

Shalom and Khesed:
The Character and Scope of Divine Creation,
Redemption, and Faithfulness

MARK DeVINE,¹
Associate Professor of History and Doctrine,
Beeson Divinity School,
Samford University

Dedication

More than a quarter century ago, there he was, with a satisfied expression on his face, stationed as usual in front of the copier on the second floor of the James Petigru Boyce Library at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Reams and reams of printed material came out of that machine trying to but failing to satisfy what has so far turned out to be one of the great insatiable appetites for biblical learning planet earth has ever seen. Records were set for interlibrary loan traffic in those days. It was Alan Tomlinson. I met him and I clung to him, prompted him with a few questions about this or that passage in the New Testament to set him off and then just settled in to steal and steal and steal from him. How did I make it as a young pastor facing a pulpit week after week? By all that stealing, that's how.

Congratulations Alan, on a life invested well—a life in service to the word of almighty God. I work in the Christian tradition, not in the archeological spelunking of Biblical backgrounds. But oh how I need help from those deep divers into the ancient world in which the only true God became incarnate in the second person of his triune being and spoke to us through the eternal Son. But Dr. T. told me that my work was also necessary. The work of stepping back from the Bible, not to abandon it, but to try to hear more of it at once, helped not just with your own brain,

¹ Dr. D. Mark DeVine served as Professor of Theology at Midwestern Baptist Theology Seminary, 1994-1998 and 2001-2008. He is the author of *Bonhoeffer Speaks Today: Following Jesus At All Costs* and *RePlant: How A Dying Church Can Grow Again*.

but with help from many hearts and minds across time and geography through biblical, historical, and systematic theology. So in this little contribution to this celebration of my longtime friend, I attempt to do just that, knowing that the testing of it requires help from the deep divers like Alan Tomlinson, whose presence I feel every time I open the New Testament, and to whom I owe an unpayable debt every time I step behind a pulpit and try to faithfully expound it.

Introduction

In this paper I shall sketch the outline of a hypothesis about the teaching of the whole Bible concerning God's purposes in creation and redemption. In that sense what follows is an exercise in biblical theology an early stage of development. My aim is to encourage further exploration of my hypothesis in order to test its viability. I shall explore two key components of this hypothesis using two well-known Old Testament words; *shalom* and *khessed*. I shall then identify what I believe to be a major hindrance to faithful discernment of and teaching about *shalom* as I use the term, namely a proper and urgent but also exaggerated and distortive quest to repudiate the prosperity gospel. I shall then contend that a more faithful recovery of the doctrines of creation and redemption offers a better way forward than one wrongheadedly dominated by the need to reject the prosperity gospel.

A History of Mutual Accusation

The Bible records a recurring argument between the only true God and his people. The argument can be precipitated by either protagonist and tends to involve the hurling of an accusation by one side against the other. The chronicling of this back and forth encompasses the entire canon of Holy Scripture and surfaces with special and concentrated force in the Psalms. Sometimes the initial accusation is that the other party has failed to remember. Thus God's people accuse their creator:

How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? Psalm 13:1.

Awake! Why are you sleeping, O Lord?
 Rouse yourself! Do not reject us forever!
 Why do you hide your face?
 Why do you forget our affliction and oppression?
 Psalm 44:23-26.

O God, why do you cast us off forever?
 Why does your anger smoke against the sheep of your pasture?
 Remember your congregation, which you have purchased of old,
 which you have redeemed to be the tribe of your heritage!
 Remember Zion, where you have dwelt. Psalm 74:1-2.

Individually and collectively, the possibility of divine forgetting stirs terror in God's people—the terror appropriate to the threat of divine abandonment, or even of a permanent divine forsaking:

Cast me not off; forsake me not,
 O God of my salvation! Psalm 27:9.

I will keep your statutes;
 do not utterly forsake me! Psalm 119:8.

The people of God speak as those who have a claim on God's *khessed*, his steadfast or loyal love. An essential component of this expected divine *khessed* is fundamentally negative—it counts upon God not forgetting, not abandoning, and not forsaking his people. In Psalm 44, the psalmist, on behalf of God's people, after recounting Yahweh's deeds of might on behalf of their ancestors, complains:

But you have rejected us and disgraced us
 and have not gone out with our armies.
 You have made us turn back from the foe,
 And those who hate us have gotten spoil.
 You have made us like sheep for slaughter
 and have scattered us among the nations. Psalm 44: 9-11.

