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Editorial

This issue is devoted to the Southern Baptist Convention's January Bible Study book, the Gospel of Mark. Notwithstanding synoptic research on the issue of Markan priority, the study of Mark's gospel has largely been neglected in comparison with the other gospels. This relative neglect is unfortunate because Mark's gospel challenges its readers with an especially powerful message. Mark emphasizes—more so than the other gospels—the cost of discipleship. He presents Jesus as the suffering Son of Man and urges his readers to take up their crosses like Christ did.

Our guest contributor to this issue is Dr. Craig Evans, the Payzant Distinguished Professor of New Testament at Acadia Divinity College, Acadia University, Wolfville, Nova Scotia. He is the author of numerous scholarly works, including a volume on Mark in the Word Biblical Commentary series. Evans contributes to this journal an extremely helpful article titled, "The Gospel of Mark in Current Study."

This issue also contains three inspirational sermons based on texts from Mark's gospel. First, Dr. R. Philip Roberts contributes "Is That Your Final Answer?" a gospel sermon from Mark 10:17-22 on the rich young ruler's encounter with Jesus. Second, in "Three Requirements for Following Jesus," Dr. Walter Norvell soberly reminds us from Mark 8:34 to take up our crosses. Third, Dr. Michael McMullen supplies "Edwards was Extraordinary," an article which includes a previously unpublished sermon from Mark 2:17 preached by Jonathan Edwards.

In my article titled, "The Heart of Mark's Gospel," I briefly discuss not only the central message of this biblical book, but also how Mark structured his material on the cost of discipleship.

Finally, though he does not contribute from Mark, Radu Gheorghiiță fittingly asks in his article whether Scripture memorization has any place in biblical studies. His answer is a resounding "Yes!"

Should not the latter practice find increase in our lives more than ever, especially as we take Mark's message to heart, counting the costs and seeking to be Christ's disciples? I think so.

To God's glory—Enjoy!

Terry L. Wilder, Editor

The Gospel of Mark in Current Study

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Introduction

In the last dozen years or so a large number of commentaries and monographs on the Gospel of Mark made their appearance. Many of them apply aspects of the newer methods of literary criticism; some follow older methods, but with fresh data and new insights. Markan studies in some ways constitute a microcosm, as it were, of New Testament scholarship in general.

In the paragraphs that follow I shall look at fifteen commentaries and more than twice that number of monographs. I divide the latter into three general categories, touching (1) questions of authorship, genre, and source, (2) themes, and (3) exegesis of specific Markan passages. The essay will conclude with an assessment of major issues, including proposals that place Mark in the context of the Roman Empire.

Commentaries

The commentaries surveyed below range from various literary approaches to the more or less traditional philological and background approaches. All make significant contributions to Markan interpretation to one degree or another, though a couple of them stand out. My comments here are brief. One or two themes will be discussed more fully later.

Edwin Broadhead's commentary appears in Sheffield's series, called *Readings: A New Biblical Commentary*. He has published several monographs on Mark, as well as various articles. In his commentary Broadhead speaks of the "alert reader" or the "attentive reader" (and not the "implied reader," which is so popular today). The evangelist stakes out his story in 1:1-20 and then offers eight "acts," made up of several "scenes." Broadhead believes Mark's attentive readers will hear important echoes and allusions to Old Testament texts and themes (an aspect of Markan study that several commentators and authors of monographs have emphasized). The thinness of the book means that these allusions and themes are briefly treated, and sometimes

overlooked. The one aspect that I suspect many readers will question is Broadhead's lack of interest in Mark as an oral narrative.

Michael Cahill, *Christopher Hall*, and *Thomas Oden* have published important works that assemble and assess ancient commentary on the Gospel of Mark. Cahill's book consists primarily of a translation of a seventh-century exegetical work on Mark by an (Irish?) abbot, whose Latin text (*Expositio Evangelii secundum Marcum*) Cahill published previously in the Corpus Christianorum Series Latina (vol. 82; Turnhout: Brepols, 1987). Readers are treated to many examples of allegorical interpretation and at times insightful points of connection between Mark and the other Gospels. Hall and Oden have assembled ancient commentary on Mark from a variety of patristic sources, in keeping with the purposes of the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture series. This is a rich resource, gathering and translating pertinent comments from sources that in many cases are not readily accessible and have not been translated before.

John Donahue and *Daniel Harrington* have produced the commentary on Mark for the Sacra Pagina series. We have here an interesting team of scholars. Donahue is well known as a redaction critic, exploring what ways the evangelist's editorial work reflects his and his community's *Sitz im Leben*. Harrington is well known for expertise in Semitics, especially Aramaic. The merger of their respective skills makes for a learned and insightful commentary. Nevertheless, some readers may be disappointed that the commentary proper does not explore literary development and themes in as much detail as the Introduction seems to promise.

James Edwards published his commentary in the ad hoc series that has become known as the Pillar New Testament Commentary (for other examples, see Morris on Matthew and Carson on John; the latter is the series editor). Although this even-handed, balanced commentary is traditional in many ways, it offers a refreshing assessment of Mark's employment of irony, journey, and insiders/outsidere, complete with several excursuses on important themes. Edwards accepts the Roman province of the Gospel and gives it an early date (ca. 65).

Richard France has published the commentary on Mark for the highly technical New International Greek Testament Commentary series. His meaty work is on par with Howard Marshall's commentary on Luke, though in my opinion the former is more reader friendly than the latter (especially in that it does not become bogged down with interaction with secondary literature). France identifies Christology and discipleship as the key themes of the Gospel. In contrast to Broadhead, France views Mark as consisting of three acts—marked off by geography—following the prologue (1:1–13). He is inclined, moreover, to accept the Papiian tradition that lying behind Mark is Petrine and Roman tradition.

The editors of the Word Biblical Commentary originally assigned Mark to *Robert Guelich*. He brought out volume 1 in 1989, but died suddenly two years later. Guelich's volume emphasizes form criticism and redaction criticism. His thorough work is rich with interaction with major commentators and secondary literature. Volume 2 was assigned to me and appeared in 2001. Although issues relating to form and redaction are treated, I have chosen to emphasize comparative literature, background, and history. I have also been able to take advantage of the abundant harvest of research stemming from the pseudepigrapha, Dead Sea Scrolls, and archaeology, much of which came to light in the 1990s. In agreement with Gundry (considered next), I do not see hidden ciphers or double meaning in Mark or ideas in any way opposed to a theology of miracles or the like. I view the Gospel—written in the late 60s—as presenting Jesus, not Caesar, as the true "son of God." (More will be said on this theme below.) Currently I am writing a replacement for volume 1. I have also written a brief commentary on the whole of Mark in *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible*, edited by James Dunn and John Rogerson.

Robert Gundry's commentary is not in a series, but is free-standing. It is distinctive for its uncompromising rejection of what so many Markan scholars think they can detect in this Gospel. Gundry declares: "The Gospel of Mark contains no ciphers, no hidden meanings, no sleight of hand" (p. 1). He goes on to deny the presence of a messianic secret or mirror images of various enemies or heresies. "Mark's meaning lies on the surface. He writes a straightforward apology for the Cross, for the shameful way in which the object of Christian faith and subject of Christian proclamation died, and hence for Jesus as the Crucified One" (p. 1). As I state in the Preface of my commentary, I think Gundry is correct. However, I do think the evangelist Mark is instructing the faithful in matters of discipleship, but I also agree with Gundry that the disciples are not mirror images of enemies of the community. Gundry offers a detailed and sympathetic analysis of the Papiian tradition.

Morna Hooker's commentary appears in Black's New Testament Commentary series and as such replaces Sherman Johnson's commentary that appeared in 1960 (jointly under the series headings of Black's and Harper's New Testament Commentary). Hooker's readable commentary is far more detailed and is almost twice the length of Johnson's. Hooker judiciously reviews the Papiian traditions, concluding that the Gospel probably was written by someone who may have had contact with Peter and who wished to explain why Jesus died. She also dates Mark to just before or just after 70.

Virgil Howard and *David Peabody* have written the commentary on Mark in the *International Bible Commentary*, edited by William Farmer

and others. Curiously, though Howard and Peabody support the minority view that Mark's Gospel was written last, utilizing Matthew and Luke as sources, they choose not to emphasize this point in their commentary (p. 1334: "The present commentary is . . . not dependent upon any literary theory of synoptic relationships"). Also somewhat surprising, given the tendency of adherents of the Two Gospel Hypothesis (or Owen-Griesbach-Farmer Hypothesis) to argue that the authority of Peter lies behind Mark, Howard and Peabody do not press for either Roman or Petrine origin. For another significant "chapter-sized" commentary on Mark, see the one by *PHEME PERKINS* in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, edited by Leander Keck.

Donald Juel's commentary on Mark has been published in the Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament. It is a lightweight, reader-friendly commentary that cuts right to the chase, explaining the meaning of the text, passage by passage and often phrase by phrase. Juel is skeptical of the Papiian tradition, casting doubt on Markan authorship, Petrine influence, and a Roman provenance. He also dates Mark as late as 80. For an updated and thematic treatment, see Juel's *Master of Surprise* as well as his contribution to Abingdon's Interpreting Biblical Texts series.

Eugene LaVerdiere has written a two-volume commentary that is intended for the church, not the academic guild. Nevertheless, there are some intriguing interpretations that scholars will find interesting, even if not persuasive (e.g. the reference to the crowd in 3:20 and not being able to eat implies the presence of Gentiles; or "son of man" as part of an Adam Christology).

