attempt to preserve both the literary and linguistic features of the original text. By focusing on the contexts of the original language as well as the contemporary audience, they go back and forth between whatever works best in each situation: word for word or thought for thought.<sup>19</sup> The NIV84 and TNIV also use a hybrid approach.

Six possible methods can render a NT numismatic term: four types of translations, a transliteration (bringing the ancient term, letter by letter, into the receptor language), or a combination of methods. The κοδράντης (Mark 12:42b) in the widow's mite event (what her two lepta were worth) will provide most of the examples here. There are two types of formal translations: (1) translate it into the closest modern equivalent coin in the receptor language culture, such as "worth a penny" (an exact modern coin equivalent) (NRSV), or (2) translate it into an ancient language equivalent that may be known to modern readers, such as "shekel" for stater in Matthew 17:27 (ESV).<sup>20</sup> The next two methods are dynamic translations of Mark 12:42b: (3) translate it into a modern monetary value, such as "worth a few cents" (NCV) or "worth only a fraction of a penny" (NIV84, TNIV), or (4) translate it into a generic monetary equivalent, such as "worth very little" (CSB). The final two options are: (5) transliteration, such as "quadrans" (NKJV) in Mark 12:42b, or (6) a combination of the previous methods within the text itself, such as "the regular wage, a silver coin a day" for δηναρίου in Matthew 20:2.

Twenty-one translations in this study were compared as to how they render twenty-one numismatic terms.<sup>21</sup> How do the twenty-one translations

<sup>16</sup>See the charts in Wayne Grudem, "Are Only *Some* Words of Scripture Breathed Out by God?" in Grudem, *Translating*, 22, and Andreas J. Köstenberger and David A. Croteau, "A Short History of Bible Translation" in *Which Bible Translation Should I Use? A Comparison of 4 Major Recent Versions* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2012), 21. Note: each translation mentioned above falls into a gradient spectrum within its category.

<sup>17</sup>This paper will use "ME" (Mediating Equivalence) for this hybrid method.

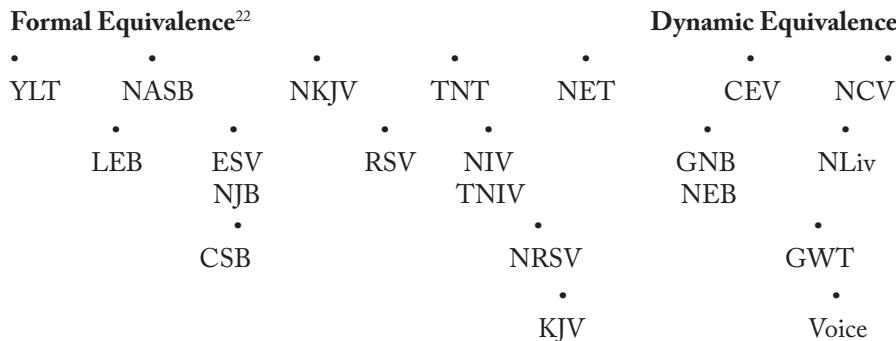
<sup>18</sup>Christian Standard Bible, viii.

<sup>19</sup>The Voice New Testament, xii–xiv.

<sup>20</sup>See also NASB95, NJB, and RSV.

<sup>21</sup>When the same term is used more than one time in a pericope, only the first use is cited (the underlined verse): denarius (Matt 20:2, 9, 10, 13), talent (Matt 25:15, 16, 20, 22, 24, 25, 28), mina (Luke 19:13, 16, 18, 20, 24, 25), and drachma (Luke 15:8, 9). Since John 6:7 and Mark 6:37 are parallel, the latter passage is not considered. Mark 12:42a and Luke 21:2 are parallel, but both are examined since the CEV renders them differently. Although talent

compare with one another? The following graph illustrates where each stand in translating NT numismatic terms:



Interestingly, no modern translation reflects a consistent approach in how they translate NT numismatic terms.<sup>23</sup> Although the way each version renders coin terms is generally consistent with its stated translation methodology (such as the YLT remaining an FE translation and the NCV being a DE translation), none are totally consistent. Confusingly, they all take a varied approach in translating coin terms, as the chart above illustrates. For instance, the YLT has the most transliterations (15) in this study, but it also has 6 modern coin terms. On the other end of the spectrum, the NCV has the most Dynamic general values (10), but it also has 2 modern coin terms, 2 types of coins, and 2 generic coin terms.<sup>24</sup>

An additional factor is worth noting. The use or lack of marginal notes greatly impacts how well the reader understands an ancient numismatic term. YLT has 15 transliterations of numismatic terms in this study, but

is more of a weight than a coin, its worth can be calculated, yet it is not included in the chart above since it is not an actual coin. Conversely, *argurion* does not appear in the chart because it means “silver” or “money” and does not have a value in the context that can be calculated (Matt 25:18, 27; 26:15; 27:3, 5, 6, 9; 28:12, 15; Mark 14:11; Luke 9:3; 19:15, 23; 22:5; Acts 3:6; 7:16; 8:20; 19:19; 20:33; 1 Pet 1:18). Also, *nomisma* does not have a specific value since it means “coin” (Matt 22:19).

<sup>22</sup>The 21 verses compared are: assarion (Matt 10:29; Luke 12:6), kodrantēs (Matt 5:26; Mark 12:42b), didrachma (Matt 17:24a, b), stater (Matt 17:27), lepton (Mark 12:42a; Luke 12:59, 21:2), drachma (Luke 15:8), mna (Luke 19:13), dēnarion (Matt 18:28, 20:2, 22:19; Luke 7:41, 10:35, 20:23; John 6:7, 12:5; Rev 6:6). For example, here are translations of οτατήρωα in Matt 17:27, graded in 6 categories—from the most Formal to the most Dynamic: (1) “stater”(transliteration), (2) “shekel”(ancient coin equivalent), (3) “20 pence”(modern coin equivalent), (4) “silver coin”(type of coin), (5) “coin”(a coin), (6) “piece of money”(generic).

<sup>23</sup>Of course, most translations reflect the work of a committee deciding how to apply their methodology in each instance. Young's is the work of one person.

<sup>24</sup>Here is the breakdown of each translation in the six divisions of footnote #22: CEV (0:0:3:6:5:7), ESV (10:2:5:3:0:1), GNB (0:0:4:10:2:5), GWT (0:0:4:4:5:8), CSB (12:0:4:3:1:1), KJV (0:0:17:1:0:3), LEB (13:1:5:2:0:0), NET (4:1:4:5:3:4), NASB95 (12:1:5:3:0:0), NCV (0:0:2:3:6:10), NEB (0:0:6:8:0:7), NIV84 (7:1:4:4:0:5), NJB (9:3:6:2:0:1), NKJV (10:1:4:3:0:3), NLIV (0:0:4:3:3:11), NRSV (6:0:6:3:1:5), RSV (7:2:5:3:2:2), TNIV (7:1:4:4:0:5), TNT (0:0:19:0:0:2), Voice (2:1:1:4:1:12), YLT (15:0:6:0:0:0).

there are no marginal notes, so the reader does not know the meaning or value of the terms. The TNT and KJV often use outdated coin terms the modern reader will not understand. The NASB95, LEB, CSB, and NKJV have the most transliterated coin terms along with helpful marginal notes for most of the terms.

### Determining Monetary Value

Once one determines how best to translate a NT numismatic term, it is helpful to determine the value in today's currency. The denarius was worth one day's wage for an unskilled laborer. Based on the current minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour in almost half of the states in the US, a day's wage today is \$58, based on an 8-hour day.<sup>25</sup> Thus, an ancient half shekel (the annual temple tax) is worth \$116 today ( $1/2$  shekel = 2 denarii), and an ancient shekel is worth \$232 today (1 shekel = 4 denarii). An assarion would be worth \$3.63 today (16 asses = 1 denarius), and a lepton is worth 45¢ today (128 lepta = 1 denarius). A quadrans is worth twice a lepton: 90¢.

Of course, figuring the current monetary value of ancient coins must be nation and time specific. Although the evaluations and conclusion of this paper can apply to translating NT numismatic terms into any language today, the monetary calculations given above will work only for the US in 2019. When the minimum wage changes in subsequent years, the calculations will be out of date and need to be revised. Even if the minimum wage remains the same next year, the worth of the US dollar is never static due to daily factors such as inflation and its value in relation to other currency. The ancient coin value equivalent in other modern countries will be much different for other countries since the average daily wage today varies greatly from country to country and from year to year. For instance, a lower-middle income country today, such as Egypt and Ukraine, has an average per capita daily wage in 2019 of \$10.46, so the daily wage of a common laborer is even lower. A low-income country, such as Mozambique and Madagascar, has a per capita daily wage in 2019 of \$1.68. Based on these per capita daily wages, an assarion (1/16 of the daily wage) in those two economies is worth 65¢ and 11¢ respectively, and a quadrans (1/64 of a daily wage) is worth 16¢ and 3¢ respectively.<sup>26</sup> A number of translations render assarion and quadrans as "penny" or "cent" but they are worth more than that today in even destitute economies, and they are worth far more than that in the US economy.

Moving to the unit greater than a denarius, based on \$58 for a denarius, a talent (6,000 denarii) is worth \$348,000. A talent equals 6,000 denarii. Another way to calculate a talent is by the number of workdays required to earn it. Based on a lunar calendar of 48 weeks, and counting one day off a

<sup>25</sup>An 8-hour day is the standard for calculating the modern equivalent of a day's wage.

<sup>26</sup>Calculations are based on "Average Income around the World," WorldData, <https://www.worlddata.info/average-income.php>. This writer is unable to find a minimum wage in low-middle-income and low-income countries, thus the calculations are based on the average per capita income.

week, a talent is worth 20.8 years of work. If one has no day off, a talent is worth 17.9 years of work. Obviously, even one talent was beyond viable ownership for the vast majority of people in first-century AD Palestine. Even in twenty-first century US, a monetary unit equivalent to 20.8 years of work is beyond attainable ownership for many people.

### The Gap in Buying Power

However, even when one determines the modern equivalent value of an ancient coin term, another major challenge remains: the 2,000-year-wide cultural gap between first-century Palestine and twenty-first-century US. There is much disparity in buying power due to the two vastly different economies. A proper understanding of this coin chasm will help one's interpretation of NT monetary references.

It is hard to imagine an economy further apart from the first-century Palestinian economy than the twenty-first-century US economy. In the US today, a minimum-wage worker has more buying power than a wealthy person in ancient Palestine could ever imagine.<sup>27</sup> This difference is because a modern person in the US has more variety in goods, better products, more plentiful goods, and less expensive products for purchase. The gap in buying power is due to five benefits of the modern US economy: (1) a competitive free market, (2) a post-Industrial Revolution economy, (3) modern technology, (4) a scalable economy, and (5) abundant wealth—all of which are radically different than the agrarian economy of Jesus' day.<sup>28</sup> A brief examination of each of these benefits will show how far apart these two economies really are.

### Competitive Free Market Economy

The competitive free market economy in the US is better than the agrarian economy in Jesus' day in at least four distinct areas: (1) ownership of property, (2) labor wages, (3) accessible wealth, and (4) a truly free market. Briefly, in first-century Palestine, few people owned land, few people earned wages, there was no middle class and wealth was concentrated in the ruling elite, and the market was highly taxed and limited. All economies prior to the Industrial Revolution were far different from the wealthy economy in the US today.<sup>29</sup> For instance, many people in the US can own private property,

<sup>27</sup>Buying power in this paper refers to one's ability to purchase goods and services that significantly affect one's standard of living, such as health care products and technological goods.

<sup>28</sup>This writer is indebted to Craig V. Mitchell for help in suggesting and clarifying these points and for helpful feedback from Matt Wicker.