But on what basis does the Psalmist expect something different from Yahweh? On what basis do the people of God appeal for different treatment? The climax of Psalm 44:

Awake! Why are you sleeping, O Lord?
 Rouse yourself! Do not reject us forever!
 Why do you hide your face?
 Why do you forget our affliction and oppression?
 For our soul is bowed down to the dust;
 our belly clings to the ground.
 Rise up; come to our help!
 Redeem us for the sake of your steadfast love (*khesed*)!
 Psalm 44: 23-26.

Appeal to Yahweh's *khesed* touches the heart of the covenant relationship between God and his people and advances a claim based upon God's own reputation. Not to some abstract *khesed* is appeal made, but to "your steadfast love." Yahweh himself promised "I will bless you and make your name great . . . I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse" (Genesis 12:2-3). Yahweh himself established the covenant, repeatedly re-affirmed it, and promised repeatedly to remember it: "I will remember my covenant with Jacob, and I will remember my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham" (Leviticus 26:42). That the Psalmists hurl in Yahweh's face not *their* own, but *Yahweh's* own words, accounts for the confidence, the boldness, "the cheek" with which they do so.

The dynamic of such complaint and appeal feeds upon a covenant-fixated and divine reputation-directed challenge—"Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of your name; deliver us, and atone for our sins, for your name's sake" (Psalm 79: 9). "O God, why do you cast us off forever? . . . How long O God, is the foe to scoff? Is the enemy to revile you name forever?" (Psalms 74: 1,10). The divine *khesed* Israel expected is rooted in the divine promise and so implicates the divine character and thus the reputation of Yahweh. Yahweh's glory, his worthiness for praise, depends not upon an alien norm but an internal one, his righteousness, his integrity. Israel challenges Yahweh to live up to the standard Yahweh has set for himself. And that standard includes

his promise to remember his covenant and the *khessed* dimension of that covenant.

Pulling Yahweh's Chain

Yahweh hears the groans and cries of his children and responds to their pleas for help. As such the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob witnessed to in Holy Scripture is responsive, but not usually reactive. He more typically sets agendas than has them set for him. But certain subjects, certain complaints advanced by God's people, do seem to trigger a more immediate and a stronger divine response. The charges of forgetting, abandoning, and forsaking do not sit well with him. He does not let such accusations stand.

Yahweh denies the charges. Contrary to his people's complaints and fears, he has indeed remembered his covenant promises, including *khessed*. "I have heard the groaning of the people of Israel . . . and I have remembered my covenant" (Exodus 6:5). God's people themselves have repeatedly acknowledged Yahweh's *khessed* covenant-keeping. "The Lord has made known his salvation . . . He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel" (Psalms 98:2-3). "Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. . . . It is he who remembered us in our low estate, for his steadfast love endures forever" (Psalms 136:1, 23).

So the Bible chronicles God's direct defense of himself against the charge of forgetting and also the long history of God's people's own acknowledgment of this covenant faithfulness. It also records God's turning of the accusation back upon his people. He is the rememberer—they the forgetters. "Can a virgin forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? Yet my people have forgotten me days without number" (Jeremiah 2:32). "Therefore, thus says the Lord God: Because you have forgotten me and cast me behind your back, you yourself must bear the consequences of your lewdness and whoring" (Ezekiel 23:35). What God's people may reflexively attribute to God's forgetting and forsaking actually arises on account of their own unfaithfulness. "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel . . . Because they have forsaken me and have made offerings to other gods . . . my wrath will be kindled against this place, and it will not be quenched" (1 Kings 22:17). Juxtaposed with such unfaithfulness and forgetting stands Yahweh's unmatched remembering—"Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should

have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget., yet I will not forget you” (Isaiah 49:15).

Khessed and Shalom

At their best, Israel acknowledges, counts on, and takes comfort in Yahweh’s *khessed*-shaped covenant-keeping. “For the Lord will not forsake his people, for his name’s sake, because it has pleased the Lord to make you a people for himself” (1 Samuel 12:22).