Joel Marcus has been asked to replace the weak commentary by *C. S. Mann* in the Anchor Bible series. This is a good choice. Marcus has produced some innovative studies of Mark, especially sensitive to the function of the Old Testament in this Gospel. Mann's commentary is plagued by the inconsistency of his exegesis with his adoption of the Two Gospel Hypothesis. Instead of finding evidence that Mark made use of Matthew and Luke (as the hypothesis requires), over and over again he finds evidence of the primitiveness of the Markan tradition. The commentary founders and critics have savaged it. The first volume of the replacement commentary appeared in 2000. Marcus thinks it likely that the Gospel was written by a man named Mark, perhaps John Mark. But he doubts the Papiian tradition that links the evangelist with Peter. Moreover, he doubts the Roman location, opting instead for a Syrian setting (as argued in his dissertation). Marcus describes the Gospel as a liturgical drama, whose purpose is to reassure Christians who are suffering persecution at the hands of Jewish revolutionaries shortly before or after the destruction of Jerusalem. The evangelist invites his

readers to take comfort in and to share in Jesus' suffering. We eagerly await the appearance of the second volume, in which Marcus may nuance his thesis.

Francis Moloney has produced a free-standing commentary. In my estimation it is one of the best in the middle-size category. The commentary sections are concise, with judiciously written footnotes that take readers to the heart of the important issues. There is no fluff in this commentary. It grew out of the classroom setting and is written with that setting in mind. Moloney believes Mark was written shortly after the capture of Jerusalem in 70, that the evangelist was familiar with Roman law and custom (and perhaps wrote in Rome), and that the Gospel reflects a community suffering persecution.

John Painter's commentary is in the New Testament Readings series. Treating whole passages, the commentary is eminently readable. Painter exploits the ambiguity of "the gospel of Jesus Christ," meaning either the gospel that Jesus himself proclaimed or the gospel concerning Jesus that the early church proclaims. Painter thinks the ambiguity is intentional and as such bridges the gap between the proclamation of Jesus and the later proclamation concerning him. In some ways this commentary is an updated version of the form critical approach. Painter identifies the various stories (correction stories, commendation stories, and the like). Speculatively Painter aligns the Markan evangelist with Paul, over against the central authority of the Jerusalem church. Mark's Gospel is thus "the Gospel which best represents the Pauline point of view" (p. 213). Painter has given a new spin to an old proposal.

Bas M. F. van Iersel has written a "reader-response" commentary on Mark, in which he compares what he imagines were the "first readers" with "present-day readers." He situates Mark's first readers in Rome, shortly after the fall of Jerusalem in 70. These readers are familiar with the Old Testament, particularly the Psalms and the stories of Elijah and Elisha. Problematic is van Iersel's belief that Mark's readers were familiar with Paul's letter to the Romans (whatever one thinks of Painter's arguments). Consequently the apostle's letter sometimes significantly influences interpretation of Mark. Not too many critics will accept this procedure.

Ben Witherington III has written a free-standing commentary that seeks to apply the insights of socio-rhetorical interpretation. The evangelist's preferred rhetorical form is the *chreia*, which was to be read orally. The whole of Mark constitutes an instance of biography (which is what many interpreters in recent years have recognized). This commentary is readable (though sometimes a little too cute) and enhanced with several brief excursions on various topics. Some will criticize the commentary for its failure to explain clearly its theoretical

basis, especially with regard to its subtitle (i.e. just exactly what is meant by “socio-rhetorical”?). Nonetheless, the commentary is helpful.

By way of conclusion, I offer a few comments about some of the German commentaries. Arguably the best is by *Rudolf Pesch*, whose two thick volumes are in Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament. This commentary—whose format is not particularly reader-friendly—is characterized by careful assessment of almost every issue and by substantial engagement with primary and secondary literature. The volumes appeared originally in 1976-77 and have been updated periodically on into the 1990s. The updates themselves are modest, focusing mostly on bibliography and brief supplemental notes. Consequently the commentary has fallen behind in some areas, such as in the Dead Sea Scrolls and recent archaeological finds.

Two other German commentaries that should be mentioned are those by *Joachim Gnilka* and *Dieter Lührmann*. The former has produced two slender volumes in the Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament. Like Pesch, Gnilka dates Mark’s publication to shortly after the fall of Jerusalem (ca. 70-73). Lührmann, known for his work in apocryphal gospel papyri and fragments, has produced a one-volume commentary in the Handbuch zum Neuen Testament. He accepts Papias’ attribution of the Gospel to Mark, but doubts association with Peter, and, as does Gnilka, he finds Mark’s structure revolving around Christology.

Readers should know that *Cilliers Breytenbach* is working on a replacement volume in Wilhelm Meyer’s *Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neuen Testament*. Ernst Lohmeyer’s work (first edition, 1937) is very much out of date. Breytenbach has already published several important works on the origins, composition, and perspective of the Markan evangelist and his community. Finally, all of us eagerly await *Adela Yarbro Collins*’s commentary on Mark, which is to appear in the *Hermeneia* series. Collins has published several works on Markan eschatology and *Sitz im Leben*. New volumes in the *International Critical Commentary* and the *New Cambridge Bible Commentary* may also be expected in due course.

Monographs on Authorship, Genre, and Source-Critical Issues

It needs to be stressed here at the outset the studies treated below represent only a sampling of the many books that have been published in recent years. These books are selected for their distinctive contributions and illustrative usefulness. They are also readily available to readers of this journal.

Clifton Black has produced an outstanding study of the traditions relating to John Mark, which many early authorities believed was the author of the Gospel. Black reviews the references to this person in the

New Testament and in patristic sources. He then examines Mark in the light of these traditions. Black does not commit himself to a given conclusion, but he does prudently inquire in what ways the John Mark tradition contributed to the church's interpretation of the Gospel.

Maurice Casey investigates what Aramaic sources may have lain behind the Markan Gospel. He begins his work with a vigorous criticism of previous work that has explored this topic. Casey is particularly sharp in his criticism of C. C. Torrey and Günther Schwarz, and takes an unfair and misleading swipe at Stanley Porter, who has suggested that Jesus may have known some Greek (p. 67). (Ongoing research into the languages of Galilee suggests that many Galileans probably did know some Greek in the period in question). With the deck cleared, Casey states his contention: "Mark's Gospel contains some literal translation of Aramaic source material" (p. 86). He then treats four passages: 2:23-3:6; 9:11-13; 10:35-45; and 14:12-26. At many points his work results in exegetical gains. In my judgment, Casey is on the whole successful.

Harry Fleddermann and *Werner Zager* tackle the vexatious question of Mark's relationship to Q. Both presuppose Markan priority. (According to the Two Gospel Hypothesis the problem simply disappears, for the so-called "Q" material found its way into Mark because the evangelist found it in his Matthean and Lukan sources). Fleddermann argues that Mark knew and minimally made use of Q. This point is the primary burden of his work. Zager assumes that Mark and Q are independent, as he tries to argue for an eschatological dimension in Jesus' preaching (contra the Jesus Seminar).

Peter Head wades into the source-critical debate, investigating the development of Christology. He finds that the evidence does indeed favor Markan priority, with Matthew developing aspects of Christology found in the earlier Gospel. *David Neville* reopens of the question of the Synoptic Problem in terms of the argument from order. He finds that although at points this argument favors Markan priority, it is not decisive. Other criteria (such as redactional and theological criteria) are necessary to settle the question. It seems that Head's approach offers one such criterion.

Four significant studies have appeared that relate in various ways to the question of the genre of Mark. *Dennis MacDonald*, in keeping with a long-held interest, believes it is necessary to interpret Mark in light of Homeric epics. He finds Homer echoed at many points in the Markan narrative. Jesus is cast as Odysseus, both of whom "suffered much." The disciples of Jesus are compared to the feckless crew of Odysseus. The stilling of the storm, the Gerasene demoniac, the execution of John the Baptist, the feeding stories, the transfiguration, the healing of the blind man—all are said to have counterparts in Homer's tales of *Odyssey* and

Iliad. But what is the trigger in the Markan narrative that alerts readers and hearers that Homer's epics are indeed the underlying text? MacDonald can't say. Surely Mark's opening verse, which utilizes the language of the Roman imperial cult, would alert readers and hearers to a different paradigm. This is not to say that Homeric influence is not felt anywhere in Mark or other New Testament literature; it may well be. But these Homeric influences may play no greater role in Mark than do Shakespearean allusions in today's English. More will be said on this question below.

Marion Moeser finds analogs for Mark's stories, or anecdotes, in classical Greek literature and in rabbinic literature. She investigates fourteen Markan anecdotes (which are mostly identified as *chreiai*). Her conclusions are consistent with the point raised above against the hypothesis put forward by MacDonald. *Michael Vines* takes the study a step further, arguing that Mark's Gospel is not so much a biography as it is a novel, and a Jewish novel at that. That novelistic features may in fact be present in Mark is probably true, but I doubt seriously that the evangelist thought of his work as a novel or piece of fiction (any more than the tellers of the stories of Elijah and Elisha thought these stories were works of fiction). The Markan evangelist proclaims Jesus as God's Son because he actually did the things described in the narrative. The evangelist did not attempt to write a bestseller, but a narrative that boldly tells the story of one who possessed amazing power, a power seen even in death. The comments at the end of this essay will relate to this point. *Christopher Bryan* concludes, rightly in my opinion, that Mark is indeed a "life," which was to be read aloud.

Monographs on Thematic Issues

Most learned monographs that treat the Gospel of Mark investigate general themes, hoping to shed light on the work as a whole. Most of books reviewed below fall into this category. And it is in this category more than in others that we encounter examples of special pleading and subjectivity. My comments are very brief.

Barry Blackburn's dissertation leveled much-needed criticism against the various *theios aner* ("divine man") hypotheses that had become so popular in previous years (as seen, for example, in work by Hans Dieter Betz). Not only has the concept itself been seriously challenged (and many would now say debunked altogether), Blackburn demonstrates that there is no fixed *theios aner* concept in late antiquity; there is no evidence of Hellenistic divine man concept influencing Judaism or early Christianity; and there is significant evidence that the miracle traditions of the Gospels, including Mark, reflect patterns seen in the Old Testament.

Peter Bolt's recent monograph is a model of properly contextualized historical and exegetical inquiry. He systematically works his way through the Gospel of Mark, asking the question in what ways would the narrative impact first-century readers in the Roman Empire. Aspects of health, disease, death, fear, bondage, and the like are taken into account, particularly from the point of view of the suppliant, who petitions Jesus for help. All of these problems—as understood in late antiquity—are linked to death, and this is what Jesus has confronted and defeated. Mark's Gospel is not simply an apology for the cross (as Gundry so forcefully argues in his commentary), but a demonstration of how Jesus has confronted and defeated humankind's greatest evil: death. This is the evangelist's good news. In my opinion Bolt's richly-documented study is of the utmost importance for Markan research.