<sup>29</sup>Douglas E. Oakman, "The Ancient Economy," in *The Social Sciences and New Testament Interpretation*, ed. Richard L. Rohrbaugh (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 128. The Industrial Revolution was a period of rapid economic change, starting in Britain in the 1760s. New technologies that led to new manufacturing techniques brought about the Industrial Revolution.

earn wages from labor, own and invest wealth, and participate in the free market system, such as the unencumbered buying and selling of property and goods.<sup>30</sup> The states in the USA are the size of many countries, and the benefit of having no tariffs makes goods inexpensive to market in interstate trade.

### **Post-Industrial Revolution Economy**

The ancient world changed little across thousands of years. However, today one experiences change on a regular basis in the US. Moore's Law has been in effect for over fifty years: that computers double in capability every two years while the price remains the same.<sup>31</sup> In contrast, it is hard to fathom how little the world changed prior to the Industrial Revolution. Gregory Clark documents that although the basic worldwide income per person varied somewhat from 1800 BC to AD 1800, which he calls the Malthusian Era<sup>32</sup>, there was no upward swing until the Industrial Revolution. Then income skyrocketed upward. In the wealthiest economies today, wealth is ten to twenty times what it was in 1800.<sup>33</sup> The average North American has more wealth and more disposable income than the average person in Jesus' day ever dreamed of possessing.

### **Modern Technology**

Technology has been advancing at an ever-increasing pace since the Industrial Revolution, and today people expect change as the norm. Breakthroughs occur regularly in health care technology, computers, smart phones, robotics, and a vast array of household and business items. It is hard to imagine how static life was back in Jesus' day. Although there were many advances in technology between the time of Christ and the Industrial Revolution, none of them ultimately affected work output.<sup>34</sup> Since most people in this vast period were farmers, a good measure of the advance of technology is

<sup>30</sup>Certainly, there are poor people in the US today who do not own property, are jobless, and are living hand-to-mouth. However, there are numerous opportunities in this country to get educated and rise out of poverty that did not exist in Jesus' day.

<sup>31</sup>In a 1965 paper, Intel cofounder Gordon Moore predicted that the number of transistors in an integrated circuit would double every two years, and his prediction has proven true through the years with the advent of semiconductors. Gordon E. Moore, "Cramming More Components onto Integrated Circuits," *Electronics* 38 (4–19–1965): 114–17, [http://www.computerhistory.org/semiconductor/assets/media/classic-papers-pdfs/Moore\\_1965\\_Article.pdf](http://www.computerhistory.org/semiconductor/assets/media/classic-papers-pdfs/Moore_1965_Article.pdf).

<sup>32</sup>Gregory Clark, *A Farewell to Alms: A Brief Economic History of the World*. The Princeton Economic History of the Western World (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 2, 48. Clark named this era after the groundbreaking economic insights of Rev. Thomas Robert Malthus (5).

<sup>33</sup>Clark, *Farewell to Alms*, 2. In an interesting contrast, the richest and poorest countries' economies today are further apart than at any time in history: a fifty-to-one gap that Clark calls The Great Divergence (3). However, examining this modern gap is beyond the scope of this paper.

<sup>34</sup>Certainly, some pre-Industrial Revolution inventions did directly affect work, such as the plow. However, the net production of the land per person increased slowly during this time.

how much more output the land produced per capita from one year to the next: and it was small. Prior to the Industrial Revolution technology advanced at the rate of only 0.05% per year. “In the 1,750 years between the birth of Christ and the eve of the Industrial Revolution the technology improved [merely] by a total of 24%.” However, since the Industrial Revolution, successful economies experienced technology improvement of 1% or greater *every year*.<sup>35</sup> The number of patents granted by the U.S. Office of Patents has increased in an ever-increasing upward trend since 1790.<sup>36</sup> It is difficult today to imagine life in Palestine when travel, work, and cooking changed very little across many generations. The bulk of one’s work was spent growing or preparing meals.

### Scalable Economy

Modern technology in free market societies has led businesses in healthy economies into economies of scale for two reasons. First, technology has and continues to increase production efficiency, thus enabling companies to produce more goods and services with fewer workers. For instance, the modern assembly line at Ford dramatically reduced the number of man-hours needed to assemble an automobile engine.<sup>37</sup> Second, technology has and continues to lower the costs of production. When an economy of scale is achieved, a portion of the savings in production costs is passed on to consumers in the form of lower prices. Thus, in the healthy US economy, one has greater buying power due to many plentiful and economical products.<sup>38</sup> One clear example is in the great variety and quantity of food for purchase today versus the limited choices in Jesus’ day. For the last fifty years the Green Revolution in farming has resulted in much higher yields per acre in farming. It involves new industrial technologies, improved fertilizers, and high-yield grains.<sup>39</sup> As a consequence, prices are lower for food due to the economy of scale.

### Abundant Wealth

By many studies, the US is a wealthy nation. The “Better-Life” Index published by the OCED think tank ranks the US near the top of all world countries when taking into account eleven variables, such as income and wealth, jobs and earnings, housing, education.<sup>40</sup> The US has the world’s

<sup>35</sup>Clark, *Farewell to Alms*, 134, 140.

<sup>36</sup>“US Patent Activity: Calendar Years 1790 to Present,” U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, [http://www.uspto.gov/web/offices/ac/ido/oeip/taf/h\\_counts.htm](http://www.uspto.gov/web/offices/ac/ido/oeip/taf/h_counts.htm).

<sup>37</sup>Heilbroner and Thurow, 60–62.

<sup>38</sup>Large box stores also benefit from an economy of scale. Walmart can sell products at an economical price because of their tremendous buying power. They can buy products in bulk at a cheaper price than a small mom-and-pop store can. Jay W. Richards, *Money, Greed, and God: Why Capitalism is the Solution and Not the Problem* (NY: HarperOne, 2009), 169–70.

<sup>39</sup>Richards, *Money, Greed, and God*, 175.

<sup>40</sup>“OECD Better Life Index: United States, <https://bit.ly/KjxdTk>.

largest GDP (gross domestic product).<sup>41</sup> The Human Development Index by the United Nations takes into account “a long and healthy life, knowledge, and a decent standard of living,” and in 2013 the US was in 5<sup>th</sup> place in the world.<sup>42</sup>

Engel’s Law says that the poorer a family is, the higher percentage of their income will be spent on food. This law applies to nations as well. The study has been proven time and again. The average family in a poor society may have to spend up to 80% of its income on food, but the average family in a wealthy country may spend as little as 5–10% of its income on food. However, the problem does not end with cost. In a poor society, hunger is every-present, and families consume the cheapest form of calories available (typically grains, beans, or potatoes) and consume them in the cheapest way possible (such as porridge or bread). Thus, the diet of a poor person is monotonous and not very nutritious.<sup>43</sup> The average person in the USA spends much less money on food, has much more variety in food, and has greater nutritional food than the average person in Jesus’ day.

### **Mind the Gap**

As the five benefits above demonstrate, the buying power of an equivalent sum of money in first-century Palestine and twenty-first-century US is vastly different. The Bible reader must be made aware of and appreciate this huge gap. There are two ways to do so. First, if the translation term is an ancient coin term, then the historical setting is preserved. Second, a marginal note can give a current value calculation as well as an explanation of the buying power gap. For instance, the note could say for a denarius, “Although this amount is worth \$58 in today’s dollars, the buying power of this amount of money is far greater today in a post-Industrial Age country, such as the US, than it was in ancient Palestine.”

So, are the economies of Jesus’ day and today so vastly different that one is unable to discern what Jesus meant in numismatic terms and their monetary value? No. One *can* understand what Jesus meant, but there is a wide interpretive gap involving time, culture, and economy that one must learn to appreciate and cross for a proper understanding. Using modern terms, such as “penny” and “dollar,” does a disservice to the Bible reader because such anachronistic terms make it appear that no interpretive gap exists.

### **Examining the Possible Solutions**

Name accuracy, coin clarity,<sup>44</sup> historical clarity, and monetary worth accuracy are four key criteria that must be met in a translation to avoid

<sup>41</sup>“GDP Ranked by Country, 2019,” World Population Review, <https://bit.ly/2JgbfUP>.

<sup>42</sup>“Human Development Index,” 54, Human Development Report 2018, United Nations Development Programme, <https://bit.ly/2xhtfVF>.

<sup>43</sup>Clark, *Farewell to Alms*, 52.

<sup>44</sup>“Coin clarity” means that a coin name appears in the translation so that the reader can know a coin is in the original context.

confusion. Inaccuracy in any of these issues is problematic, as the following critique demonstrates. In addition to the four key criteria, three other criteria are more debatable but can be negative factors in a translation: coin name familiarity,<sup>45</sup> text amplification, and the need for a marginal note. The following chart compares the six possible translation methods using seven criteria in order to determine the best approach.

	Formal: translitera- tion	Formal: ancient coin name	Formal: modern coin name	Dynamic: a type of coin	Dynamic: a coin	Dynamic: monetary value
Name accuracy	✓	X	X	—	—	—
Coin clarity (it is a coin)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
Historical clarity	✓	✓	X	X	X	X
Monetary worth accuracy	—	—	X	✓ -	—	✓
Coin name familiarity	X	X	✓	—	—	—
No additions to the text	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X
No marginal note needed	X	X	X	X	X	✓

[In this chart, “✓” = advantage, “X” = disadvantage, and — = not applicable.]

## 1. Formal Equivalence: Transliteration

This method uses transliteration. Four advantages come with this technique—more than any of the other five methodologies. First, it is the only method to correctly name the ancient coins. It is a common practice today in translation to retain the name of currency used in the original language, such as the Chinese yuan, Japanese yen, Mexican peso, and US dollar. Thus, transliterating NT coin terms follows this practice. Second, this method indicates the object in the biblical text is a specific coin, which is important for properly understanding the text. Third, this method retains the historical flavor of the text. Fourth, transliterating does not add to the biblical text. The ancient coin with a specific numismatic value had clear meaning in the first century AD and in the biblical text. With a transliteration, the reader understands that a specific foreign coin term was used even if he or she ignores the marginal note.

The chart above has an “X” by “coin name familiarity” and “no marginal note needed.” One could argue this method does a disservice to the reader because the common reader will have no idea as to the meaning or value of this unknown Roman, Greek, or Jewish coin. A marginal note is needed to explain the meaning and value of the term. Yet, it seems more likely that a person will look at a marginal explanation of the meaning of an unknown

<sup>45</sup>“Coin name familiarity” means the reader will likely be familiar with the term, such as “penny.”

coin term than the reverse. In other words, if a coin description is in the text (such as “a copper coin”), one is probably less likely to look up the actual ancient coin term in the marginal note.

The marginal note needs several important pieces of information. It should give the coin’s value related to other coins of the day, its monetary value in ancient and modern time, and a reference to the difference in buying power in ancient and modern time. However, there are three challenges with marginal notes: (1) readers tend to ignore marginal notes, (2) readers may erroneously think marginal notes are part of inspired Scripture, and (3) notes must be regularly updated for accuracy.

One transliteration is problematic and worth noting, but this is an anomaly in this methodology. Readers commonly mistake the “talent” in Matthew 25:14–30 as a special ability like singing. Due to this possible misunderstanding, it might be helpful to accurately transliterate it (“talant” rather than “talent”) and to add a descriptive term, such as “talant of money” (since readers may not catch the spelling difference of talant versus talent).

## **2. Formal Equivalence: Using an Ancient Coin Name**

What about using another ancient coin term that is possibly more well-known than the term in the text? This method avoids the problem of anachronism. Using “shekel” (ESV, NASB95, NJB, RSV) or “four-drachma coin” (LEB, NET, TNIV, NIV84) instead of “stater” in Matthew 17:27 certainly retains the historical flavor. Also, this methodology keeps coin clarity since a specific coin (or coins) was used in the text.