But what is the content of that expected *khessed* component of the divine faithfulness? How does Yahweh act towards his people when he makes good on the promise of *khessed*? What expectations are properly stirred up by the Lord’s promised *khessed*? Rather than forget, abandon, and forsake, he will keep and bless. But what are the material indices of such *khessed* blessing?

The church across the centuries has consistently looked both backward and forward in her attempts to answer this question. Backward because the fall into sin involved a fall from that human flourishing for which human beings were created. As such, the church has sought to gain glimpses of full or at least fuller enjoyment of the divine *khessed* by looking back to the garden of Eden (delight) prior to the fall into sin and expulsion from that garden of delight.

The glance forward has seems justified because the promised eternal home toward which the redeemer is moving his children and this world is meant to and does produce proleptic first fruits along the way through this valley of the shadow of death. Though imperfect and impermanent, such glimpses and tastes and first fruits do truly serve both as harbingers of the world to come and guides to faithful and victorious living this side of the eschaton.

For example, Jesus’ miracles of healing, while not ushering in universal and permanent deliverance from sickness just now, nevertheless do entail a foretaste of that land where crying and pain and death are no more. And those same miracles, together with Jesus’ own identification of himself with every act of kindness toward “the least of these,” legitimize the battle against sickness in the meantime.

Neither Eden nor the new heaven and the new earth are doomed. Rather, *this* world is paradoxically both doomed and full of hope. This world in its rebellion against its creator, redeemer, and Lord together

with all the consequences of its rebellion—all of this is doomed. Sin, death, and the devil shall not stand. To live as though this were not so is to live according to a lie.

Yet this same world is the object of divine redemption, not only the immaterial souls of the saved, but the entire creation awaits redemption (Romans 8:19-22). All proper talk of the pilgrim status and the resident alien status of the people of God in this world must reckon not only with the “doomed” dimension but also with the promised redemption and its present implications. Faithful reasoning about these dimensions will take seriously not only the destruction and replacement language in Holy Scripture, but also the language of redemption and renewal meant to illumine the relationship between yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

It is this second dimension, the promised redemption of the entire creation, that invites examination of Eden and of the new heaven and new earth as windows into the actual content of the divine *khessed*. Given the faithfulness of the triune God to himself, we expect comparative continuity, not discontinuity between the three major distinguishable epochs of divine dealing with his people; namely, (1) Eden prior to the fall, (2) the new heaven and the new earth, and (3) the time between these times in which we all live. Surely the character of the divine *khessed* offers a promising window into any such cross-epochal continuity.

Eden and *Shalom*

My contention is that discernment of the character of the divine *khessed* must explore dimensions of reversal, renewal, and restoration. The divine *khessed* acts to reverse in some measure the consequences of the fall and to restore in some measure the “very goodness” of Eden prior to that fall. Final redemption shall entail more than a restoration of Eden, but not less.

This pre-fall Edenic “very goodness” I am calling “shalom.” Nowhere in Scripture does this word fully comprehend the definitional scope or the semantic range I am according it. Nevertheless, this word seems especially fitted to comprehend something of the depth and richness of the created order which evoked from the creator himself the exclamatory assessment of “very good.”

The word “shalom” is variously translated “peace,” “harmony,” and “prosperity.” As such, its semantic range seems especially suited to illumine major components of the character of Edenic paradise. Negatively Eden was a place without enmity, violence, hate or scarcity. It was a place without want, poverty, sickness or suffering of any kind. Positively, Eden was a place of harmony, where all things served their proper role both functionally, relationally, and aesthetically. Eden was a flourishing place, a loving place, and a beautiful place. And it was a place, not of material scarcity, but of abundance; not of sickness, but of health.

In these ways, the word *shalom* commends itself for the use to which I want to put it. But in order to construe the word in way capable of capturing what we see in Eden with even more depth, it helps to conceptualize a three-dimensional relational *shalom*. The pre-fall Eden could evoke the exclamatory “very good” from the creator because three relationships flourished in proper harmony according to Yahweh’s creative purposes: (1) the relationship between human beings and their creator; (2) the relationship between human beings (Adam and Eve) with each other before their creator. And, the perhaps more controversial third relationship, which I am arguing is no less constitutive of the divine *shalom* or the divine *khesed* than the first two in each of the three epochs I have identified; (3) the relationship between human beings with each other before their creator *in the place (the home)* into which the creator settled them.