Edwin Broadhead has produced three monographs that may be briefly mentioned. In *Teaching with Authority* (1992) the object is not the historical Jesus or the situation of the evangelist, but the meaning (or "grammar") of the Markan narrative. Broadhead attempts this by focusing on the miracle stories, showing how they advance the narrative in important ways. *Prophet, Son, Messiah* (1994) focuses on the Markan Passion Narrative and so is in a sense a sequel to the earlier study. He stresses the continuity of Passion Christology (the son of man who suffers) with the powerful Christology of miracles (the son of man who has authority. In *Naming Jesus* (1999) Broadhead focuses on the titles of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark. Some of these titles are explicit (e.g. "Holy One of God" or "son of David"); others are "embedded" (e.g. Priest, Teacher, Shepherd, Suffering Servant). Careful and comparative consideration of the way in which the evangelist uses these titles and categories should clarify his Christology. *Peter Müller's* work might be mentioned here. He too recognizes the importance of titles for understanding Mark's Christology, but believes their significance is closely bound up within the narrative context, especially in the light of the resurrection.

In a collection of programmatic essays *Adela Yarbro Collins* proposes that Mark be viewed as an "apocalyptic historical monograph" (which strikes me as a little too modern), in which the healings and exorcisms play an important eschatological role. She also suggests that much of Mark 13 derives from the historical Jesus. Disappointingly, she thinks Mark 16:1-8 is fiction, intended to create a narrative context for the early church's proclamation of the resurrection.

John Cook's monograph takes a text-linguistic approach to Mark. In this highly technical and semantic study, the author follows ideas put forth by David Hellholm and others. Cook also makes use of speech-act theory and tries to make sense of Mark's alleged secrecy theme. In the

end, he thinks the evangelist's principal concern is "to draw people into discipleship" (p. 285). I think most students (and veteran scholars, for that matter) will find this book dense.

James Crossley's recent study tackles head on the question of the date of Mark's publication. He pursues this question from every imaginable angle. Crossley has little faith in the Papiian tradition, so he finds no help in external tradition. Mark 13 could reflect almost any time between the 30s and 70 and therefore has limited use for dating Mark. He also places no faith in arguments based on Mark's alleged relationship to Pauline theology. Crossley instead appeals to the attitude toward the Jewish Law in Mark, concluding that the evidence suggests this Gospel was composed sometime between the mid-thirties and the mid-forties, that is, before significant Pauline influence. It will be interesting to see how scholars react to this bold proposal. I plan to test it as I work through my commentary on Mark 1:1-8:26. Although for now I still hold to Mark's publication in the late 60s (i.e. before the conclusion of the Jewish war), I am certainly open to an earlier date. For more on the question of the Law in Mark, see discussions of Sariola and Svartvik below.

Timothy Dwyer probes the theme of wonder in Mark. The study is prompted by the observation of some thirty-two occurrences of words or descriptions of wonder, in reference to miracles, exorcisms, teaching, unusual events, and the empty tomb narrative. Dwyer studies aspects of wonder in the Greco-Roman and Jewish worlds, concluding that the evangelist has exposed his readers and hearers to the ineffable, which cannot be explained but must be experienced. In my judgment aspects of this work comports well with Bolt's study described above.

Susan Garrett investigates the rhetorical and cultural conventions of Mark, focusing on the ways in which Jesus faces temptation (and not simply that of the "temptation story"). The failure of the disciples, the death of John the Baptist, and the agony in Gethsemane are investigated. Garrett concludes that the temptations of Jesus (as well as those experienced by his disciples) function paradigmatically for the Markan community.

Douglas Geyer's study grows out of his work as a psychiatric social worker, who has treated veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. For Geyer it is Mark's abrupt ending that provides the clue for the purpose of the Gospel. This purpose is to assure the followers of Jesus—past and present—that the "good news" of their master is sufficient for the terrors and uncertainties of a fallen world. Geyer's approach is highly symbolic and although it offers fresh and stimulating interpretations here and there (thanks in part to expertise in psychology), most will view his results with skepticism. Moreover, his conclusion,

that Mark's message is that "we can still follow Jesus to find out what might happen next" (p. 274), does not rise above banality.

James Hanson investigates Mark's portrayal of the conflict between Jesus and his opponents, on the one hand, and the conflict between Jesus and his own disciples, on the other. He is not sure if the negative portrayal of the disciples is polemical or pastoral. In my view this negative portrayal has been exaggerated and usually misunderstood by interpreters, who tend to read far too much into the Markan narrative. Hanson does not interact with the related and earlier published thesis by Shiner (see below).

Thomas Hatina argues that the context of Mark's use of Scripture is found within the narrative itself. Hatina examines the function of Exodus 23:20/Malachi 3:1/Isaiah 40:3 in Mark 1:2-3; Isaiah 6:9-10 in Mark 4:11-12; Isaiah 29:13 in Mark 7:6-7; Psalm 118:26 in Mark 11:19; and a cluster of texts in Mark 13:24-27. Hatina proposes an intriguing solution to the meaning of Mark 8:39-9:1 (viz. that the religious authorities will see judgment come upon them). The work represents a sophisticated advance in understanding the function of the Old Testament in the New.

Konrad Huber investigates the significance of the five "Jerusalem Controversy Dialogues" for Mark's understanding of Christology (i.e. 11:27-33; 12:13-17, 18-27, 28-34, 35-37; with 12:1-12 treated in an excursus). Huber believes that all five of these dialogues originated in the *Sitz im Leben Jesu*. Markan editing and contextualization have enhanced Jesus' authority as a greater religious teacher. The work suffers from insufficient primary data (such as early rabbinic examples of controversy dialogues) and does not take into account the possible significance of the function of the *chreia* in Greco-Roman sources.

Paul-Gerhard Klumbies examines Mark's Gospel in the light of theories about myth. This is an important study, regardless of one's view of the antiquity and reliability of the material. After all, the people of late antiquity will have read and heard the story of Jesus as presented in Mark from perspectives that will not have sharply distinguished "history" (especially as we moderns tend to think of it) from stories about the gods. Klumbies urges us to understand Mark's use of *archē* in 1:1 in the light of mythology (which imperial usage would also have done). That is, the new era (part of the mythological scenario) *begins* with the appearance of Jesus, God's Son. This not-easily-digested book scores some important points about the way the Markan narrative would have been understood in the first century.

Ulrich Kmieciak reopens discussion of the meaning of "son of man" in the Gospel of Mark. In doing so he reestablishes the importance of this curious epithet, but avoids (anachronistically) imputing to it messianic or technical meaning. The epithet derives from Jesus, to be sure, but takes

on important meaning in Mark, in which the authority of Jesus is underscored.

Amy-Jill Levine and *Marianne Blickenstaff* have edited *A Feminist Companion to Mark*, with contributions by Joanna Dewey (on Mark 8:34, to “deny” oneself), Deborah Krause (on the healing of Peter’s mother-in-law), Wendy Cotter (on healing the woman with the hemorrhage and raising the daughter of Jairus), Sharon Ringe (on the gentile woman), Elizabeth Struthers Malbon (on the poor widow), Dennis MacDonald and Marianne Sawicki (on the anointing of Jesus), Kathleen Corley (on female disciples), Victoria Phillips (on the women at the tomb), and others.

Joel Marcus has written an important book on the use of the Old Testament in Mark (and also a significant essay on Isaiah in Mark, in the *Festschrift* for David Freedman). The title of the book is *The Way of the Lord*, so Marcus appropriately launches his study with an investigation of the meaning of Isaiah 40:3 in late antiquity and its function in Mark 1. In the Markan context the “way of the Lord” is the way of the cross. The book is rich in background discussion and exegetical insight. It is must-reading for Markan study.

Maksimilijan Matjaz studies the theme of fear in Mark (and so in some ways is a companion to Dwyer’s investigation of the theme of wonder). This fear is understood in terms of the awe humans feel in the presence of the divine. The background here is developed out of the Old Testament, which is appropriate, but intertestamental writings are not brought into the discussion as fully as they should have been. Some interpreters will question Matjaz’s interpretation of the fearful women at Mark 16:8.

Susan Miller investigates the function of women in the Gospel of Mark. This recent dissertation complements the *Feminist Companion* mentioned above. Miller finds in Mark a very positive portrayal of women, which raises several interesting questions about the evangelist’s point and may well be of great significance for understanding the role of women in the church.

Dwight Peterson has written a hard-hitting and much-needed critique of the commonly held notion that a distinctive “community” can be reconstructed from the Markan Gospel and that apart from such reconstruction this Gospel cannot be understood. *Prima facie* evidence for this conclusion is seen in the “lack of agreement among Gospel community constructors” (p. 4). The most obvious problem is circularity: constructing an imagined community that then influences the interpretation of the text. Peterson illustrates this problem by assessing the differing reconstructions offered by Werner Kelber, Howard Kee, and Ched Myers.

Narry Santos investigates the implications of the authority-servanthood paradox in the Gospel of Mark. The whole of Mark is seen to contribute to dimensions of this paradox. Santos concludes that the evangelist has deliberately created tension, in order for his readers and hearers to appreciate the paradoxical nature of Jesus. I wonder if the evangelist created this paradox, or if it reflects the actual experience of Jesus?

Heikki Sariola investigates the function of the Jewish Law in Mark. He treats the controversy over purity in 7:1-23, the sabbath controversies in 2:23-3:6, divorce law in 10:2-12, the decalogue in 10:17-27, the Great Commandment in 12:28-34, and issues relating to the temple in 11:15-19. Sariola attempts to isolate Markan redaction and reconstruct pre-Markan forms. He sees Jesus exercising great authority in his interpretation of the Law, sometimes even nullifying it. In my opinion, Sariola does not always carefully distinguish the Written Law from the competing interpretations found in Oral Law. Crossley's sensitivity at this point makes his a better study.