This method has three benefits as the transliteration method but one additional problem. The glaring problem: the terms are wrong. In Matthew 17:27 Jesus said στατῆρα. He did not say “shekel” or “four-drachma coin.” One might argue that it is more likely that Jesus actually said the Hebrew name לְקַשֵּׁה (shekel). Yet, the Greek word for לְקַשֵּׁה is σίκλος, as seen in the LXX translation of 1 Samuel 13:21 and 2 Kings 7:1, 16, 18. One’s translation of the NT should be of the Greek words themselves rather than a guess at the underlying Aramaic or Hebrew actually spoken at that time.

There is a unique challenge with using “shekel.” The value of shekel today is much different from its value in Jesus’ day. Back then a shekel was roughly equivalent to 1 stater, 1 tetradrachm, 4 drachmae, or 4 denarii (four days’ wages for a common day laborer): the equivalent to \$232 in the US today. Yet, modern Israel’s revival of the shekel in 1980 was as a coin of much smaller value: the equivalent of 29¢ in US currency.<sup>46</sup> So, since the modern shekel is a different coin of much less value than the ancient shekel, a marginal note is needed to explain the difference in worth of the two coins.

<sup>46</sup>“The Universal Currency Converter,” <http://www.xe.com/ucc/>. The modern shekel is divided into 100 agorat. Of course, the modern shekel value is a moving target. In the 1970s inflation was climbing up towards 1,000% annually in Israel, but in recent decades it has been kept under control.

### 3. Formal Equivalence: Using a Modern Coin Name

This solution employs the term for a similar coin in the receptor language. It has three advantages: (1) coin clarity, since the reader understands a particular coin was used in the original text, (2) familiarity, since readers will likely be familiar with the modern coin term, and (3) no additions to the biblical text. Yet, familiarity results in the first of four problems with this methodology: it is anachronistic. The uninformed reader may think that Jesus actually used pennies (minus the picture of Abraham Lincoln, of course). Some people may serve the Almighty Dollar, but it is not the currency of the Bible or heaven. A modern equivalent coin term loses the historical setting of Scripture. Eugene Nida made an important observation about the need for preserving the historical nature of Scripture:

It must be recognized also that, while translation is intended to make the original text understandable and in a certain sense indigenous, it is by no means desirable to translate so as to give the reader the impression that the events described happened yesterday or just across the street. The historical nature of the Scriptures, their witness that certain events occurred at particular places and times in the world's life, and under conditions that existed, warrants the retention of such terms as preserve the historical atmosphere. For this reason, transliteration of a term, when it appears necessary, may be an advantage.<sup>47</sup>

Interestingly, Nida did not follow his own advice with numismatic terms, instead suggesting transliteration for only “talent” (sic) and saying “shekel” is a good transliteration of στατήρ and ἀργυροῦ, which it is not.<sup>48</sup>

The second and third problems are related: both the coin names and the monetary values are inaccurate. For instance, an assarion was worth 1/16 of a denarius, and a denarius was a full day’s wage for a common laborer. Yet, fourteen of the Bibles in this study use “penny” (CEV, ESV, GNT, GWT, CSB, LEB, NCV, NEB, NET, NIV84, NRSV, RSV, TNIV) or “cent” (NASB) in Matthew 10:29. Translators Newman and Stine advocate using the smallest coin in circulation, such as “penny” or simply using the dynamic translation “a small coin.”<sup>49</sup> Nida advocated using “penny.”<sup>50</sup> Yet, an assarion was not a cent, nor was it the smallest value coin in circulation. The lepton was considerably smaller (worth 1/8 of an assarion).

<sup>47</sup>Eugene A. Nida, *Bible Translating* (New York: American Bible Society, 1947), 314.

<sup>48</sup>Nida, *Bible Translating*, 328–30.

<sup>49</sup>M. Newman, and P.C. Stine, *A Handbook on the Gospel of Matthew*, Logos Edition (New York: United Bible Societies, 1992), 307.

<sup>50</sup>Nida compiled a helpful—but now dated—table of translation and marginal note suggestions for coins, weights, and measures. Nida, *Bible Translating*, 328–30.

Four translations use “farthing” (KJV, NEB, TNT, YLT) to translate *kodrantēs* in Matthew 5:26.<sup>51</sup> They illustrate a problem with this methodology if the translation is not continually updated. The TNT and KJV use seventeenth-century equivalent coins, most of which were current in their day but are obsolete terms today. Today these translations simply substitute one unknown term with another one. Who knows what is a farthing is today? A marginal explanatory note is imperative for these translations. So, why use seventeenth-century terms at all? It is a confusing and unnecessary step.

Interestingly, Matthew and Luke record Jesus addressing the subject of settling with one’s opponent to avoid debtor’s prison on different occasions. Matthew 5:25–26 is in the Sermon on the Mount, and Luke 12:58–59 is during the journey to Jerusalem. In Matthew 5:26 Jesus said the person will not be released until he paid the last *kodrantēs*; whereas, Luke 12:59 has *lepton*. If these two different terms are translated as “penny” or “cent” as do the majority of translations consulted in this study, the reader will not know that two different terms are used, one of which (*kodrantēs*) is worth twice as much as the other (*lepton*). Normally when Jesus repeated a lesson He used some differences in wording. One could argue that both translations are fine since the point of Jesus’ illustration was the entire debt or payment must be made, but these two numismatic terms refer to two different coins, so accuracy is sacrificed by using “penny” or “cent.”

The fourth problem with this methodology is the need for a marginal note to give the actual historical name of the coin (the transliteration) for the sake of accuracy. However, since the reader is already familiar with the modern coin name used in the translation of the biblical text, there is little incentive to look at the marginal note. Thus, this translation methodology sacrifices accuracy and historical context for familiarity, which does a disservice to the reader.

#### **4–5. Dynamic Equivalence: Using a Type of Coin or Simply: “Coin”**

The next two methodologies have the following two disadvantages in common. First, they lose all sense of historical clarity because they are so generic in coin terms. Second, a marginal note is needed for the reader to have an idea as to the name and value of the coin.

They differ in two categories. First, using a type of coin does give some monetary worth accuracy. For instance “silver coins” for *δραχμάς* in Luke 15:8 (NASB) or “two little copper coins” for *λεπτὰ δύο* in Mark 12:42 (GNT) both convey some sense of worth; thus, the fourth methodology gets a ✓ - in this category. In contrast, just using “coins” in the fifth method (GWT for *δραχμάς* in Luke 15:8), gives no sense of their value. The fifth method has the advantage over the fourth method in that it gives no additions to the

<sup>51</sup>Nida suggested using “farthing,” since that coin was in use when he compiled the chart. It was worth  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a penny in British currency; however, after 1961 it was no longer legal tender. Nida, *Bible Translating*, 329.

biblical text. However, both of these Dynamic Equivalent methods have no benefits that outweigh their drawbacks.

## 6. Dynamic Equivalence: Using the Monetary Value

It is tempting to translate the ancient coin into a modern monetary equivalent. Having no need for a marginal note is good, but this method has four problems. First, it ignores the name of the coin(s) in the text. Second, it has no coin clarity. The reader has no idea that a coin was used in the text—missing an exact picture of what really happened. A denarius was a specific and well-known coin in Jesus' day. For instance, in Matthew 18:28 ἔκατὸν δηνάρια is rendered “a few thousand dollars” (NLiv), “hundreds of dollars” (GWT), “a few pounds” (GNT, NEB), and “a few dollars” (NCV). The marginal note of the NIV has “that is, a few dollars.” Craig Blomberg notes “‘a few dollars’ is misleadingly small.”<sup>52</sup> Third, this methodology is anachronistic since it gives the monetary translation in modern US currency. The historical setting is lost. Fourth, none of the value calculations using this methodology in this study are accurate. The amounts vary greatly, and even if their values were correct for their year of publication (but they are not), the following year the values would be wrong due to the daily fluctuating value of the dollar (as noted above). So, using a current monetary amount in the biblical text is meddling with the timelessness of Scripture. Each numismatic term had a fixed monetary value in the first century AD, and in ancient times values changed very slowly through the years. In contrast, the monetary value of coins and currency in the last few hundred years has changed dramatically.

Would it help to state a generic monetary value instead of a specific amount? Thus, δηναρίου in Matthew 20:2 (the eleventh-hour worker parable) can be translated as “the usual daily wage” (NEB, GWT) or by a similar phrase (CEV, NET, NLiv, NRSV, Voice). The reader must then estimate the exact amount. Although there is no need to constantly update a generic amount, the other problems with this method remain the same. There is no coin clarity, no historical clarity, and it adds to the biblical text, regardless of whether the amount is specific or generic in the translation. For instance, the reader has no idea that a specific coin appears in the text of Matthew 20:2 when the translation simply says “the usual daily wage.” There is textual confusion for the reader, who may think Jesus actually said this generic value or term, but he did not. Rather, Jesus was numismatically specific. One ought to know that the text mentions a specific coin (or coins) rather than just a value. So, this method lacks specificity. Additionally, although not imperative for understanding the value, this methodology ought to have a marginal note to give the coin term used in the text as well as a notation of the difference in buying power today versus in the first century AD.

<sup>52</sup>Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, vol. 22 of The New American Commentary (Nashville: B&H, 1992), 283.

## 7. A Combination Methodology

Rarely, a translation will combine two of the above methods. For instance, the GNT renders δηναρίου in Matthew 20:2 as “the regular wage, a silver coin a day.” It gains benefits and loses some problems by wedging methodologies. For instance, this example overcomes the problem of coin clarity. However, this practice is an amplification of the text rather than a straight translation, and this is its main problem. It harms the original flow of the text. Jesus said to Peter (Matt 17:27), “You will find a stator” rather than, “You will find a stator that is roughly the equivalent of a shekel with a value differential of plus or minus 5%.” Since this translation clearly contains words not in the original text, how does the reader know what is original and what was added? A marginal note is not needed because the note was added to amplify the biblical text. Italics or brackets could be used for added words, but the example cited above does not use them. Thus, it seems best to leave any textual amplification to a Bible specifically dedicated to this task.<sup>53</sup>

## Conclusion

Numismatic terms in the New Testament are a unique challenge in Bible translation. How does the English translator communicate that a specific coin was used, give a comparable monetary worth today, and retain historical clarity—so the modern reader knows the event happened in a culture 2,000 years ago, possibly thousands of miles away? Most modern Bible translations today are inconsistent in their approach and insufficient in their NT numismatic translations. Methodologically-consistent and accurate translations are needed. The above evaluation demonstrates that the transliteration of NT numismatic terms along with an explanatory marginal note has the most benefits, and its two problems are alleviated by providing good marginal notes. It appears to be the best method for preserving the name accuracy, coin clarity, historical clarity, and no textual additions in order to properly understand the meaning and message of the text.

The marginal note is crucial for the reader’s understanding. However, the challenge is to entice the reader to read the marginal note, and this is a problem not easily resolved. Using a transliteration, thus giving an ancient coin term unfamiliar to most readers, is more likely to result in the reader consulting the marginal note than would occur if a familiar (but misleading) modern coin term or description is used.

The problem of translating NT numismatic terms will not be resolved anytime soon. As translations proliferate and translation committees continue to work in isolation from each other, the problem will continue. Translating biblical weights and measures is a similar problematic area whose solution is likely the same as the one proposed to best translate numismatic

<sup>53</sup>See, The Amplified New Testament (La Habra, CA: Lockman, 1958).

terms. Hopefully this paper will inspire dialogue and continued research in these needed areas.