Vital to the hypothesis I want to explore is recognition that the triune God reveals himself from the beginning as a homemaker. Yes, the created universe bears witness to the creator’s mighty power, but not in some abstract manner in which the power displayed serves only as a demonstration that the creator is able to accomplish whatever he pleases. Rather, all that God made should be acknowledged as itself good and, once human beings are added to the mix, very good. Not intrinsically or inherently good. But good and then very good in the three-dimensional relationships within which it flourished prior to the fall. The creator made a home for us human beings and then put us into it.

That this place, this home, including both the universe itself and, in a special way, Eden, the garden of delight, belongs essentially to the creator’s purposes is indicated in various striking ways. First, that the home for human beings had to be prepared first in order to receive them. The Bible bears witness to a God who never intended to have, does not

have, and shall never have, a people without a proper place to dwell with each other and with the creator. No exclamatory divine “good” or “very good” could have sounded without the flourishing of all three relationships, including the third one involving place or home. Demonstration that this is so seems easy within confines of the Old Testament. But what about the New Testament so replete with seemingly place-disinterested and even place-hostile passages? More on this later. Second, the personal and meticulous manner in which the creation, design, and ordering of the home for human beings was made bears witness to the non-human dimensions of creation as more than a temporary stage on which or background against which some ostensibly more properly “spiritual” history might play out. Such personal and meticulous care in creation culminating in the divine “very good” accords more with an artistic and architectonic crafting of an essential component of the divine purposes in creation.

Oh yes, the non-human dimensions of create constitute lower orders of creation for sure—“you are worth more than many sparrows” (Luke 12:7). But gradations in ordering or value do not indicate *mere* instrumentality, non-essentiality, or impermanent status. In short, every dimension of the created order attaching to Eden and the universe for which Eden provided the center, however encompassing of real orderings and gradations of value, remains in the crosshairs of the creator’s redemptive work. That is why “the whole creation” rightly “waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God” and, thus, “to be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (Romans 8:19-22).

Thirdly, the consequences of the fall encompass all three dimensions of *shalom*, including the “home” dimension. Thus, not only is the relationship between the creator and human beings, and between human beings themselves disrupted and distorted, the ground itself is cursed and expulsion from the paradisiacal home ensues. Now thrust into the land of Nod, east of Eden, human beings find themselves ejected from the home divinely fitted to their flourishing. But, good news! In the time between the times, and the time between the “places,” the divine *khessed* promised by God and expected by his people, acts to restore, albeit partially and impermanently for the time being, all three dimensions of *shalom*, including the “home” dimension.

Khesed, Redemption, and the Prosperity Gospel

Khesed love promises make of Abraham a great nation and to settle them “into the land” he will show them (Genesis 12:1), a land “flowing with milk and honey” (Exodus 3:8). There, “if you walk in my statutes and observe my commandments and do them, then I will give you your rains in their season, and the land shall yield its increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit” (Leviticus 26: 3-4). There, in their new divinely provided home, “the Lord God will make you abundantly prosperous in all the work of your hand, in the fruit of your womb and in the fruit of your cattle and in the fruit of your ground” (Deuteronomy 30:9).

Such divine blessings between expulsion from Eden and the arrival of that city not made with human hands involve partial and impermanent reversals of the fall and harbingers of the coming redemption of all things. So do the feeding and healing miracles of Jesus and his promise in the long last discourse of John’s gospel that he is going to “prepare a place” for his followers (John 14:1-3). Every serious reader of Holy Scripture knows how easy it is to find passage after passage in which the blessing of God is physical, material—bound up with physical wellbeing and material prosperity, all the physical and material components that belong to happy settlement into a well-protected and flourishing home.