Brenda Deen Schildgen has produced two studies. One treats the interesting history of Mark's reception in the church, highlighting its neglect over the centuries and its remarkable resurgence in the last one hundred and fifty years. The other study investigates the concept of time in the Gospel of Mark. Influenced by the theories of Paul Ricoeur, she identifies "sacred time," "mythic time," "ritual time," and "suspended time." I find this study highly theoretical and wonder if modern theories are being read into an ancient text. Indeed, some of the interpretation strikes me as bordering on allegorical interpretation (e.g. does John's head on a platter really foreshadow the Last Supper? See p. 110).

Whitney Taylor Shiner compares Mark's portrayal of the disciples with disciples and followers in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, Iamblichus' *Pythagorean Life*, Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, and the Wisdom of Jesus ben Sira. Shiner's comparisons are interesting and suggest that Mark's view of the disciples is not nearly as negative as some in the past have thought. More engagement with early Jewish traditions is needed. Appeal to ben Sira is useful, to be sure, but in itself is insufficient. Shiner's important study would benefit from examination of rabbinic traditions of discipleship.

Stephen Smith's Lion with Wings examines Markan narrative along the lines of Alan Culpepper's *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*. Characters, plot, space/time, point of view, and rhetoric are the principal topics of study. Treatment of the last topic is probably the best part of the book, whose conclusion fragments with the interesting admission (pp. 235-36) of the limited value of narrative criticism and the difficulty and lack of

appeal that Smith's book will have for students and specialists alike. Curious.

William Telford's study of Mark is a strong addition to the Cambridge New Testament Theology series. He inquires into the three theologies of Mark: those of author, text, and reader. Telford also probes the Markan setting, which is understood in terms of persecution and estrangement from the community's Jewish heritage. The major contribution is to the Markan portrait of Jesus, who is seen as the suffering Son of God. This portrait is then compared to other New Testament writings, and the history of the interpretation of Mark is reviewed. This book is very helpful in orienting readers to the main lines of Markan research.

In contrast to Albert Sundberg's view that Daniel was the most important Old Testament writing for Mark, *Rikki Watts* now argues that the book of Isaiah (especially the second half of Isaiah) is the key influence. This ambitious study focuses on Mark's opening verses (1:1-3) with the conviction that they indicate Mark's "conceptual framework" (p. 370), which revolves around the theme of a new exodus. There is a great deal of insightful material in this engaging book.

Joel Williams investigates the role played by the minor characters in the Markan narrative. He finds that these minor characters sometimes play major roles. Foremost among the minor characters is blind Bartimaeus (10:46-52). He is portrayed as an exemplary figure who summons Jesus for help, leaves behind his property, and follows Jesus.

There are other, older studies that should be taken into account. One thinks of *Ernest Best's* solid work, in which in one study he argues for the influence of the Old Testament on Mark and that Mark falls between oral and written literature. His work on discipleship in Mark is a classic. *Phillip Cunningham* has written a useful, semi-popular treatment of Mark seen in Roman setting. *Frans Neirynck's* study of Markan redaction remains very helpful. The bibliography on Mark that was assembled under Neirynck's direction is of enormous value. The semi-popular studies on discipleship and the Passion, by *Dennis Sweetland* and *Donald Senior*, respectively, may be noted.

Lastly I mention *Burton Mack's* imaginative tour de force, *A Myth of Innocence*. In this extraordinary book Mack accuses the Markan evangelist of inventing the Passion story, whereby the Jewish religious authorities—instead of the Roman authorities—are blamed for the death of Jesus. The problems with this book are legion, with the hypothesis just mentioned seriously undermined by the independent accounts found in the fourth evangelist and in Josephus, accounts that corroborate the Markan narrative at just this very point. Infatuated with the Hellenistic world of the eastern Mediterranean, Mack ignores much of the relevant Jewish and Palestinian data, resulting in very skewed interpretations of

the meaning of Jesus' teaching and activities and Mark's presentation of them. A number of other weaknesses and improbabilities could be reviewed. As it has turned out, Mack's book has been largely ignored by mainstream Markan scholarship. Of course, it has been hailed in some circles, as illustrated in part by the jacket endorsements, some which are simply ridiculous. Werner Kelber describes this book as "the most penetrating historical work on the origins of Christianity written . . . in this century." Ron Cameron enthuses that Mack's book "is surely one of the most important studies of the origins of Christianity since Schweitzer's *Quest*." This is the stuff of utter nonsense, even when allowance is made for the hyperbolic nature of promotional endorsements. *A Myth of Innocence* exemplifies how far tendentious, axe-grinding scholarship is prepared to go. This book has not made and will not make a lasting contribution to either serious Markan scholarship or the investigation of Christian origins.

Exegetical Monographs

A large number of exegetical monographs have appeared in the period under review. Some focus on a single passage; others on larger blocks of material. Many of the ones discussed below engage in comparative, traditional work and present useful insights.

In keeping with his interest in the Judaic background of the Gospels, *Roger Aus* has produced two interesting and learned studies of Markan passages. In one he probes the interpretive backdrop of the story of the Gerasene demoniac (Mark 5:1-20) and other passages from Matthew, Luke, and John. In the demoniac story Aus brings to bear a wealth of background information, much of it concerned with demonology. The story "demonstrates with suspense and very many vivid details how Jesus, God's Son, has complete authority and power over the unclean spirits/demons" (p. 99). The second study investigates the backgrounds and overlapping points of contact in the parable of the Wicked Tenants (12:1-9) and Gethsemane (14:32-42). Aus thinks the beloved son of the parable is Isaiah (and this I find doubtful), while the portrayal of Jesus in Gethsemane has been colored by Moses traditions (which is a more plausible possibility). Whether or not one accepts all of Aus's proposals, one is treated to a rich feast of interpretive tradition and lore.

Jean-François Baudoz investigates the interesting passage of the Syro-Phoenician woman as presented in Matt 15:21-28 and Mark 7:24-30. He underscores the differences in perspective in the two versions. The passage in Matthew reflects a Jewish-Christian orientation, while the passage in Mark reflects a largely Gentile-Christian perspective. He treats the two versions of this story as independently derived, rather than viewing the Matthean version as a reworking of the Markan version.

Many Markan scholars will demur at this point. Baudoz is to be commended for trying to interpret the respective versions of this story in the light of different community situations, but I think some of his specific points of interpretation (e.g. the dogs under the table) smack of allegory and subjectivity. These details should be interpreted in the light of culture and convention. In this case the dogs under the table eat crumbs (which especially fall from tables when children are eating) before the dogs outside eat what is thrown out. Being *under* the table signifies nothing and should not be related to Pauline theology.

Mary Ann Beavis argues that Mark 4:11-12, which contains an allusion to Isaiah 6:9-10, plays a key role in Mark 4 and in the Gospel as a whole. She understands Mark as written for oral presentation (almost like a play), including evangelistic proclamation. Mark 4:11-12 consciously distinguishes between those inside the community of faith and those outside, and challenges those outside to reconsider their refusal to accept the Christian message. Isaiah 6:9-10 and Mark 4:11-12 are treated in studies by Lehnert, Marcus, and Mell, all of which are treated below.

Agustí Borrell treats us to a study of Peter's denials in Mark 14:54, 66-72. He contends that Peter's denials of Jesus constitute a "paradigmatic manifestation of the disciples' inability to follow Jesus to death" (p. 212). Peter's failure highlights Jesus' prognostic powers and strength in the face danger, suffering, and death. In this the Markan evangelist proffers his readers "good news," that is, despite the failings of his followers, Jesus himself does not fail, but fulfills his mission, accomplished God's purposes, and restores the ruptured relationships in his community.

Michael Humphries has written an insightful study of the synoptic tradition in which Jesus is accused of being in league with Beelzebul (Mark 3:19b-30 and parallels). Humphries offers some original work in the meaning of Beelzebul in tradition and in early Christian communities. Unfortunately, influenced by Burton Mack, he understands "kingdom of God" in the Hellenistic sense of wisdom and community, rather than in the Judaic sense of the ruling presence and power of God (as seen in the Psalms and elsewhere in Scripture and in the Aramaic paraphrasing of Scripture in the synagogue).

John Chijoke Iwe investigates Mark 1:21-28, where Jesus teaches in the Capernaum synagogue and heals a demonized man. Because themes from this passage recur in Mark, Iwe believes the passage serves a programmatic purpose. However, this may be a bit of an overstatement. The passage certainly does adumbrate things to come—such as Jesus' attack on the kingdom of Satan—but it is hardly programmatic. For one

thing, there is no overt Christology in this passage, nor is there mention of the kingdom of God, the very heart of Jesus' proclamation.

Alberto de Mingo Kaminouchi's monograph investigates the meaning and significance of Mark 10:32-45, the passage that addresses position and power in the Christian community. The author is sensitive to the innertextuality of the Markan narrative and the context of the first-century Mediterranean world. The latter point is especially concerned with the way power was understood in the first century. In view of Mark's narrative development, the reader and hearer will readily perceive how ill-conceived the question of James and John is in 10:35. Their misguided request, of course, gives Jesus the opportunity to give proper teaching on power. Kaminouchi hears echoes of Herod's banquet (Mark 6), as well as other banquet stories, at various points in the Markan story. He also makes the intriguing suggestion that the reference to *lytron* ("ransom") in 10:45 should be interpreted in the light of Roman practices of manumission.

Volker Lehnert reopens the question of the function of Isaiah 6:9-10 in Mark 4:10-13 (and in Luke 8:9-10; Acts 28:25-27). He reviews previous research on this interesting passage, including studies by Joachim Gnilka and me (see also Joel Marcus in the next entry). Lehnert examines the versions and the variants of the Isaiah passage, though curiously does not probe the variants of 1QIsaiah^a, which may be deliberate and if so are quite interesting. He examines the function the passage had in various contexts and settings. He thinks Isaiah's original command not to hear or to see was reverse psychology, intending to provoke the hearers to hear. Lehnert believes Isaiah 6:9-10 plays a crucial role in Mark's Christology, touching on the question of Jesus' identity. I agree that this text is important, but think it has more to do with Jesus' message not his identity. (See also the study by *Mary Ann Beavis*.) This point is underscored in the next study.