## Book Reviews

*Exegetical Gems from Biblical Hebrew: A Refreshing Guide to Grammar and Interpretation.* By H.H. Hardy II. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019. 196 pages. Paperback, \$19.99.

H.H. “Chip” Hardy is Associate Professor of Old Testament and Semitic Languages at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, where he has served for 5 years. He has published several articles and has a forthcoming book: *Grammaticalization of Biblical Hebrew Prepositions*. The present work, *Exegetical Gems from Biblical Hebrew: A Refreshing Guide to Grammar and Interpretation*, is meant to help the reader by illustrating abstract concepts with specific examples from the biblical text. The book is aimed at college and seminary students, former Hebrew students, and Hebrew instructors.

Each chapter follows a pattern of four steps. First, each chapter begins with an introduction that contains a Hebrew text (such as Jeremiah 27:10). He then presents a description of the interpretive issue, such as an infinitive construct phrase, specifically לְמַעַן הָרְחִיק (conjunctive adverb + Hifil infinitive construct). Second, Hardy gives an overview of the abstract concept, with examples from other biblical texts. In this example he illustrates several uses: nominal (Num 14:3), purpose or result (Jer 27:6), temporal uses (here he gives several examples including Jer 27:20), explanatory uses (Gen 3:22), and illustrates how infinitive constructs may be negated with the particle לֹבֶל. Third, Hardy describes how the interpretive issue in the main passage should be understood in light of his overview. In this case, Hardy opts for understanding the words לְמַעַן הָרְחִיק found within Jeremiah 27:10 as a result use. Hardy’s point is that understanding this infinitive construct to be describing a result means that Jeremiah is telling the people not to listen to other prophets because those other prophets are trying to cause harm. Fourth, each chapter concludes with a section titled “Further Reading.” In this case, Hardy suggests one article written by Douglas Gropp which deals with the infinitive construct.

The book begins with an examination of Hebrew language and literature. Then, Hardy moves to a discussion of textual criticism from Genesis 22:13, and then to word studies. After those abstract principles, he moves on to construct phrases, then definiteness, adjectives and pronouns. The next major section consists of chapters 9–20 and deals with verbs. The chapters dealing with verbs make copious use of charts to illustrate the verbal forms and their possible interpretations. When describing the syntax of verbs, Hardy’s list of resources for further reading increases in number as compared to earlier chapters. Next, he moves to a discussion of negations and prepositions, as well as a directive נ in chapters 21–24. Then Hardy discusses verbless clauses, interrogatives, and particles. This set of chapters feels out of place when compared to Waltke and O’Connor’s *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, which places these matters before their discussion of verbs. Finally, Hardy closes with three chapters that deal with clause level syntax.

Hardy’s work accomplishes its purpose. First, he does a thorough job of illustrating grammatical and syntactical issues with texts from the Hebrew Bible. For example, in chapter 14 dealing with participles, Hardy gives multiple illustrations

(from Biblical Hebrew texts) of attributive, substantive and predicate participles before landing on a particular interpretation for his example in Jeremiah 20:9. Second, the scripture index at the back of the book will be useful for students who wish to quickly find sections dealing with a particular scripture. Third, some of the sections for further reading could work as a beginning bibliography for researching a topic. For instance, Hardy suggests 11 different resources for further reading in his discussion of verbal stems. Fourth, the greatest strength of this work may be that each chapter feels like a contained unit. It seems designed so that a reader could go through one chapter at a sitting, perhaps daily, for successive weeks (so as not to be overwhelmed). Pastors and teachers with only a few minutes of free time can still utilize this book.

Even so, weaknesses do exist in this work. First, its order of presentation would benefit if it followed the order of a standard Hebrew grammar textbook. In this way, the work would be more useful as an auxiliary textbook, and more helpful for students who are seeking further illustration of a concept. Second, many of the resources cited for further reading are more than 20 years old. Third, the chapters feel uneven. It may be understandable that more space is given to illustrating concepts dealing with verbs, but each individual chapter dealing with verbs is more detailed than chapters which deal with other ideas.

Because of the strengths mentioned above, I recommend this book. It is well suited for students who have finished Hebrew 1 and 2 and will have a summer break before Hebrew 3 and 4. The book is also well suited for students who are returning to the study of Biblical Hebrew after some period of time. Hebrew instructors would benefit from this book by way of utilizing the examples from the book in their classroom.

Justin Allison  
Weatherford, Texas

*War in Chronicles: Temple Faithfulness and Israel's Place in the Land.* By Troy Cudworth. London: Bloomsbury, 2016. xi + 209 pages. Hardcover, \$120.00; Softcover, \$39.95.

The book of Chronicles consists of retelling parts of Israel's history, especially those events recorded in Samuel-Kings. As Chronicles retells this history, it emphasizes certain themes. One of these themes is the principle of immediate retribution: God punishes a person's or group's disobedience but rewards a person's or group's obedience. In this volume of the Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies, Troy Cudworth addresses an aspect of retribution in the book of Chronicles. He explores how war narratives relate to the principle of retribution in Chronicles. As part of his answer to this question, he looks to the significant role that the Jerusalem temple and its ritual worship play. As he examines the war narratives in Chronicles, he argues that a king's faithfulness to worship Yahweh at the Jerusalem temple secures stability and peace for Israel while a king's unfaithfulness brings about chaos and disaster for Israel.

Cudworth organizes his volume around the accounts of Judah's kings. He points out the significant role that Israel's cultic worship plays in each king's reign and how such worship results in stability and security for Israel. He begins with David. He argues that David's reign sets the pattern for other kings. At the beginning of David's reign, he immediately tries to gather all Israel together in Jerusalem to worship Yahweh. Cudworth argues that this desire accounts for David's military

successes (1 Chronicles 14) even after David attempts to transfer the Ark using improper methods (1 Chronicles 13). Once David has successfully deposited the Ark of the Covenant in Jerusalem, he then looks forward to building the temple, gathering and organizing resources for its construction. Only when David attempts to provide Israel with security militarily (1 Chronicles 21) does the land suffer from disaster. These concerns that Cudworth identifies in David's reign become a pattern that he applies to other kings as well.

He examines the other kings in Chronicles in the following chapters: "Faithful Kings" (e.g. Solomon, Abijah, Hezekiah), "Unfaithful Kings" (e.g. Saul, Ahaz, Zedekiah), "Faithful Kings Who Falter" (e.g. Asa, Amaziah, Uzziah, Josiah), and "Unfaithful Kings Who Repent" (i.e. Rehoboam, Manasseh). As he examines these various kings, he attempts to show that concern for worshiping Yahweh properly at the temple provides peace and stability for all Israel. Any other attempt to secure peace and stability for all Israel fails, whether the attempt involves worshiping other gods (e.g. Amaziah, Ahaz), creating alliances with other nations (e.g. Asa, Jehoshaphat), or bolstering Judah's military strength (Asa, Amaziah, Uzziah). As he looks at these kings, he attempts to show how Chronicles consistently presents the principle of retribution in relation to the themes of war and temple faithfulness.

This volume provides a consistent analysis of three themes significant for understanding the message of Chronicles: retribution, war, and temple. Cudworth provides innovative readings for several passages in Chronicles where interpreters have noticed tensions in the presentation. For instance, he provides a reason for David's victories in 1 Chronicles 14 even though David has failed to transfer the Ark according to the regulations of Mosaic Law. He argues that Yahweh rewards David's desire to unite all Israel in worship at Jerusalem. Conformity to Mosaic Law is a secondary issue; therefore, Yahweh still rewarded David even though his attempt failed.

At the same time, Cudworth's attempt to present the retribution principle consistently leads to some areas where he seems to press the evidence into greater uniformity than is warranted. For instance, Chronicles records two periods of religious reforms during the reign of Asa (2 Chronicles 14–16). Cudworth relativizes Asa's first reform because the second set of reforms are more extensive and involve gathering all the people to the temple. Furthermore, following the first reform Asa also builds a large army and fortifies several cities. As a result, Cudworth argues that the first reform is inadequate because Asa's heart is in the wrong place: Asa first neglected the more extensive reforms "so that he [Asa] could build fortresses and amass a large army" (121). Such a reading expects that each reform corresponds to the pattern he has developed elsewhere; however, it is more likely that Chronicles presents a history with more nuance and complexity.

At a thematic level, this volume is a valuable resource for understanding the message of Chronicles as a whole. At an exegetical level, the volume opens new lines for interpreting several passages that have created tensions for interpreters in the past. Therefore, this volume offers something for readers looking to get a sense of the whole book of Chronicles and those wrestling with specific passages. The volume is a good source for anyone wrestling with the meaning and theology of Chronicles.

Joshua E. Williams  
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

*Archaeology and the Letters of Paul.* By Laura Salah Nasrallah. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019. xviii + 310 pages. Cloth, \$99.00.

New Testament archaeology has primarily been focused on the world of Jesus, so it is refreshing to have a study dealing with the Pauline corpus. Lacking an ability to answer most New Testament critical questions (i.e. questions of source criticism or authorship), NT archaeology historically became geared to locating sites mentioned in the text. Over time, material evidence related to the New Testament accumulated, primarily consisting of relevant inscriptions and what could be labeled as narrative backdrops of physical space. Contemporary NT archaeology has expanded far beyond these boundaries and draws on current archaeological theory and the geometrically expanding data on the first century world.

The book begins with a strong introductory chapter that firmly argues for the importance of current archaeological data for biblical scholarship; “Those interested in the historical context for the production and first reception of biblical text *must* [sic] use archaeology” (14). Nasrallah confines her discussion to the recipient cities of letters included in the higher critical “canon” of Pauline writings (1 Thessalonians, Galatians, the Corinthian correspondence, Philippians and Romans; she also includes Philemon which some critical scholars do not). She then provides a chapter based on each of her accepted letters. By including Philemon, she is able to engage with Ephesus as her starting point from which she focuses on slavery: “being bought with a price” is her theme. In chapter 3 she uses Galatians to discuss travel and hospitality, in particular the effect on the hosting community of various travelers. Philippi becomes the context for a discussion on poverty and abundance. This chapter is her first real engagement with archaeological data beyond inscriptions. Chapter 5 focuses on death and grief against a Corinthian background. In Chapter 6 she uses the Augustan mausoleum in Rome as the launching pad for a discussion of time, race and obelisks and their influence in the letter to the Romans. Chapter 7 discourses on what Nasrallah calls “the afterlife of the Apostle Paul” (224), using Thessalonike as a backdrop. Her concluding chapter again argues for the use of archaeology in NT study, a weakness that she correctly identifies in much contemporary NT scholarship.

However, this book, despite its title, is neither a comprehensive survey of the archaeology of the world of Paul nor a true archaeological study on the letters of Paul like she calls for in her discussion of method (34). As her title indicates, she does not discuss Acts in her presentations. She baldly states that “Acts is a later text ... it is not an objective history against which to plot the life of Paul” (14). Instead, Nasrallah uses archaeological data from the various cities linked to the letters to lay a foundation for a discussion of non-traditional perspectives on various interpretive issues in the letters. Nasrallah writes as a biblical scholar, writing for biblical students and scholars, freely admitting in both the introduction and the conclusion that she is not an archaeologist. For the most part, her archaeological data is inscriptional material and the physical topography of the cities she engages with. This is a classic “biblical backgrounds” approach, of some value, but it is not archaeology. Her strongest chapter is probably the one on Philippi because she understands the site very well. Another limitation is a general failure to use evangelical scholarship even where it could contribute to her narrowly focused discussions.