And yet, do not many of us evangelicals draw back a bit from such passages? I think we do and I believe a major source of such wariness is fairly easy to identify. It is the troubling and tragic specter of the prosperity gospel. Troubling because we know that the Bible does not equate the index of divine favor in this life with the rise and fall of physical and material wellbeing. Indeed, as Jesus warned on his way to the cross, “in [this] world you will have tribulation” (John 16:33). Indeed, as for Jesus Christ our Lord, so also for us, obedience often leads to the opposite of physical health and material wealth. At more than one level, including the physical and material level, Dietrich Bonhoeffer heard the call to discipleship aright—“When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.”² I call the prosperity gospel tragic because, all too often, where it flourishes, the suffering of faithful disciples is multiplied by

² Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Macmillan, 1959), 99.

estrangement and even repudiation by fellow believers who trace all their “trouble” to a failure of their own faith.

At the most fundamental level, evangelical repudiation of the prosperity gospel is both right and needed. Yet the prosperity gospel continues to strengthen and spread, not among liberals who long ago abandoned submission to a divinely inspired, inerrant, and authoritative Bible, but among those who do. How can this be? The lure of the prosperity gospel is very strong. We who oppose it come armed with truckloads of suffering, sacrifice, and persecution passages. But they who embrace the prosperity gospel come bearing loads of Bible passages of their own—passages such as the ones I have referenced already in my wide-scoped sketch of the relationship between creation, *shalom*, *khesed*, and redemption.

Heresy and Prosperity

That sketch fits with the ancient mind of the church in its affirmation of creation, incarnation, and redemption against an array of some the most pernicious and enduring heretical teachings the church has faced—teachings that pit creation against redemption, that privilege non-physical, non-material dimensions of reality against ostensibly “spiritual” realities, dualistic teachings that go so far as to repudiate the creator himself. From Marcion to Mani to a bewildering array of Gnosticisms, the church has felt compelled, on the basis of the testimony of Holy Scripture to affirm again and again the full scope full scope of the divine “good” and “very good” in both creation and redemption. The passages cherished by prosperity preachers are precisely those the church has cited in own its defense against an array of creation-wary and creation-hostile heresies.

I wonder if current evangelical repudiation of the prosperity gospel has unwittingly both ceded too many chunks of the Bible to our opponents and unwittingly lapsed into Gnostic and/or Marcionite patters of Biblical exposition—either “spiritualizing” what ought not to be or keeping quiet about blatantly “health and wealth” language we encounter on the pages of Scripture. Surely we can do better. When the Roman Catholic church made more of Mary than the Bible does, too many of us who recognized this and rejected it, began to treat Mary as a bit toxic, relegating her to the annual Christmas pageant. Cutting out

cancerous heretical tumors while leaving healthy orthodox teaching tissue intact has always proved difficult, but surely it comes with the territory for would-be faithful ministers of the word of God.

The prosperity gospel presents us with just such a challenge. The strongest and most effective exposure of the prosperity gospel as unbiblical will not settle for self-congratulatory, echo chamber-like repetition of the suffering/sacrifice/persecution passages between ourselves. It must take away the passages upon which the prosperity preachers depend. When we do so, it will require avoidance of all Gnostic and dualistic squeamishness about the divine creation and redemption of the physical world, replete with deliverances from bondage, conquests and settlements, incarnation, healings and feedings and feastings, and a promised Messianic banquet in a new heaven and new earth without crying or pain. It will learn better how to theologize about the connection between our prayers touching all things physical and material and sermons where we “go spiritual” and tend to treat such matters as second-class citizens in the scope of divine redemption. It will learn theologize better not only about the bearing up and waiting, but also about glimpses, foretastes, and first fruits.

Let Suffering Be Bad

As a first prompter to what a more robust response to the prosperity might look like, we might reflect a bit on the origin, character, and future of suffering. Should not suffering’s origin in the fall as punishment pit us against it and not for it? Prosperity preachers say so and surely we must join them. It’s not the three dimensioned shalom that is doomed but rather suffering, also in three dimensions, that is doomed. Yes, God makes sin, death, hell, the grave, and suffering serve his redemptive purposes. Indeed, through suffering alone is redemption secured. The Lord enables his children to bear up differently under suffering and persecution than those without hope. Thanks be to God!