Joel Marcus studies Isaiah 6:9-10 in the larger context of Mark 4 as a whole, asking the question how Mark's first readers understood the parable chapter. The evangelist has assembled and edited traditional materials, creating "apocalyptic epistemology" through which the real meaning of the kingdom of God can be understood and therefore the essence of Jesus' message as a whole. The passage reflects the Markan community's struggle to evangelize in the face of opposition. Some interpreters may question to what extent Mark 4 actually mirrors the community's *Sitz im Leben*, but on the whole this study makes an important contribution.

Ulrich Mell has published two exegetical treatments of important Markan passages. The first is a study of the parable of the Wicked Tenants, in the larger context of Mark 11:27-12:34, and the second is a

study of the parable of the Sower (Mark 4:1-9). Both studies evince detailed exegesis and consideration of pertinent parallels and cultural features. In the first, Mell argues that the parable of the Wicked Tenants does not derive from Jesus but originated in Hellenistic Jewish Christianity. Coherence with LXX Isaiah 5:1-7, which supplies many of the parable's details, and the quotation of LXX Psalm 118:22-23 at the conclusion of the parable constitute the primary reasons for this position. Unfortunately Mell does not take into account 4Q500 and early targumic and rabbinic interpretation of Isaiah 5:1-7 and thus fails to recognize the Palestinian character of this parable. In the second book Mell argues that the parable of the Sower derives from Jesus and originally concerned the kingdom of God. The parable is studied in the light of farming practices in Galilee and Markan editing and contextualization are taken into account in great detail. Mell suggests that the parable was originally uttered in Capernaum.

Klaus Scholtissek's study investigates the concept of the authority of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark (a study that in fact provided Mell with his point of departure), which is understood as a key component in Markan Christology. Jesus' authority is seen in his participation in the saving activity at work in God's inbreaking kingdom. Mark's Christology is therefore not limited to titles, but is acted out in the mighty deeds and teachings of Jesus, who possesses unrivaled authority. Paradoxically, the high point of Jesus' authority is seen in his obedience to God's will by going to the cross.

Jesper Svartvik investigates the meaning and authenticity of Mark 7:15, "There is nothing outside a man which by going into him can defile him; but the things which come out of a man are what defile him." He concludes that the saying goes back to Jesus and that it was not anti-nomistic. Jesus' saying was part of an aggadic teaching concerning the perils of evil speech (perhaps related to Deuteronomy 24:9) and was not an abrogation of the Jewish food laws and should not be understood in terms of the gloss found in v. 19b ("Thus he declared all foods clean"). Svartvik thinks the utterance originally had this meaning: "It is not so much what goes into a person [*or* the mouth] which defiles, but what comes out of a person [*or* the mouth] which defiles" (p. 408). This detailed study makes an important contribution to the larger question of how Jesus and the evangelists understood the Jewish Law.

Major Issues

As one might expect, Mark's Christology remains a hot, ongoing topic of discussion. Recent work seems to be moving more toward examining aspects of Mark's "narrative Christology." On this point, see *Jacob Naluparayil's* monograph and *Mark Powell's* essay. For additional

assessments of Markan Christology, see Naulparayil's very helpful essay, as well as the essays by *Eugene Boring*, *Cilliers Breytenbach*, *Gerhard Dautzenberg*, *M. M. Jacobs*, and *Donald Juel*.

Related to the question of Christology is the question of Mark's purpose and what type of literature it represents. As seen above, I have called into question Dennis MacDonald's appeal to the Homeric epics. I question this hypothesis, not because I think there are no allusions to Homer in the Gospel—there may well be—but because Mark's incipit (i.e. the opening verse, 1:1) unmistakably alludes to the Roman imperial cult: "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, son of God." The Priene Inscription in honor of Augustus (*OGIS* 451) speaks of the emperor as "God" and the beginning of the good news for the world (and similar statements are made of other first-century emperors), a point for which I have argued in an essay. I find several points of contact between Mark's story of Jesus and aspects of the cult of the Roman emperor. One should also see *Detlev Dormeyer's* interesting essay on this topic.

I should also mention that *Adela Yarbro Collins* has concluded that "son of God" at the end of Mark 1:1 is a scribal gloss and not part of Mark's original text. Early manuscript evidence is almost evenly divided, and internal considerations cut both ways: either a scribe glossed the text with a common confessional title, or an early scribe omitted *huiou theou* through homoioteleuton. Mark's Christology seems to call for the retention of these words, especially in light of the centurion's confession in 15:39. I shall address this issue fully in the replacement volume 1 of the *Word Biblical Commentary*. Collins will doubtlessly address it further in her *Hermeneia* commentary.

If it is agreed that in its incipit the Gospel of Mark alludes to the Roman imperial cult, then we have clear indication of at least one of the Gospel's purposes: to challenge belief that Caesar is God's son and that in him good news for the world begins. The Markan evangelist has apparently attempted to apply Isaiah's message of good news to the empire as a whole and not simply to Israel, which longs for redemption. Accordingly, Mark's message constitutes a bold challenge to Rome. If Mark was written in the late 60s, then this bold challenge was issued shortly after the death of Nero, the last of the Julian emperors, when Roman imperial succession was plunged into chaos. If Mark was written in the 40s, as James Crossley argued, then it may be viewed as a challenge to Caligula and the threat to the Jewish people that he had become. In any case, ongoing scholarly support for placing Mark's Gospel in a Roman setting (with the notable exception of Joel Marcus) lends general support to my interpretation of Mark 1:1.

And finally, another battle is seen in the debate concerning the religious context of the Gospel of Mark. Some contend for a Hellenistic

background, appealing to various Greco-Roman epics or various literary forms and structures. Others have emphasized the Judaic background, especially in reference to Israel's Scriptures and the interpretive traditions that grew up around them. Here I might mention the essay by *Daniel Harrington* in the recently published volumes in memory of Anthony Saldarini. Harrington concludes that Mark is a very Jewish Gospel and is friendly toward the Jewish people, even if engaged in polemics with some Jewish leaders. Of course, elements of both Hellenistic and Judaic contexts are probably present in Mark. There is no need to choose one and exclude the other (keeping in mind Martin Hengel's important work on the blending of Hellenism and Judaism). But the question of which context is primary is a pressing issue and is sure to continue at the heart of the debate.

The Gospel of Mark, its sources, its relationship to Matthew and Luke, the evangelist and community from which it emerged, including its relationship to Judaism, and its genre will remain items of ongoing investigation and debate. In my view, significant progress has been made, thanks to new source material, a burgeoning of studies of Galilee, and the critical sifting of methods. Although consensus on many of these important questions is not yet in sight, convergence at some points seems to be taking place.

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Is That Your Final Answer?

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Introduction

“I love to tell the story of unseen things above, of Jesus and His glory, of Jesus and His love; I love to tell the story because I know ‘tis true, it satisfies my longings as nothing else can do.”

The words of this beloved hymn describe the preeminent task of a preacher of the Gospel—from the text of Holy Scripture preaching Jesus and his love. I cannot think of a more delightful and at the same time more challenging assignment for the evangelist.

When I come to any Gospel, including Mark, I find myself thrilled afresh to encounter Jesus through his inerrant and trustworthy Word. But the proclaimer’s job then is to communicate the words on the page to the hearts of people so that Jesus is made real to the hearers. The ability to preach to others the Gospel from the Gospels is finally to be trusted to the preacher’s adequate preparation and the illumination of the Holy Spirit. Then Jesus comes alive in a fresh and powerful way so that “sinners will be converted” and the saints of God quickened.

The following sermon is an average preacher’s attempt to take seriously the text of Mark and to explicate it to others so that God may use it for the salvation of the lost.¹ After all, it is through the preaching of the Word and its hearing that faith is aroused. If the following pages in some measure encourage you to preach through Mark or another of the three reliable records of Jesus’ glory, love, and truth then my purpose will be achieved. Probably you will be energized by a clear desire to improve on the preaching of the Gospel—so be it. The ultimate issue always is that Christ is preached!

Sermon

In Mark 10:17-22 we read these words:

¹ This sermon was preached on August 8, 2004, at First Baptist Church, Macon, MO, and is transcribed here with minimal editing.

Now as he was going out on the way, one came running and knelt before him and said, "Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may have eternal life?" And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? There is one who is good and that is God. Do you know the commandments? Do not commit adultery. Do not murder. Do not steal. Do not bear false witness. Do not defraud. Honor your father and your mother." And he said to him, "Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth." And Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, "One thing you lack. Go, sell all that you have and give it to the poor and you shall have riches in heaven. And then come, take up the cross and follow me." And on hearing these words, he was sad and went away sorrowful for he had great possessions.

It's been called the most successful game show in American television history, and just about everybody has seen the television game show *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?* By the way, do you know the answer to the question, "Who wants to be a millionaire?" Regis Philbin. He only made a quarter of a million dollars a pop off of every show that he hosted in that series. It was and is a very interesting program, and I enjoy watching it occasionally. You know how it works—a contestant wins the opportunity to be in the hot seat. And once they were in the hot seat, they then were challenged to answer fifteen questions. The questions begin from the most simple to the most complex. They are multiple-choice questions.

When I was in school, I always liked true and false questions best because you had a fifty percent chance of getting it right, even if you didn't know the answer. Correct? Everybody knows that, right? Well, next to true and false, I liked multiple-choice the best because you at least had an opportunity of guessing at the answer. Well that's the way this program is: four answers to one question. And you not only have the option of choosing one of the four, but you also have three lifelines in the course of those fifteen questions if you get stumped. You may call a friend to get some help, or you may poll the audience to see what their suggested right answer is, or you can have the computer take away two of the wrong answers. But usually in every contestant's experience there will come a point and place at a question where they struggle. They will sort of mull over the answer and talk it over with Regis a little bit. They will discuss out loud what they think the right answer is and so forth and so on. And then they take a stab in the dark and say it is A, B, C, or D. The punch line and the line for which the show became famous was when Regis leaned forward and he'd ask them this question: "Is that your final answer?"