This study can be frustrating to use. Although she self-identifies as a Christian (2), she does not have an evangelical approach to the Pauline corpus, and this hurts her work. For example, Nasrallah’s failure to accept Ephesians and the Timothy

correspondence as Pauline severely limits her interaction with the archaeology of Ephesus. This site has been intensively excavated for nearly a century and provides a wealth of contextual data on first century life in the first generations after Roman conquest. She does not engage at all with the fluidity of identity in Ephesus or with the overpowering presence of Artemis in the lives of the populace, a major issue in the NT writings. Philemon mentions a house church, but she does not use the results from the extensive domestic excavation which has occurred in Ephesus to comment on this phenomenon. Even on this issue, she could have used the physical layout of the houses to discuss domestic slavery. By not accepting Titus as Pauline, she fails to benefit from new work on Crete which provides archaeological evidence of negotiated identity which is highly relevant to the epistle. In chapter 3, she has a good discussion of travelers, but does not emphasize that ideas spread through trade networks. She could have engaged the wealth of new data on Roman trade networks in Anatolia, primarily derived from ceramic studies and used it as a framework to discuss Paul's travels. The chapter on Rome is frankly bizarre with a five-page section devoted to a discussion of Mussolini's 'archaeology'. She defends this choice, saying "embedding the letter to the Romans within the ancient roman landscape of Augustus' mausoleum complex, even while our awareness hovers over the fact that this complex is an 'authentic ruin' produced by fascist 'archaeology' allows us to hear more clearly the language of time and cosmos in the letter to the Romans" (222). Maybe it does for her, but not for me.

Overall, Nasrallah raises good questions that are rarely asked in the way she does, but when she answers them, she actually employs only a small amount of the archaeological data that could be brought to bear on these issues. If this book encourages NT students and scholars to dip into the burgeoning archaeological literature bearing on the Mediterranean world of Paul, then it will have achieved a positive purpose.

Thomas W. Davis  
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***Paul: A Biography.* By N.T. Wright. New York: Harper Collins, 2018. 432 Pages. Hardcover, \$29.99.**

N.T. Wright is the chair of New Testament and Early Christianity at the School of Divinity, University of St. Andrews. He has taught New Testament studies for more than twenty years at Cambridge, McGill and Oxford Universities. He has authored several works on Paul including *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Fortress Press, 2013), *Pauline Perspectives* (Fortress Press, 2013) and *Paul and His Recent Interpreters* (Fortress Press, 2015).

Wright, as a biographer and historian, seeks to answer questions about Paul that lie behind the biblical texts: Who was Paul? What was his work and why did he undertake this work? What was the nature of Paul's transformation on the road to Damascus?

Wright traces Paul's journey from his beginnings as Saul of Tarsus, who strictly adhered to his ancient Jewish traditions (cf. Gal 1:14) and urged radical obedience to them to the point of violence, to Paul, the Apostle. Paul's experience on the road to Damascus marks the transition from one to the other. Wright views this experience, not as a conversion, but Paul's recognition that Jesus of Nazareth is Israel's Messiah, the fulfillment of prophecy. Paul's devotion to the One God changes from

Torah and Temple to Jesus the Messiah. Wright argues that Paul reorients his entire life once Paul acknowledged that heaven and earth came together in Jesus.

Wright also addresses recurring themes of Paul's writings and seeks to understand them within Paul's cultural, historical, and personal experience. For instance, Wright addresses what many regard as Paul's fundamental doctrine: justification. Wright argues that the theological framework is a construct from the Middle Ages. The sixteenth century Reformers may provide important new angles to the first-century perspective, but Wright reasons that Paul's concern is not saving souls to go to heaven, but the coming together of heaven and earth in a great act of cosmic renewal. This heaven-to-earth reality comes in Jesus' birth activated by the Spirit. Paul realizes that God acted "when the fullness of time came" (Gal 4:4 NASB).

Wright also addresses the important theme of resurrection. He sees the resurrection as the underlying connection or glue that holds together Paul's theology and is foundational to everything Paul believes. The resurrection is the reason for Paul being an Apostle. In Jesus victory has already been won over sin, dark powers, and death, but this victory will be completed in the new creation. For Paul learning to be a follower of Jesus the Messiah culminates in the heart and mind being transformed to live in this already/not-yet world (1 Cor 15:25; Ps 110:1). This is a messianic eschatology, the ultimate fulfillment of Israel's hope in the Messiah and resurrection. Wright argues that Paul understood the expected covenant between God and his people does not come through the Torah but through the Messiah.

Wright shows how Paul operates within a worldview different from the view of sin and salvation that Western Christians have normally assumed. He argues that Paul's humanity is the best context for understanding Paul and how God used him to bring a new paradigm for understanding Jesus. His reflection and commentary on the chronological reading of the Pauline epistles and Acts enlightens the development and maturity in Pauline theology. His work provides insight into Paul, the man, and how his theological reflection comes to light through his cultural and historical context.

James Lee Bartlett  
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***Jesus The Eternal Son: Answering Adoptionist Christology.* By Michael F. Bird. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017. 155 pages. Softcover, \$18.00.**

*Jesus The Eternal Son*, which began in a public dialogue held at a Greer-Heard Point-Counterpoint forum, deals with the divinity of Jesus by focusing on Christological adoptionism. Michael F. Bird, lecturer in theology at Ridley College in Melbourne, Australia, discloses the inaccurate evidence used by scholars (e.g. Bart Ehrman and James Dunn) to argue for adoptionism. Against the incorrect claims, Bird highlights two points from the primary sources: (1) a ripened adoptionism comes as a phenomenon during the second century CE; and (2) the *de facto* promoters are the Theodotians (xi). The rest of the book unfolds these two points.

In chapter one, Bird observes, based on research of early Christologies, that no one can claim "a single monolithic Christology of the early church." Rather, he argues for a process of "early christologizing" (5). While the consensus in beliefs and practices within the early church appeared, a few disparate Christologies remained in their own context, which came to be known as heresies. Adoptionism, one of the heresies of the second and third centuries, is assumed to be the earliest recoverable Christology according to modern scholars. A full incarnational Christology was only

developed afterwards (8). This presents a problem to Bird because he believes “there is no tangible evidence for an adoptionist Christology in the New Testament” (124).

In chapter two, Bird works with two biblical passages: Romans 1:3–4 and Acts 2:36. He refutes the Adoptionist interpretation, which asserts that Romans 1:3–4 reflects the creedal nature grammatically with substantive participles, implying Jesus is invested with divine sonship at his resurrection (11–13). According to Bird, however, Romans 1:3–4 pictures Jesus in transition from one state of divine sonship to another state of divine sonship, and not in transition from the earthly Son of David to a divine state as the Son of God by the resurrection. Namely, “divine sonship is already embedded in the designation of Jesus as the Davidic descendent prior to his resurrection” (16).

Respecting Markan Christological origin and the baptismal incident, chapter three elaborates on two aspects: (1) deification within the Greco-Roman world and (2) Jewish monotheism. Criticizing Greco-Roman notions of deification, Bird points out that they lack an essential distinction between humans and the eternal gods. Therefore, the Gospel of Mark could not correspond with the Greco-Roman idea of deification. Furthermore, deification looked absurd to those holding to Jewish monotheism. Bird brings in Josephus’s and Philo’s critiques of deification to emphasize that “the premise of monotheism, even with subordination and intermediary figures, includes an absolute distinction between God and humanity” (56–57).

In chapter four, Bird argues that Michael Peppard has misread the Gospel of Mark. Peppard projected both the imperial cults and Roman adoption practices onto the incident of baptism (66). To Bird, however, Mark 1:11 appeals to Old Testament allusions: Psalms 2:7 and Isaiah 42:1. The scriptural intertextual contexts exhibit “the call and commission of Jesus as the Son and Servant to complete his messianic task; it marks him out as the *messias designatus*, not as one who becomes the divine Son at this juncture” (72). Then, Bird enumerates four characteristics of the Gospel of Mark and emphasizes Jesus’ eschatological dimension as the Son of God (84–102).

In chapter five, Bird deems adoptionism as a product of the second century CE by examining three suspects of adoptionism: (1) the Shepherd of Hermas, (2) the Ebionites, and (3) the Theodotians. Delving into the first two cases, Bird concludes that both should not be considered adoptionism (107–120). Even in the case of Theodotus, Bird is reluctant to acknowledge that Theodotus is an adoptionist because he believed Jesus is a mere man and did not claim Jesus was divine and became divine. Bird finally claims that the occurrence of adoptionism was through a group of Theodotians in the 190s or early 200s.

This book is worthy of attention because not only does it deal with biblical and historical evidence regarding adoptionism but also implicitly defends the deeper meaning of the relationship between Jesus and God. The affirmation that Jesus is the eternal son is Bird’s real claim. His work shows that incarnational Christology is at the forefront of Trinitarian theology as well as Christology.

Wang Yong Lee  
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***The Biblical Canon Lists from Early Christianity: Texts and Analysis.*** By Edmon L. Gallagher and John D. Meade. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. 337 pages. Hardcover, \$46.95.

In this volume, Edmon Gallagher and John Meade provide a valuable resource for those studying the formation and reception of the biblical canon by collecting and contextualizing “canon lists” from the first four centuries of early Christianity. They define a canon list as a “list of books that an author or council considers to constitute the biblical canon” (xii). For each major list, Gallagher and Meade include an orientation to the historical occasion of the list, the text of the list in its original language, an English translation of the list, and a series of footnotes where they flag points of interest, outline scholarly discussions, and provide analysis of specific textual details.

After a survey of the field of canon studies, they include Jewish lists (from Josephus and Baba Bathra 14b), Greek Christian lists (like Melito of Sardis, Athanasius, and Gregory of Nazianzus), Latin Christian lists (like the Muratorian Fragment, Codex Claromontanus, and Hilary of Poitiers), and a Syriac Christian List (the St. Catherine’s Monastery Syriac list). They conclude with a selection of lists drawn from Greek, Syriac, Latin, and Hebrew manuscripts that include the full contents of the biblical canon and an appendix that describes significant writings that were disputed in the history of the formation of the canon (like the *Epistle of Barnabas* and the *Shepherd of Hermas*).

When considering the story of canon formation, there are many types of evidence and data that must be considered (e.g., manuscripts, citations, patterns of use). However, Meade and Gallagher argue that canon lists provide a strategic window into the canon formation process because “in most cases,” these lists “unambiguously report what the compilers of the lists considered to belong to the biblical canon” (xiv). Consequently, “they bear an undeniable importance in the history of the canon” for more than other “types of data, the lists directly inform us of the books considered canonical in early Christianity” (xiv).

While they recognize the limits of what canon lists can explain, Gallagher and Meade maintain that neglecting this type of evidence would be a clear mistake. Their volume itself illustrates this dynamic, as it includes a lengthy preliminary section discussing the necessary definitional question of canon and other relevant methodological issues that help clarify the role that canon lists play in the formation of the biblical canon (78 pages). In their original literary setting, several of the lists mentioned are in the form of discussions, homilies, or commentaries (e.g., Josephus’ “list,” the Muratorian Fragment, or Origen’s Homilies on Joshua 7). As this volume showcases both explicitly and implicitly, then, considerable interpretive work is required both to access and assess these writings/documents.

By having these important lists classified, categorized, and contextualized, readers will be able to note both the continuity and discontinuity of their contents but also of their form and literary setting. The inclusion of a chapter on manuscripts also communicates the way the canon lists relate to the broader constellation of physical evidence that helps us tell the story of how the canon came to be. In sum, as a tool for research on the biblical canon, this volume succeeds and will serve students and scholars for many years.