But that bearing up finds its power not in some glamorization of suffering or conversion of suffering from a bad thing to a good thing. Such bearing up arises from the sure hope that the suffering is temporary and ultimately doomed. “I reckon that the sufferings this life are not work comparing to the glory that is to be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18). Paul made sure the Corinthians could not interpret his inner strength in

the face of the deterioration of his “outer tent” as either Stoic nonchalance or Neoplatonic anticipation of release of the spirit from the tomb of the body. “For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed . . .” (2 Corinthians 5:4).

We must accept the challenge to make the prosperity gospel passages our own. In doing so we must not leave behind, but we must also must move beyond the shaking of the suffering passages mainly in our own and others’ faces, toward more Biblically positive celebration of the entire scope of the *shalom* for which we were made and which ongoing divine acts of *khessed* bring to us, albeit, for now, partially and temporarily, as true first fruits and harbingers of what is to come.

Maker of Heaven and Earth

The threat of the prosperity gospel as rival to the true gospel is real and must be met with the most effective weapon at our disposal—the word of God. But a deeper threat emerges when, in our horror and recoil against the perniciousness and global spread of this “other” gospel, we lapse unawares into variously Gnostic, Marcionite, Neoplatonic, and Manichaeian squeamishness with regard to creation itself. It is not for nothing that the first article of the oldest post-canonical Christian creed confesses “God the father almighty, maker of heaven and earth.” It is not too much to say that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob’s favorite way of demonstrating his deity was precisely introducing himself as the creator and then displaying his mastery over all that he has made.

Psalms 29 marks just one of the many instances in which the divine glory is acknowledged and celebrated as it is refracted through the magnificence of what Yahweh has made and the use he continues to make of it. How ought worshipers “Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength?” How might they “Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name” and so “worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness?” Apparently by pondering and being properly enthralled by the Lord as the Lord of creation who “is lord over the waters . . . over many waters,” whose voice “breaks the cedars of Lebanon” and makes Lebanon itself “skip like a calf.” His voice “flashes forth flames of fire” and “shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.” and “makes the deer give birth.”

This is how the Lord insists on being known and glorified, as the one who “sits enthroned over the flood” as “king forever.” But why? Why the axiomatic embeddedness of the glory of the Lord, his worthiness for praise, with his act of creation and his continued delight in and mastery over *all* that he has made? So that us humans might recognize, acknowledge, and worship the creator for his great power and only to then learn that the physical creation is not the heart of the matter but that actually it is merely the stage on which God sees to the truly “spiritual” matters related to the individual soul such as the forgiveness of sins? No. When Jesus asked rhetorically “Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘your sins are forgiven.’ Or to say, ‘Rise, take up your bed and walk?’” he was not subordinating the one act to the other, but displaying two equally divine and holy powers and preoccupations (Mark 2:9).

The fall and its consequences have neither negated nor undone nor forestalled the original divine commitment of the creator to homemaking. The creator’s redeeming purposes have the whole of what was made and the original plans for the whole in its crosshairs. Thus Psalm 29 reaches its crescendo: “May the Lord give strength to his people! May the Lord bless his people with *shalom!*”

Much more is at stake in the clash with the prosperity gospel than exposure of Joel Osteen and his ken as false teachers. If we settle for a technically correct but too narrow critique of this false teaching, we may unwittingly concede full affirmation and enjoyment of the heart of the gospel itself, which aims at much more than the saving of immaterial souls. Unwitting Gnostic and Marcionite opposition to the prosperity gospel illegitimately shrinks and truncates the scope of divine redemption. In so doing it shrinks the scope of the abundant life Jesus Christ came to give through a false shrinking of God’s own concerns. It unwittingly imagines a God settling post-fall for a salvaging of a mere slice of what he made and abandoning his original plans in creation. Such shrunken views of God’s interests and plans cannot be reconciled with the one who now has all power in heaven and on earth, through whom and for whom all things were made and who makes all things new (Matthew 28: 18; Colossians 1:15-20; Revelation 21:5). Surely we can and must find ways to oppose the prosperity gospel that leave the Lord of this universe, the creator and redeemer of all, properly acknowledged, worshiped and enjoyed.