That is the question I would have liked to ask the rich man. "Is that your final answer? Is that the last response that you will make to Jesus?" We don't have any other record in all of the Bible and all of the Gospels

about this man's response. We have stories of other rich men like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea that pop up at the end of Jesus' life. But this man, we don't know his name; we don't know if he went away and just turned his back on Jesus and that was the end of the story, or maybe he changed his mind and came back later. We just don't know. Was that his final answer?

But what is also very interesting about this encounter with this man and Jesus, as it parallels the game show, is that in the game show you know you can get some right answers, but if you give the wrong answer at the end or in the course of your contest, you're due to lose virtually everything. In the young ruler's case, he did lose everything. But I want us to note here that he did get some things absolutely pinpoint straight right and correct. And for that he ought to be commended. So what I want to do is just to look at some of the things he got right and the way he handled this situation. Take note of his right choices, then the bad choice he made at the end.

I. He Went to the Right Person.

First of all, I want us to note that with this very important question, he went to the right person. What does verse 17 say? It says, "Now as he." And who is the "he" there?—Jesus—Jesus "was going out on the way." In Mark's gospel we don't have to fill in the blanks when we ask the question, "Who was the 'he' here?" Mark's gospel answers it for us. Very interestingly, Mark's gospel is called the gospel of action. Jesus comes on the scene as the man of power and authority. In fact, Mark's gospel doesn't record as much of the teaching of Jesus, but it records a whole lot of the actions of Jesus. So, who was the one who was going out of the way? Well, Mark's gospel, if you read the first ten chapters, you'll discover he's the one who could still the waters. He's the one who could make the blind to see. He's the one who would forgive and could forgive sin. He's the one who could walk on the waters, who could multiply the loaves and the fishes. Here was the one who came as the very Son of God, the Savior of the world, and the Redeemer of all those who would believe and trust in him. And I reason to myself, certainly this rich man knew something about Jesus or he wouldn't have been in such a hurry to catch up with him. And he, probably among other things, realized and understood, what a great and marvelous and wonderful teacher Jesus was. He had a question. It was an important theological and spiritual question. He doubtlessly understood that Jesus had a wonderful reputation because, among other things, we learn in Mark's gospel that Jesus was such an amazing, astounding teacher that folks would sit for days and listen to him teach. That's why he had to multiply the loaves and fishes and feed them, because they hadn't planned on staying for

days. But when they got in the presence of Jesus they didn't sit for extra minutes. Now, for example, if I go 10 minutes longer than your pastor does, I realize I'm going to get a few watchful watchers out there. You may put up with me for a few extra minutes, but not too many extra. But these people didn't stay for extra minutes; they didn't even stay for extra hours. They stayed for days. They forgot to pack their lunch and their picnic basket, but they didn't care because Jesus was such a fascinating, enthralling communicator that they were willing to sit for days, forgetting about eating, to listen to Jesus teach.

Among other things, we know his listeners weren't Baptists because you wouldn't have gotten a Baptist to go that long without eating, would you? You know the old saying, "Where there are two or three Baptists, there's a potluck dinner around somewhere." But they listened. The Bible says that the common people heard him gladly. He talked in an amazingly attractive and positive way, in a communicative way. But not only was it the way he talked, but it was what he taught. He taught the words of life. At one point in John 6 there were a bunch of naysayers and half-hearted erstwhile disciples who had left him, and Jesus turned from them and turned to his twelve. Jesus asked them, "And are you going to go away too?" And what was their response? "Lord, where are we going to go? You have the words of life." He taught the great things of God and the great truths of God. He didn't monkey around with all the traditional interpretations, the secondary issues, the issues that were irrelevant to the real concerns of real people. He went straight to the heart of people's relationships with God and how they could be established and generated and maintained. He taught with great authority and with great power and with great interest.

It wasn't just the talk of Jesus that attracted the rich man. It was also the walk of Jesus that doubtlessly drew this rich man to Jesus. Because you see, not only did Jesus teach, but he taught with accompanying signs of power. This is extremely clear in the Gospel of John. You can see how his life illustrated his message. You can go to John 6, where we have this story of when he multiplied the loaves and fishes. Then when he finished, he gave a little sermon. He said, "The bread which I give is my flesh, which I give for the life of the world. And any man who will eat of my flesh and drink of my blood, he will have eternal life." You see the important thing about the miracles of Jesus was that they always taught a truth about who he was. They weren't just signs of power to ooh and awe people or even just to meet human needs, although they did that. They also drew a picture of what Jesus came to do for all people of all time who believe and trust in him. So when he multiplied those loaves and fishes he was illustrating that he was the bread of life who came to

satisfy and fill spiritual hunger and needs of people. He came to provide food for eternal life, his body, his sacrifice on the cross for our sins.

Likewise in John 9, he makes the blind man see. And then later he comments on the fact that he is the light of the world. He just didn't come so that one man could have physical sight—although he had bestowed sight for sure—but he came so that all people who believe in him would have spiritual sight when they put their faith and trust in him. In John 11, he raised Lazarus from the dead. You remember the story. And Lazarus' sisters didn't understand why Jesus didn't come running when he heard Lazarus was sick, sick even unto death. He said, "This is for the glory of God." His purpose was to allow Lazarus to die. So people would understand Christ's greater power and wider purpose. He arrived therefore after Lazarus had been buried three days. Jesus called him forth from the tomb, and said, "I am the resurrection and the life. If anyone believes in me he will never die." He said this because of the fact that Jesus himself would conquer sin, death, and the grave through his death and resurrection.

So doubtlessly this rich man heard that not only was Jesus a great and fascinating teacher, but that Jesus taught spiritual truths and spiritual realities such that this man was seeking after; and not only that, he was accompanied by the power of God to illustrate he wasn't just any old teacher; he was the Son of God who came to reveal the truth of God and was the truth of God. So, the rich man started out well. Why?—because he went to the right person with his question.

If you have a question today about spiritual life, if you want eternal life, if you want to know the reality of what it means to know God and have a relationship with him, you need to come to Jesus.

II. He Came in the Right Way.

Secondly, let's note that in verse 17, that when he came to Jesus, he came in the right way. What does verse 17 say? "Now as he was going out on the road," one came strolling along, walking along to him. Is that what it says? No, it says, "One came running to Jesus." Isn't that an amazing thing? He was so impressed that Jesus would have the answer to his question, that when he heard that Jesus was in the neighborhood, whatever he was doing at the time—cutting a business deal, meeting with his accountant, counting his profits—whatever it was this rich man was doing, he decided it wasn't so important to keep him from finding Jesus and getting an answer to his question. So, what did he do? He dropped everything he was doing and he came running to the Master.

In Jesus' day, for a rich man to run took a bit of an effort. You know that in our day you don't usually see businessmen in suits somewhere in the city running very often, do you? If you do, you usually figure out

either (1) there is an emergency or (2) there's someone giving away some free football tickets—because that businessman has his priorities right. He's going. He's in a hurry. But in Jesus' day a rich man would have had a coat and then a cloak over it, a long gown, so to speak, and a long robe on top of it that would have served as a universal covering. And that is the way they wore them in those hot dusty areas of the Middle East. And so for a rich man to run meant that he would have had to have gathered up that coat and cloak like a lady would a skirt and run like that, or he would have tied them in a knot in order to free up his legs so that he wouldn't trip over his own clothes to run to Jesus.

His sense of urgency impresses me. It impresses me that this man realized that spiritual things have an important place in life. And he realized no matter how much money he had—we don't know how much he had, but the Bible says he had great possessions—no matter how much wealth he possessed, he realized for him to live his life here and now and to die and go into eternity and be separated from God was pretty dumb. So what he wanted to know is, "Master, good Teacher," not "How can I make more profit here and now?" but "Good Teacher, when I die, how can I know and what must I do that I may have eternal life?"

That was pretty smart of him don't you think? How about you? Are spiritual things a priority of yours? Is finding out whether or not you will get to heaven a question worth investigating? As you sit in this church with an open Bible in you hands, are you interested in what a person has to do to have eternal life? Have you found out what Jesus had to say about this most crucial of all issues? Are spiritual issues a priority of yours? They were to this rich man. So when he heard Jesus was in town, he came running.

But listen, there was something else in verse 17. He came running and what did he do when he got there? He knelt before him. Now kneeling is not something we do in the 21st century in our Western culture. Neither was it something that people necessarily did everyday in Palestine at the time of Jesus. It was only done to someone for whom you had the utmost respect, or to someone to whom you had to show deference, or to someone whom you realized had authority over you, or to someone of whom you were going to ask a great favor. Kneeling was a sign of subservience and submission and obedience. So when this man got to Jesus, what did he do? He knelt before him. Now let me ask you a question. Do you think it is possible that—having heard everything what he did about Jesus and his work and his ministry—the Holy Spirit may have spoken to this man and said to him, "This is the Messiah; this is Immanuel, God with us; this is *el gibbor*, the mighty God of whom Isaiah the prophet spoke; this is the one of whom the prophets spoke would come manifesting the glory of the Lord?" And so when this man

came to Jesus he may have had that impression and had that insight delivered to him and manifested to him by the Holy Spirit that this Jesus was God in the flesh. So he did what was necessary and worthy of God in the flesh; he knelt in his presence.

Everybody who trusts Jesus bows the heart and life to Jesus. If you confess Jesus as Lord, the Bible says you will be saved. But here is a great truth: If you don't acknowledge Christ as Lord in this life, one day you will be before God. Philippians 2 tells us, "On that day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord." Do you know why all people are going to do that? Because Jesus is Lord! That's the reality of eternity. All the religious leaders—Mahatma Ghandi, Mohammad, Buddha, every one of them—will kneel in the presence of Jesus and confess him as Lord of all. Some people will do this to their condemnation; if they didn't do it here and now, because faith is necessary for salvation and you are asked to do it in this life to be saved. Some of us will do so to our salvation because in this life we trusted Jesus as our Savior and Lord. This man was smart. He did the right thing. He not only knelt in his presence, but he called him good. Jesus called his hand on his having done so. "Well, why you calling me good?" There is only one who's good and that is God." The rich man didn't correct him. And it may well be that he understood that Jesus was the one with all power and authority because not only did he come running, not only did he kneel, not only did he call him good, but he asked him a question only God could answer with any authority.