Ched Spellman  
Cedarville University

**Biblical Eschatology**, 2nd ed. By Jonathan Menn. Eugene, OR: Resource, 2018. 595 pages. Softcover, \$48.99.

In his work *Biblical Eschatology*, Jonathan Menn attempts to present a comprehensive eschatology that “analyzes all of the major eschatological passages, issues, and positions in a fair, clear, but not superficial way” (xvii). He begins with an introduction to eschatological study, briefly describing the major hermeneutical positions, before he describes his own hermeneutic for biblical study. Menn holds to an amillennial hermeneutic, with its familiar two-age model. From this position, he sees God fulfilling most prophecies substantially and not literally. The church and Christ fulfill Old Testament prophecies about Israel, while the prophecies of Revelation are largely symbolic and not literal. He advocates for one *Parousia*, one general resurrection, and one general judgment. Menn provides a brief examination of historical eschatology in order to show that the traditional positions of the church support his hermeneutic. Menn follows by examining four major eschatological themes and their importance to biblical eschatology—the millennium, the Olivet Discourse, the rapture, and the antichrist—before concluding with a lengthy commentary on Revelation. Menn also includes several appendices on additional important eschatological texts.

Menn’s work is a weighty contribution to eschatological study. He accomplishes his task of examining most of the major aspects of biblical eschatology; any comprehensive discussion of eschatology should comment on the subjects he has chosen. The inclusion of the history of eschatological discussion in the church is beneficial to show the reader this conversation is not a new one, born out of the contemporary premillennial discussions of the past century, but rather a conversation that dates back to the church fathers. Menn’s commentary on Revelation demonstrates a steady hermeneutic, as he shows that his interpretations remain consistent from early in Scripture until the final book. Finally, the items in his appendices, such as the important but oft-overlooked Zechariah 14, are also profitable and necessary to any end-time conversation.

While Menn offers much to the eschatological conversation, his work is not without its deficiencies. *Biblical Eschatology* suffers most by not presenting a unified, Biblical eschatology, though Menn states this goal is his intention. Instead of showing how Scripture presents a singular eschatological narrative, his work reads more as a commentary on eschatological subjects. For example, Menn dedicates almost no commentary on the day of the Lord. This oversight is a serious issue when presenting a comprehensive eschatology, as the day of the Lord is a recurring theme throughout both the Old and New Testaments. Furthermore, Menn’s dearth of study on Old Testament prophecy leaves his interpretation of New Testament passages without a foundation. Menn is wise to discuss major themes, such as the rapture and the antichrist, but by dedicating them to their own chapters, the book reads as an amalgamation of subjects instead of building blocks of a cohesive eschatology. The inclusion of so many appendices, while individually valuable to the eschatological conversation, demonstrates this lack of cohesion. Any attempt to present a unified eschatology needs these appendices in the main body of the work.

Additionally, Menn does not argue for the amillennial hermeneutic that guides his interpretations. Instead, he assumes Scripture reflects an amillennial eschatology and structures his interpretations around the position. He uses terms such as “historic Christianity” and “historic exegesis” to justify holding to amillennialism, yet he himself demonstrates that the early church varied greatly in its eschatology.

Menn's work also suffers from assuming all dispensationalists are united in their eschatological systems, ignoring the development of dispensational thought over the past several decades. He thus attacks dispensationalism at its underdeveloped and weakest points while ignoring the more potent dispensational arguments that challenge his own system. Furthermore, his commentary on Revelation is lacking. One could hardly expect Menn to present a fully developed exegesis of Revelation in a singular volume on eschatology, which makes the commentary's inclusion here puzzling. Instead of commenting on Revelation's crucial passages, Menn attempts to speak on every section, which only dilutes the commentary's overall value.

Menn's *Biblical Eschatology* is a valuable overview of eschatology and its most important facets. Menn shows that despite a plethora of scholarly attention throughout church history, eschatology remains a captivating and unsettled area of study.

Joshua Yowell  
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

*The Beginning of Baptist Ecclesiology: The Foundational Contributions of Thomas Helwys.* By Marvin Jones. Monographs in Baptist History. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2017. 157 pages. Paperback, \$22.00.

Marvin Jones, Assistant Professor of Church History and Theology at Louisiana College, presents a dual purpose in writing *The Beginning of Baptist Ecclesiology*. The first, given in the preface, is to "give a fresh voice" to Helwys's Baptist ecclesiology as well as contribute to the ongoing conversation surrounding Baptist origins (xiv). The second, presented in the final chapter, is to analyze Helwys's belief—and major contribution to Baptist ecclesiology—that only Baptist churches are true churches, as demonstrated in *A Short Declaration of the Mystery of Iniquity* (139). Jones ultimately succeeds in the latter but flounders in his treatment of the former.

In addressing his second purpose, Jones presents an argument that, although not always explicit in his writing, is still discernible to the reader. After providing a brief biography of Helwys and establishing the basic hermeneutical approach to apocalyptic literature in the English Reformation, Jones posits that Helwys uses the same approach to interpret his own context, ultimately leading Helwys to establish a Baptist church since all other ecclesial traditions were apostate (34–37). The third chapter expands upon this point, revealing the reasons why Helwys rejected the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches. A history of religious toleration during the English Reformation is provided in the fourth chapter, giving the reader the historical context that led to Helwys's ecclesiological formation. The final two chapters trace Helwys's critiques of Puritanism and Separatism in *Mystery of Iniquity*. Jones argues that by rejecting the ecclesiology of every other group involved in the English Reformation, Helwys establishes a unique ecclesiology: a Baptist ecclesiology.

Jones ultimately achieves this second stated purpose; the reader is able to discern the argument throughout the work. However, this is largely done implicitly rather than explicitly. Jones does not always draw connections together, leaving the reader to do so on his own. For most of the work, the reader can still trace the argument, but there are three specific instances where a more explicit approach would alleviate some confusion. The first is found in the second chapter. The reader shifts from a biography of Helwys to a discussion of the historicist interpretation of apocalyptic literature in the English Reformation. The connection between Helwys and this method of interpretation is not immediately evident, and it is not until

the end of the chapter that the reader discovers that Helwys applied this model to the Church of England to establish their status as an apostate church. Making this connection explicitly at the beginning of the chapter would aid readers in tracking Jones's argument.

The second instance is connected to the theme of the "two churches" in Helwys's *Mystery of Iniquity* and other apocalyptic works in the period. This theme is introduced by Jones on page 23, but is not defined as the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches until page 28. Proper understanding of this theme is needed for the reader to understand why Helwys rejects both churches as apostate, but Jones does not specify that Helwys and others connect the two churches to the beast and the false prophet in Revelation until later in the chapter.

The third instance is of a similar nature in the fourth chapter. Jones demonstrates how Helwys's conception of religious toleration provides a framework for his Baptist ecclesiology. This is demonstrated largely through the tenet of royal supremacy. Royal supremacy is introduced as a concept on page 55 but is not defined until page 75. Royal supremacy does indeed play a role in Helwys's thought, but the reader is left wondering as to its relevance for twenty pages. Forming this connection explicitly earlier in the chapter would aid the reader in understanding Jones's argument. Ultimately, his argument is discernible, and the emphasis on Helwys's historical context does much to inform the reader why Helwys argues in the manner presented in *Mystery of Iniquity*. However, both Jones's and Helwys's arguments would be more easily grasped if Jones argued them more explicitly.

As to Jones's first stated purpose related to Baptist origins, *The Beginning of Baptist Ecclesiology* leaves much to be desired. Jones writes that Helwys formed his ecclesiology in response to, and thus resembles, *both* English Separatism and Anabaptism (xiv). Jones certainly demonstrates the commonality and distinctions between Helwys's ecclesiology and that of the Separatist movement. Especially helpful in this regard is his treatment of the doctrine of covenant in Puritan, Separatist, and Helwys's thought. However, other than an occasional assertion that Helwys did not follow his pastor and friend John Smyth in requesting membership into Mennonite circles, little attention is given to the Anabaptist connection.

Aaron S. Halstead  
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***The Blackwell Companion to Substance Dualism.* Edited by Jonathan J. Loose, Angus J.L. Menuge, and J.P. Moreland. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2018. 528 pages. Hardcover, \$202.75.**

*The Blackwell Companion to Substance Dualism* provides a comprehensive introduction to human nature, focusing especially on the viability of substance dualism. The editors are Philosophy Professors at Heythrop College, University of London (Jonathan J. Loose), Concordia University Wisconsin (Angus J.L. Menuge), and Biola University (J.P. Moreland) respectively. Including the editors, twenty-nine total experts in the Philosophy of Mind author chapters. These authors range from various universities around the world and from various denominational and religious backgrounds.

The book is a *tour de force* in defending and critiquing the feasibility of substance dualism. It is precisely the range of viewpoints presented by the various authors that makes this text so valuable. As topics in human nature continue to rise to

premier importance in contemporary contexts, this volume is a timely text for pastors and scholars alike. But what exactly is substance dualism and why does it need 500+ pages to determine its feasibility? The editors define substance dualism as the view that “(1) there is a substantial self, soul, or ego that is immaterial and (2) that self, soul, or ego is not identical to the body and is the bearer of personal identity” (1). This view, while often considered the consensus of the church for two millennia, is certainly no longer in vogue today (2). Precisely for this reason the editors assembled this wide range of authors to explain its meaning. But, as the layout suggests, they did not decide to explain it by merely offering positive articles but rather summoned numerous counterproposals to best describe the strengths and weaknesses of substance dualism from both devotees and critics. In doing so, the editors confess their hope for the book to “be a valuable resource for scholars in a variety of disciplines.... and that it will be a useful reference for those interested in doing further work advancing the case for or against substance dualism” (11).

Now, a full orb'd summary being impossible, the broad sections of the book include defining and debating various versions of substance dualism, the unity of consciousness, near-death experiences, and competitors to substance dualism including animalism, non-reductive physicalism, constitutionalism, and emergent individualism. The book also offers substantive theological engagement, debating the contents of the biblical witness for anthropology, the nature of the incarnation, and resurrection.

Given this very brief summation of the book, I am compelled to mention several overarching potential drawbacks for possible readers. First, the price is likely prohibitive for pastors that lack a sound library nearby to borrow the book. Second, as is often the case in edited books, some chapters are better than others. Some are needlessly idiosyncratic; some are overly verbose; and some lack argumentative rigor. Third, the way the book has been marketed unnecessarily limits its appeal to less academically focused readers who would benefit tremendously. As mentioned, topics in human nature are only becoming more prevalent in society and pastors are being confronted with difficult moral scenarios that require thick theological reasoning. This introduction to substance dualism, given the fact that it allows proponents of alternative viewpoints to argue their own case, is an ideal dialogue partner for thinking critically about human nature and its moral implications. But since it has been marketed primarily to an academic audience, many of these pastors will either be intimidated by it or miss it altogether. Fourth, while it is comprehensive it does lack reference to other narrow and rare defenses and formulations of substance dualism. This may be detrimental to the novice who is attempting to research the material and produce scholarly output but for those simply interested in the topic for practical usage this is no major problem. Finally, some may take issue with the inclusion of overtly theological material in a companion devoted to philosophy. However, substance dualism is often affirmed based on theological issues; therefore, considering such theological issues is part of the philosophical explanation of the position.

Moving from the potential negatives, I want to mention several strengths. First, as noted throughout, it provides proponents and opponents of substance dualism space to make their claims. This debate format provides readers with a thorough understanding of the potential benefits and costs of substance dualism and other competing views. Most books simply argue the case of their preferred position and miss a wealth of perceptive arguments. For example, there is a chapter dedicated to defending substance dualism from the biblical text and the following chapter

defends the very opposite—that there is no soul. Rather than only hearing one side of the debate, the reader can engage competing perspectives. Second, due to its size, it covers a wide range of topics that are both interesting and useful for understanding substance dualism and its claims. It can easily be used as a reference tool with each chapter standing alone without need to read others to understand it. Third, it offers sections on topics not often addressed, like near death experiences, which is likely a common challenging question pastors receive and would benefit from having a deep analysis. Given these positives, I think the book achieves its goal of being a valuable resource and reference work. But I think it is valuable for more than just scholars doing research—it is profoundly beneficial for pastors seeking to shepherd people through the cultural morass regarding human nature.