So what else is interesting in how he came to Jesus there in verse 17? We might ask the question, "Where did all this happen?" What does it say? Verse 17: "Now as he was . . ." Where?—out on the road. In other words, this event did not occur in a synagogue some place. This did not happen in his home or place of business. This wasn't done off in a private setting and situation like someone's garden, those rectangular homes with a garden in the middle where no one else is present. This was not done off on the side out of public view. This event took place out in public. This rich man, who obviously had authority and influence in his community, came to Jesus in public. Regardless of whether or not everybody was there to see what was going on, eventually everyone, including his family and friends and spouse, would hear about it in a few moments of him doing it. He knelt out there in public on the road. If they had a daily newspaper, let me tell you, this would have been headline news: "Jesus Comes to Town, Rich Man Kneels in His Presence and Asks a Question only God Can Answer." That would have been on the front pages. It tells us something—doesn't it?—about what it means to be a Christian, that we are to be open in our confession of Christ. Jesus said, "If you will confess me before men, I will confess you before my

Father who is in heaven. But if you deny me before men, I will deny you. Of him, the Son of Man will be ashamed when he comes in all of his glory and with his holy angels.”

So the point of all this is, if we are going to believe in Jesus, if we’re going to trust him, if we’re going to follow him as Lord and Master; we must do it publicly; we must do so openly; we must do it unashamedly. And that is why the church says if you’re going to be part of this fellowship, if you’ve trusted Jesus, if you’ve come to believe and put your faith in him the first thing that has to happen is . . . what? Baptism—because that is the public statement. It’s official New Testament style of one’s faith and allegiance to Jesus Christ.

III. He Asked the Right Question.

So, this man came to the right person. He came in the right way to the right person. And, thirdly, when he got there he asked the right question: “What shall I do that I may have eternal life?” Let’s just pretend that we don’t know the answer to this question and that we don’t have the Bible to answer it for us. And let’s imagine that you have an opportunity to ask God one question and get a straight answer. What question would you ask? This would be my question: “Lord, after I spend 50, 60, 70, 80, how many years on this earth, is there heaven and what do I have to do to get there?” “What shall I do that I may have eternal life?” That’s life’s most important question. Notably, there are 1,650 major religions in America today. There are many more around the world, tens of thousands of them. Giving an answer to the question is for the most part why they exist.

The answers they give, while diversified, can really be divided into two groups. The first group says, “Here’s our answer to the question: Join us, keep our rituals, our rights, our standards and maybe, maybe you’ll merit eternal life.” That’s what Islam says. Islam says that you can practice their religion all your life but that you can’t know for sure that you will have eternal life because if you die and go to meet Allah and if he is having a bad day, you may not get into paradise, no matter how devout you have been. It’s up to Allah. It’s up to his will. However, Islam also says there is one way you can know for sure and that is if you die in Jihad. If you die fighting for Allah and his purposes, whatever those might be, if you do that, then you will immediately go to paradise.

So why is it that 19 young men would kill the crews of four aircrafts and then kill themselves on September 11, 2001? Why would they do that? Because the religion they believe in told them that’s the way you get to heaven. That’s the way you can be sure. That event illustrates to us the importance of having the right answer to that question. Getting the right answer determines whether or not we will get to heaven, but it will also determine how big of an impact for good or for ill we will make in

this life. Those terrorists had the wrong answer and their impact was horrendous and tragic. So on this one side there are all those religions that tell you to keep their rituals and rites and so forth, and then you might make it to heaven, maybe.

Then there is the other option, which is the biblical option that says, "Hey look. Salvation is not your doing; it is God's. Jesus Christ died for your sins. It's not a matter of works or you becoming a Baptist or anything like that." Some people say to me, "Well, you Baptists are so narrow. You believe only Baptists are going to get to heaven." And I say, "Well, we are more narrow than that. We don't believe all the Baptists are going to make it." Why? Because getting to heaven is not an issue of which church you belong to. It's an issue of whether you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and that you are not trusting your works or being a Baptist or trying to be a good person. I hope nobody here is doing that. Salvation is an issue of whether we realize that we are unworthy of salvation; that we can't save ourselves; that Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins. When we therefore put our faith and trust in him, we receive the gift of everlasting life. That's the biblical answer.

IV. He Got the Right Answer.

This man went to the right person, he went in the right way to that person, he asked the right question, and, fourthly, when he got there he received the correct answer. Look at what the word of God says. Jesus said to him, "You know the commandments. Do not commit adultery. Do not murder. Do not steal. Do not bear false witness. Do not defraud. Honor your father and your mother." Now, I know what you are thinking: "Well you just told us that salvation is by grace, by trusting and putting our faith in Jesus." But when Jesus answered this question, he starts talking about the Ten Commandments. Here is a very important point. Before you ever will trust Jesus for your salvation, you have to realize you can't save yourself. You have to realize that you have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

Notably, however, there was actually a sect of the Jews that thought perfection was possible and that they could achieve perfection. Maybe this man belonged to it. He believed that he was acceptable and up to standard. He said, "All these things I have kept from my youth." Maybe what he wanted from Jesus was a little pat on the back. The rich man had acknowledged the deity of Christ, but he wanted Jesus to say, "Sir, you are doing quite alright. By the way, all the rest of you folks observing what was occurring, you do what this man is doing and you are going to get to heaven." That's not what Jesus said. He took the rich man to what we call the second table of the Ten Commandments. The first four of the commandments relate to our relationship with God. The last six deal with

our relationship with each other. Jesus took him there first because this man needed to realize that he was a sinner and that he had fallen short of God's glory. He needed to realize that he needed the mercy of Christ.

Do you think that folks in America today need to hear that and realize this truth? Some 80 plus percent of Americans believe that there is a place called hell, but only about 8% believe that they are worthy or deserving to go there. That's the biggest problem we have in America. Most folks don't realize that they have sinned and come short of the glory of God. They need God's grace just like this rich young man did. Maybe the rich man expected Jesus just to pat him on the back. He said in essence, "Lord, I've done all this; give me something else to do." Perhaps he wanted to make everybody else look bad. You see, his problem was not unrighteousness. His problem was self-righteousness. He thought he was lining up to God's standards and was going to get to heaven. The problem with much of America—with many of the unrighteous out there—is the issue of self-righteousness. Most people don't realize they need God's grace and forgiveness.

It's very interesting how Jesus dealt with the rich man under these circumstances. Jesus actually lists a commandment here that isn't one of the Ten Commandments: "Do not defraud." That's not in the Ten Commandments. Well, it's not there directly in the most literal way, but it is in another sense. Jesus actually takes two commandments: "Do not steal" and "do not lie" and combines them into one commandment. Now, most of us probably believe that Jesus was God and that he wrote the Ten Commandments. Correct? They are his commandments. So we are going to allow him a little editorial privilege here. What he did therefore was to contextualize the Ten Commandments. What was Jesus' purpose in doing this? To speak to the rich man's conscience. This rich man had no desire or interest in violent crime. He wasn't going to rob someone in a brutal fashion. He wasn't going to break into a home. He wasn't going to hold someone up with a knife. Perhaps his shortfall was white collar crime. He didn't mind cutting the corners on a business deal. He didn't mind short changing somebody in a transaction. He didn't mind feathering his nest at the expense of people's ignorance. He used the laws and the fine points against them and he thought that was good because it wasn't violent crime. That's what fraudulent behavior is. So, what Jesus was trying to do was to open his eyes to help him see the truth about himself.

Here's a truth, however. Not only can rich people be fraudulent, but so can poor people. We can rob our employers of a good day's work. We can lie to them. We can commit petty theft and all that sort of thing. So fraud is not just something rich people do. Fraud is something that poor folk can do. The whole point is that all have sinned and come short of the

glory of God. So, Jesus wanted him to see that. Jesus took him a step further. Why? The man said, "I have done all these things." All right, you have kept the second table of the Ten Commandments. Let's go back to the first table.

What is the first commandment? "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." "Now sir," reading into the scene, "you've come here and you've knelt in my presence. You called me good. You've asked me a question only God can answer. You've done all this. Now let's just see if you are going to obey command number one. Go, sell all that you have. Give it to the poor." Personally, I think that if Jesus had stopped there he would have had closure. This rich man would have been stupid not to have sold everything that he had and given it to the poor. Why?—because he consequently would have received a home in heaven. Let me tell you something, if that is what is necessary to get salvation, you and I need to do it. We'd be stupid not to do so. I don't know how much combined wealth we might have in this room, but it is not a whole lot. If we gave it all away so we could get heaven, we ought to do it. We ought to dismiss church right now. Call our bankers and real estate agents and everybody else and liquidate everything we have. Cash it in and give it all to Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Amen? And sit back and take it easy, because we are on our way to heaven. You know what? Up in heaven we are told they fill potholes with gold. In Missouri we don't fill potholes with anything. But up there they fill them with gold. You know, the point about it is it would be worth it. To live eternally in a place like that, if it meant becoming impoverished right now.

And another thing is that once you have sold it all, what happens tomorrow? You can start all over, can't you? You just liquidate, doing what Jesus asked, you liquidate everything, give it all away, and tomorrow you start back getting it all back. Donald Trump pulled that one off. Colonel Sanders got rich on KFC after living on Social Security. He used to say that God called him to preach and he chickened out. You could start all over tomorrow, but that is not what Jesus said nor is it what he wanted. He said, "Sir, after you have given it all to the poor, that's not the end; it is the beginning, come, take up the cross and follow me." This is where the rich man had his problem. "Wait a minute, Lord, are you telling me not only that I have got to give away everything that I have, but then I've got to follow you? I've got to take up my cross? I'm to become your disciple?" That's exactly the point. You see the Bible says that he had great possessions. That is why he left. But here is the truth and this is the point at which the text is driving. Not only did he have great possessions, but more importantly, his possessions had him.