In sum, I highly recommend *The Blackwell Companion to Substance Dualism*. It offers the most comprehensive introduction to human nature focused on substance dualism to date. Even as I listed several potential drawbacks, I think the positives, alongside the crucial nature of the topic itself, make it a work worth investing in. Pastors and scholars alike should add this to their reading list.

Jordan L. Steffaniak  
University of Birmingham

***Against God and Nature: The Doctrine of Sin.* By Thomas H. McCall. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019. 442 pages. Hardcover, \$40.00.**

In *Against God and Nature*, Trinity Evangelical Divinity professor Thomas H. McCall contributes a systematic overview of the doctrine of sin to Crossway's Foundations of Evangelical Theology series. This volume presents an Evangelical approach to hamartiology that is sensitive to biblical, historical, philosophical, and cultural considerations. Editor John S. Feinberg begins the volume with the reflection that one must reintroduce each generation to Scripture's timeless truths (14). When one considers the biblical truths in need of a faithful contemporary witness and presentation, few truths are as neglected and disdained as the doctrine of sin. McCall defines sin as "whatever is opposed to God's will, as that will reflects God's holy character and as that will is expressed by God's commands" (21). He elaborates, "sin is fundamentally opposed to nature and reason, and it is ultimately opposed to God" (21).

McCall's work is an impressive contribution to the field of hamartiology. McCall demonstrates his competencies as a systematician as he effortlessly weaves between exegeting the semantic nuances of Hebrew and Greek words and reflecting upon the contributions of reformation, modern, and Barthian theologians.

His work begins with a biblical analysis of hamartiology. He analyzes the key original words for a systematic understanding of sin and surveys the canonical witness to the doctrine. One finds his biblical theology of hamartiology particularly helpful. He draws insights from each stage of redemptive history and identifies relevant threads throughout Scripture. Preachers and scholars will benefit from his presentation of three metaphors for sin: the royal-legal metaphor (102–05), the familial metaphor (105–07), and the nuptial metaphor (108–11).

He transitions from biblical analysis to systematic argumentation. He subdivides hamartiology into sections on the origins of sin, original sin, the sin nature, the results of sin, and the relationship between sin and grace. McCall approaches sin

from a classical Arminian perspective. He challenges readers to consider the diversity of approaches to hamartiology within the Reformed tradition. McCall critiques common Reformed positions, such as Jonathan Edwards's occasionalism (347–48), Federalist views of original sin (165), and compatibilism (186). He argues that Reformed positions on the relationship between God's sovereignty, sin, and culpability fail to account for God's goodness (128, 142) as well as human free-will (128, 289) and responsibility for original sin (165). Also, he criticizes perspectives on God's sovereignty which insinuate that God is the author and cause of sin (131).

McCall exposes readers to relevant arguments across the theological spectrum. His engagement with various disciplines—from new perspective scholars to Augustine and Barth—demonstrates a healthy interaction with relevant scholarship. Readers will enjoy his section on individual and systemic sins (258–70). He appraises Marxist approaches to social sins while retaining biblical teaching on structural elements of sin's universal impact. This section contributes to current discussions on social justice and systemic sins as theologians debate the utility of assigning corporate guilt to demographics for social injustices.

This volume deserves to receive a wide readership. McCall presents a thorough analysis of the doctrine of sin for a contemporary audience. Scholars will benefit from his careful interactions with primary sources and Scripture's *classicus locus* texts for hamartiology. Students will meet the main contributors to debates and discussions from church history while gaining a foothold for understanding the contours of this doctrine.

McCall's work instructs students on the importance of understanding the nuances of theological positions. While it is tempting to fit ideas and theologians—such as Pelagianism, Arminianism, and Calvinism—within neat taxonomies, closer inspection always reveals subtle differences and unexpected associations between competing views. McCall calls readers to discard conventional sketches of different positions in order to inspect the actual represented positions of leading thinkers. For example, he criticizes attempts to label federalism as “*the* Reformed View, for some Reformed theologians criticize and reject it, while some decidedly non-Reformed theologians accept and defend it” (163). This anecdote reminds educators that theological pedagogy must include the consideration of original sources rather than relying upon secondhand summaries of positions.

At the same time, some readers will challenge McCall with a selective representation of the Reformed position on various doctrines. When he presents and critiques Reformed positions, McCall interacts with esoteric sources. As an example, he neglects the Westminster Confession of Faith as he presents Reformed theological statements that distance God's providential will from sin (131). He is also critical of attempts to locate Reformed thought strictly through Jonathan Edwards as opposed to Wesley (24–27).

As a notoriously difficult doctrine to define and present, Thomas McCall's contribution to hamartiology will aid pastors and theologians as they reflect upon the nature of sin. McCall reminds readers that one does not engage with the doctrine of sin for intellectual purposes alone. The doctrine of sin corresponds with the reality of brokenness within the world. As theologians present this doctrine, they help individuals understand the etiology of the dysphoria they experience as sinners in a fallen creation. Hamartiology points one towards soteriology as the study of sin “awakens ... within us the hope for something better. Things are *not* right, and we will find within us a longing that things *will* be made right” (204). The doctrine of

sin “leaves us longing for something better, and it points us beyond itself to the Holy One who promises and provides salvation” (380).

Jared S. Poulton  
Seneca, South Carolina

***The Atlas of Reality: A Comprehensive Guide to Metaphysics.*** By Robert C. Koons and Timothy H. Pickavance. West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017. 699 pages. Hardcover, \$195.00.

Following on the heels of their previous slim introduction to contemporary metaphysics (*Metaphysics: the Fundamentals*), Robert Koons and Timothy Pickavance offer *The Atlas of Reality: A Comprehensive Guide to Metaphysics* as an encyclopedic guide to a host of issues in contemporary analytic metaphysics. *The Atlas of Reality* is nothing less than 654 pages of philosophical red meat. The book is exhaustive and encyclopedic in that it aims, to use the author’s own words, “to explore, as completely as possible, the ‘logical space’ of metaphysics: to say at least something about every possible theory on the important questions in metaphysics” (9). The book is divided into twenty-nine chapters that are distributed across the following eight general sections: Foundations, Dispositions, Universals and Particulars, The Nature of Reality, Modality, Space and Time, Unity, and Causation. The topics addressed in the work range from the relationship between truth and reality (truthmaker theory), properties and universals, modality/essence/ and possible worlds, laws of nature, substance, composition, and the nature of time. Koons and Pickavance aim to survey the best arguments for and against each major view on the contemporary scene. While the authors clearly favor a broad Aristotelian position on many of the issues throughout the volume (substance, properties, modality, modal knowledge, time, composition, etc.), they are evenhanded and charitably interact with opposing views.

Let me highlight two particular ways the book stands out from competing titles. First, the authors helpfully weave together four broad packages of views in metaphysics, each consisting of a web of interrelated positions on the topics of truth-making, substance, properties, time, and modality. The authors identify the following packages of positions in contemporary metaphysics: neo-Humean, neo-Aristotelian, Fortibrachian, and Quietism (624–32). This is extremely helpful to the reader as the individual areas in metaphysics are very often treated in an atomistic fashion, without regard to how they mutually inform and are organically related to one another. Second, the volume includes two Appendices that outline a comprehensive list of metaphysical axioms and principles that are developed and defended throughout the volume.

Koons and Pickavance provide a helpful introduction that addresses the all too pervasive pragmatic challenge to the study of metaphysics: why devote time to studying metaphysics when there are more pressing philosophical areas that demand our attention, such as ethics and political philosophy (questions pertaining to the good, the right, and how to justly order a political community)? Here I’ll unpack the reasons Koons and Pickavance offer in response to the pragmatic challenge, and then go on to offer an additional reason that may be of particular interest to Christian theologians and to the readers of this journal.

First, following Aristotle, Koons and Pickavance argue that metaphysics (as with all philosophical inquiry) begins with a reflective wonder and deep desire to understand reality. This reflective wonder naturally pertains to questions of a distinctive metaphysical variety: what kinds of things exist, and how do these things relate

to one another? As rational animals, human beings alone strive to rightly understand the natures of things, for the purpose of rightly orienting their lives to reality. Second, the authors argue that metaphysics is both foundational and unavoidable; core issues in philosophy of science and moral and political philosophy crucially depend on prior metaphysical assumptions. For example, one's views about human flourishing (both individually and collectively in society) will largely depend on one's views concerning the nature of a human being, *what* a human being is fundamentally. Does human nature have intrinsic and objective ends or *teloi*, the fulfillment of which constitutes human flourishing? Or is human nature merely socially constructed, and thereby susceptible to the collective preferences of each subsequent generation? Are human beings nothing more than immaterial minds or selves, or is the material body a real constituent of human beings and thus an integral part of their moral flourishing? These are distinctively metaphysical issues that inevitably shape (often tacitly) contemporary issues in moral and political philosophy (e.g. sexual ethics, human dignity and natural rights).

Let me add a third reason why Christian theologians and readers of this journal might consider taking up the task of studying metaphysics. Theologians Michael Allen and Scott Swain define "dogmatic theology" as a "conceptual representation of scriptural teaching about God and all things in relation to God" (Series Preface to Zondervan's *New Studies in Dogmatics*). The question here is not *whether* one conceptually represents the biblical teaching concerning the nature and activity of God and his redemptive work in the person of the God-man, Jesus Christ. Rather, the question is *how* one will conceptually represent such teaching; *which* conceptual categories will one put to use in explicating, clarifying, and framing the biblical teaching concerning the nature of God and the person of Christ? Of course, the church fathers at both the council of Nicaea (325 CE) and the council of Chalcedon (451 CE) consciously employed the existing metaphysical categories of *substance* or *essence* (*ousia; homoousion*) as well as *person* (*hypostasis*) in their conceptual representation of the biblical teaching of the triunity of divine persons in the Godhead as well as the theanthropic person of Christ. Medieval Christian theologians such as Anselm of Canterbury and Thomas Aquinas also critically employed both neo-Platonic and Aristotelian metaphysical categories to conceptually represent biblical teaching. In a recent article on divine impassibility in *Credo* magazine, theologian Craig Carter summarizes my point here nicely: "I think we have to acknowledge that *everyone* utilizes metaphysical assumptions in exegesis and that the choice is not 'metaphysics or not,' but rather, 'unrevised pagan metaphysics or biblically shaped metaphysics.'" (Craig Carter, "Why I No Longer Believe in a Possible God." *Credo*, March 27, 2019).

For contemporary analytically minded theologians who are in search of a comprehensive reference work that will deepen their grasp of contemporary metaphysics, *The Atlas of Reality* fits the bill. Towards this aim, let me close by offering a brief guide to various chapters in the book that I think helpfully correspond to various loci in systematic theology, with an eye toward constructive analytic theological work in particular: Theology Proper relates to the following: Substance/Nature/Essence (chs. 9; 14–15); The Nature of Time (Chs. 19–21); Properties/Attributes/Universals (chs. 7–8). Creation, Providence, and Miracles relate to the following: Causation (chs. 26–27); The Nature of Time (Chs. 19–21); Laws of Nature (ch. 5). Christology relates to the following: Substance/Nature/Essence (chs. 9; 14–15); Properties/Attributes/Universals (chs. 7–8).

One final warning is in order: the book is not for the faint of heart. I would not recommend the book as an introductory text in metaphysics (a much better place to start would be Koons and Pickavance's much smaller and more introductory volume *Metaphysics: The Fundamentals*).

Ross Inman  
Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

***World Mission: Theology, Strategy, & Current Issues.* Edited by Scott N. Callaham and Will Brooks. Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2019. 378 pages. Paperback, \$24.99.**

Scott Callaham and Will Brooks bring together an excellent collection of biblical scholars, theologians, and missiologists with years of cross-cultural missions experience. They aim to place “every aspect of the missional task under the authority … of biblical teaching” (xi). The book has three sections—Theology and World Mission, World Mission Strategy, and Current Issues in World Mission. The first section has three chapters that focus on biblical theology. The second section has four chapters that focus on aspects of Matthew 28:19–20. The last section has four chapters that focus on language, exegetical method, orality, and missionary practice.

The first chapter sets the tone for what follows. Callaham rightly suggests that the “biblical ethos [for missions] stems from biblical theology, such that the content, themes, and story line of the Bible determine everything else” (3). He presents an Old Testament theology of mission that builds on the themes of creation, election, judgment, and new creation. Callaham helpfully shows how accurate biblical theology can shape mission strategy.

Wendel Sun writes the next two chapters. Sun first presents a New Testament theology of mission and then presents a whole Bible perspective. After addressing how Jesus fulfills many Old Testament ideas, Sun argues that the church’s ministry comes through union with Christ. Thus, the church’s mission comes through participation in his mission. Sun follows a progressive covenantal framework, showing how Jesus fulfills the covenants. He rightly states that “all missional activity must be understood within the creational framework” (75). This creational framework also offers fertile connections to wisdom literature, which is largely absent in the chapter.

In the fourth chapter, Stephen Wright analyzes the phrase “make disciples.” He first analyzes discipleship in Matthew before considering the other gospels, Acts, and the larger biblical canon. He shows how biblical discipleship entails adherence to a teacher and implies obedience (129). His research shows the necessity of both teaching and modeling in biblical discipleship.

In the following chapter, Jarvis Williams and Trey Moss address the phrase “all nations.” Beginning in the mid-twentieth century, certain missiologists interpreted the phrase anthropologically. In response, it became common to interpret the phrase as a reference to ethno-linguistic people groups. This interpretation had a lasting effect on missions strategy as it shifted its focus to unreached ethno-linguistic people groups. Williams and Moss argue that the phrase simply means “non-Jews in general” (135). They contend that missions should focus on all people in every place.

In the sixth chapter, John Massey and Callaham consider the role of baptism in the missionary task. They maintain that believer’s baptism by immersion in the Triune name of God best accords with Matthew 28:19. They also show the importance of baptism to the life of the church and how insider movements distort biblical teaching on baptism. The richness of this chapter highlights what missiologists miss when they ignore baptism’s importance in the task.

In the following chapter, Brooks and Sunny Tan claim that theological education remains essential to the missionary task. Missionaries must equip “local leadership to implement biblical forms of preaching, giving, worship, leadership, fellowship, prayer, and of course evangelism and missions” (179). Matthew 28:20 gives purpose to theological education in its result of obedience to Jesus (196–97). The authors persuade that in-depth theological education best trains indigenous leaders to interpret the biblical text on their own and removes a long-term need for missionary guidance.

In chapter eight, Callaham highlights the necessity of knowing biblical and host-nation languages. Callaham suggests that if the “missionary message is the word of God,” then missionaries must strive diligently in linguistic study (212). Callaham offers many practical suggestions in the chapter, emphasizing time and again the role of the Spirit in language acquisition and cross-cultural communication.

In the following chapter, Brooks shows the value of historical-grammatical exegesis in cross-cultural settings. Missiologists have too often encouraged reader-centric models of interpretation, but Brooks convincingly argues that an author-oriented model still provides the best method to validate interpretive accuracy and remove Western bias.

In the tenth chapter, Jackson Wu suggests narrative theology as a means for oral cultures to receive biblical theology. For Wu, the Bible’s narrative framework arises from Israel’s story. Wu goes as far as to state that “Israel’s story … is the inherent story of the Bible” (283). According to Wu, missionary materials should be developed within this narrative framework to faithfully reflect the biblical story and offer a format accessible to oral learners.

In the final chapter, Brooks shows the apostolic and pastoral aspects of Paul’s ministry as a model for missionaries today. Paul risked everything to bring the gospel to peoples and places that did not have it. He started churches, but was “concerned, not just for the *existence* of churches, but also for the *health* of those churches” (308). He labored in teaching them, following up with them after he left through repeated visits and letters, and sending other teachers and elders to lead them.

There are few negative things to say about this collection. One critique is the occasional indirect citation. As an example, Brooks references Sydney Greidanus to claim that Chrysostom held to grammatical-historical exegesis (243n12). A second critique arises from an occasional overemphasis on the narrative of Scripture. A common critique against such a framework is that it does not incorporate the frequent non-narrative portions of Scripture well. Alternatively, the work may have profited by using the thematic categories in Callaham’s initial chapter as a framework. These negatives are minimal and should not distract from the importance of this work.

As someone who has served in cross-cultural contexts for several years, I agree that this book addresses actual needs on the field. Pragmatism too often directs missionary practice. Missiologists may reference a biblical foundation, but rarely let the Bible shape their strategy and practice. The authors succeed in their aims. The work is scholarly, yet practical. I expect it to become a standard text for universities, seminaries, and missionary training centers for years to come.

G. Kyle Essary  
East Asia

*Preaching for a Verdict: Recovering the Role of Exhortation.* By J. Josh Smith. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2019. xii + 180 pages. Paperback, \$29.99.

Josh Smith is uniquely qualified to pen this crucial preaching volume. He is pastor, preacher, and homiletician. He currently serves as Senior Pastor of Prince Avenue Baptist Church in Bogart, GA. This volume draws from his 2013 D.Min. dissertation.

*Preaching for a Verdict* attempts to define and restore an oft ignored and misunderstood ingredient in the preaching endeavor, specifically exhortation. When properly understood, preaching not only informs the mind, it exhorts the will. Smith defines and distinguishes the element of exhortation, providing a historical, theological, and biblical basis for his proposal. His volume is not merely theoretical: he provides ways, means, and examples that allow the faithful preacher to integrate exhortation into his sermon preparation and delivery.

This work presents a veritable treasure-trove of homiletic gold. First, Smith clearly defines exhortation as “persuading the listener to respond to the call of the text through proclaiming the point of the text, in the voice of the text”; it is that persuasive effort that distinguishes preaching from teaching (93). Though important, to merely inform the hearer’s mind from the text is insufficient because true preaching speaks to the entire man. Failure to preach persuasively makes the sermon simply suggestive. Every Scripture demands a response and “a call to respond is embedded somewhere in the text and made clear by the Spirit” (4).

Second, there are some who disparage or even reject exhortation, believing that it is solely the Spirit’s ministry or simply synonymous with application. Smith distinguishes application from exhortation: “[W]hile application might explain what the text demands, exhortation pleads with the hearer to respond to its demands” (5). Both the Old and New Testaments confirm that the essential preaching paradigm is explanation, application, and exhortation, for “faithful biblical preaching must include an exhortation toward response” (76). He further explains the relationship between the two as follows: “Although proper exhortation always includes a form of application, it is possible to have application without exhortation. For that reason, exhortation must stand alone as a distinct and necessary practice in preaching” (9).

Third, in chapter 6, Smith offers practical advice since “like exposition, exhortation is a craft that must be learned” (93). He provides four foundational convictions for the practice of exhortation and steps to identifying and communicating exhortation. Two salient features of these hortatory convictions 1) the text drives the sermon, from structure to tone, and 2) since “God’s Word always demands a response … the sermon should call for a response” (95). On identifying and communicating the sermon’s exhortation, the exhortation is not a gratuitous postscript, flows from the text itself (106).

Finally, chapter 8 proves personally useful to the preacher. Smith provides three ingredients for effective exhortation. First, diligent study is essential, since “text-driven exhortation takes patient endurance and hard work” (145). Second, Spirit empowerment is crucial for preparation and delivery, since “exhortation void of the power of the Holy Spirit will accomplish nothing, no matter how well crafted it is” (147–48). Exhortation requires authoritative delivery since “faithful exhortation demands a response, because God demands a response” (152).

It is hard to find any “rough spots” in this homiletic diamond. Any questions or shortcomings from the reading, the author anticipated and addressed in the conclusion—concerns about limits and downfalls of *exhortation; exhortation* without

manipulation; the tension between sovereignty, free will, and preaching. One would have hoped he would have tackled those issues, but his laser focus was on making *exhortation* a part of the preaching task, a possible subsequent volume would be fitting.

This book is a welcomed edition to the field of homiletics. There are some that would devalue this book believing that preaching speaks exclusively to the mind and not the will. Josh Smith sets the record straight, showing that it is in fact, the preacher's job, even mandate, not only to faithfully preach the text but also to faithfully exhort from the text. *Preaching for a Verdict* will hopefully usher in a new day of preachers calling people to God-honoring decisions, recalling that it is exhortation that "puts the urgency in exposition" (19). This work will prove valuable for 1) those who believe in biblical exhortation, yet need encouraging in their hortatory skills, and 2) those who dismiss biblical exhortation (in theory or practice), who need to be convinced to place this scriptural tool in their preaching repertoire. As they preach and call for a verdict, every preacher ought to understand and feel the gravity that it is "God making his appeal through us" (2 Cor 5:20). Josh Smith convincingly and clearly reminds the preacher of that reality. He has called preachers back to preaching like the prophets and the Apostles, preaching like Jesus, preaching for a verdict. *Preaching for a Verdict* is a "must read"—even a "must read again."

Tony A. Rogers  
Bowie, Texas

## Index of Book Reviews

Michael F. Bird. <i>Jesus The Eternal Son: Answering Adoptionist Christology.</i> (Wang Yong Lee) .....	102
Scott N. Callaham and Will Brooks, eds. <i>World Mission: Theology, Strategy, &amp; Current Issues.</i> (G. Kyle Essary) .....	113
Troy Cudworth. <i>War in Chronicles: Temple Faithfulness and Israel's Place in the Land.</i> (Joshua E. Williams) .....	98
Edmon L. Gallagher and John D. Meade. <i>The Biblical Canon Lists from Early Christianity: Texts and Analysis.</i> (Ched Spellman) .....	104
H.H. Hardy II. <i>Exegetical Gems from Biblical Hebrew: A Refreshing Guide to Grammar and Interpretation.</i> (Justin Allison) .....	97
Marvin Jones. <i>The Beginning of Baptist Ecclesiology: The Foundational Contributions of Thomas Helwys.</i> (Aaron S. Halstead) .....	106
Robert C. Koons and Timothy H. Pickavance. <i>The Atlas of Reality: A Comprehensive Guide to Metaphysics.</i> (Ross Inman) .....	111
Jonathan J. Loose, Angus J.L. Menuge, and J.P. Moreland, eds. <i>The Blackwell Companion to Substance Dualism.</i> (Jordan L. Steffaniak) .....	107
Thomas H. McCall. <i>Against God and Nature: The Doctrine of Sin.</i> (Jared S. Poulton) .....	109
Jonathan Menn. <i>Biblical Eschatology.</i> (Joshua Yowell) .....	105
Laura Salah Nasrallah. <i>Archaeology and the Letters of Paul.</i> (Thomas W. Davis) .....	100
J. Josh Smith. <i>Preaching for a Verdict: Recovering the Role of Exhortation.</i> (Tony A. Rogers) .....	115
N.T. Wright. <i>Paul: A Biography.</i> (James Lee Bartlett) .....	101