The Bible also says that Jesus, looking at him, loved him. Jesus wanted this man to be among his disciples. Jesus wanted this man to

belong to him, to be a follower of his. You see the real object here is not that Jesus wanted his money. Jesus said, "By the way, after you have sold it, give it to the poor. Don't bring it to me. I don't need your money. Give it away. Do something good with it." Jesus wanted him. And as long as that man served and idolized his possessions, he wouldn't belong to Jesus. So, Jesus said, "You get rid of it all. You come and be my disciple."

That's the whole point of salvation for us today. Salvation means that Jesus comes first in our lives. We know him as Lord, we trust his death on the cross, his resurrection, and we say, "Lord Jesus, I'm going to be your disciple and be your follower. Whatever you want me to do I'll do in obedience to you out of my love and regard for you."

V. He Made the Wrong Decision.

This man went to the right person. He went in the right way to that person. He asked the right question. He got the right answer. But in the end he made the wrong decision. The Bible said that he was sad on hearing these words and went away sorrowful for he had great possessions. This rich man decided that instead of doing what Jesus wanted him to do and becoming his disciple and paying the price that that decision would involve, he would instead live for himself the rest of his life. Did that make him happy? Did that give him a heart full of joy? Did that give him the security and insurance of a home in heaven? Absolutely not. Sadness would characterize the rest of his life. Oh, there may have been points of happiness and this, that, and the other. But in the end he'd never really have the joy of the Lord. He would never enjoy having the assurance of a home in heaven. He'd never enjoy the presence of Christ and his grace and love.

In this same book not far before this passage, Jesus said, "If anyone will seek their life, they will lose it." Do you want to live for yourself? Do you want to do your thing? Do you want to go your own way? Guess what the end result is? You're going to lose your life and the meaning of it. You will never have eternal life either. But, Jesus said, "If anyone will lose their life for my sake they will find it." If you will trust Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you will know eternal life and lasting peace.

Two quick parables: one of which popped up in *Time* magazine a number of years ago. I clipped it out and I said, "You know this thing is going to be a great sermon illustration one day." And it is for this one. Milestones, obituaries, *Time* magazine. Died, Donny Moore, age 35, hard luck baseball pitcher, from a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head. After shooting and seriously wounding his wife Tonya following an argument in Anaheim, California, his thirteen-year career impeded by injuries, Moore was released last month by the Kansas City Royals farm

team. Teammates said the reliever had never recovered emotionally from losing to the Boston Red Sox in game five of the 1986 American League playoffs. Moore was within one strike of taking the California Angels to the World Series when Boston outfielder Dave Henderson smacked a homerun to save the Red Sox from elimination eventually sending the team on to win the League Championship.

Now we can say, "Well, that's stupid." Here's a man who at age 35, said life was over. So he shoots his wife, attempting to kill her. Then he kills himself. Why does he do that? Because the pros tell him you can't throw a leather-covered five-ounce sphere 60 feet like we want you to. We don't want you any more. You're finished. So, life's over for him. Why?—because apparently for Donny Moore, life was comprised of how well he could throw that baseball. Now my question to you is what is your life comprised of? What is the meaning of your life? If you could write it in a sentence or two, what would you say that you exist for? Being a good neighbor, being a good husband, being a good parent, having a nice family, trying to be a positive contributor to the community, being a relative success in business, being a good provider, whatever, being a happy person? We could go down the line. Whatever it might be. Leaving the world in a better place, however you do that. But the point is if those are your answers, all that will one day be taken away from you. You're going to lose it all. It can't go on forever. "If you seek your life, you will lose it."

Parable number two: Jim Elliott, a young man in his 20s, graduates from Wheaton College, goes to the jungles of Ecuador, has a young wife and a young baby. His impression is he needs to take the Gospel to the Auca Indians. He goes there. He shares the Gospel. They martyr him and his two colleagues. At the end of the story others come behind him, including his own wife, Elizabeth Elliott. They reached the Aucas. The Aucas are Christianized, evangelized. They are now a mission-sending people. Was his life a failure? Absolutely not. And the point is, while it may have looked like he had lost his life, he actually found it and found eternal life and brought life to a whole nation of people. A few days before he was killed—as he was thinking about these words, "If you seek your life, you will lose it. If you lose your life for my sake . . ."—this is what Jim Elliott wrote about that verse. He said, "A man is no fool who gives away what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

These words encapsulate the essence of salvation. We surrender ourselves to Jesus, Savior and Lord. He in turn gives us himself, his grace, his salvation, so that we might have eternal life.

We cannot keep our lives. One day they will return in accountable fashion to our maker. Today, however, you may freely, happily, willingly give yourself to Jesus, the Lord of life.

The Heart of Mark's Gospel

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Introduction

Each of the four Gospels contains an emphasis on the cost of discipleship. Matthew describes Jesus as the rejected Messiah of Israel who encourages his disciples on how to respond to similar rejection as they are sent out amidst hostility (10:1-42). Luke emphasizes costly discipleship in his Travelogue (9:51-19:44) which describes Jesus' rejection on his way to Jerusalem where he will die. In the Last Discourse, John's gospel underscores persecution by the world (15:18-16:4) as Jesus prepares the disciples for what they will encounter in their ministries after his departure from the earth and before his return. But Mark's gospel appears to have the heaviest stress on the cost of discipleship. He writes "a community under duress, a duress that may well have given rise to questions about who Jesus really was and the nature of the kingdom that he had come to inaugurate."¹ He "wants to help his readers understand who Jesus is and what real discipleship involves."² He presents Jesus as the Son of God, the suffering Son of Man, and urges his readers likewise "to take up the cross." This emphasis, found primarily in 8:27-10:45, is rightly called by scholars the "heart of Mark's gospel." I will briefly examine below this section of Scripture in more detail.³

Interestingly, Mark's stress on costly discipleship is situated between two accounts in which Jesus restores sight to some blind men (8:22-26; 10:46-52).⁴ This *inclusio* obviously serves to illustrate the myopic plight of Christ's disciples.⁵ They see, but in a sense, are also blind themselves, and thus need to have their sight restored by Jesus. This section contains three predictions of Christ's passion (8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34). All three

¹ R. A. Guelich, "Gospel of Mark," *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (eds. Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall: Downer's Grove, IL: IVP, 1992), 524.

² Donald A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Leicester: Apollos, 1992), 101.

³ This brief literary analysis and exposition may not necessarily say anything that has not been said before, but is designed primarily to aid pastors and laymen in their study of Mark for the SBC's January Bible Study.

forecasts tell not only of his death, but also his resurrection. These predictions are followed by the failure of the disciples to understand just what Christ is saying (8:32-33; 9:32-34; 10:35-41). Consequently, Jesus uses these opportunities to teach on the cost of discipleship (8:34-9:1; 9:35-37; 10:42-45).⁶ He explains what real discipleship entails when he says, “If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me” (8:34).

Christ’s First Passion Prediction—8:31

Christ’s first passion prediction (8:31) immediately follows Peter’s confession of Jesus as the Christ (8:29). Mark arranged these statements in this manner to show just what type of Messiah Jesus is. He is one that will suffer, be rejected by the chief priests and scribes, and be put to death—hardly the kind of Messiah that Peter and the other disciples were expecting. After Peter’s confession of Jesus as the Messiah (8:29), the Lord warns the disciples not to tell others about him. Why would Jesus do this? The answer to the latter question is found in 8:31—the disciples “were not yet ready to proclaim Jesus as the Christ” because he first had to suffer and die.⁷ They did not yet understand that these events had to come to pass.⁸

The Disciples’ Misunderstanding—8:32-33

After Jesus made his first passion prediction, Peter rebukes Jesus (8:32), trying to prevent him from suffering and going to the cross, which Christ earlier had said was a necessity. The idea of a suffering Christ obviously did not fit in well with Peter’s concept of whom the Messiah should be. In response, Jesus strongly rebukes Peter (8:33) saying, “Get behind me, Satan!” He was telling Peter to get out of his way and stop tempting him. Satan was, in essence, working through Peter trying to thwart Christ’s destiny and divine mission to die for the sins of humanity.

⁴ Further, the first healing in 8:22-26 is a stubborn one (cf. 8:23) and does not take on the first try; on the other hand, the healing in 10:46-52 is instantaneous (cf. 10:52). From a literary point of view this detail illustrates that “curing the stubborn spiritual blindness of the disciples will also take a second touch” (David E. Garland, “Mark,” *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary* [ed. Clinton E. Arnold; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002], 254).

⁵ Guelich, “Mark,” *DJG*, 516-17.

⁶ Information in this paragraph on the structure and use of Mark’s *inclusio* found in Guelich, “Mark,” *DJG*, 516-17; and James A. Brooks, *Mark*. NAC (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1991), 136.

⁷ Brooks, *Mark*, 136.

⁸ Many scholars correctly recognize that the word “must” (dei=), found in 8:31, often conveys a sense of divine necessity. This nuance surely seems to be the one meant in reference to Christ’s suffering and death.

Christ's Correction—8:34-9:1

Peter's misunderstanding provided Jesus with the opportunity to correct and teach the disciples. This teaching, however, was also meant for others besides the disciples because v. 34 states that Christ "summoned the crowd with the disciples." Jesus then said, "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." This was a sober invitation to follow Jesus and be his disciple. To "deny yourself" is to reject your will as the master of your life. In the first century, to "take up the cross" meant forcing a condemned man to carry the horizontal part of the cross on which he would eventually die.⁹ This image was a startling one because "only criminals and slaves were crucified and carried crosses to the place of execution."¹⁰ Jesus' exhortation to "take up the cross" was a summons to martyrdom; he was inviting his disciples to die with him. Unfortunately, in our day we have cheapened the impact of Christ's words to mean "self-sacrifice" rather than dying with him. But Jesus made it clear that in order for one to save his life, i.e. in heaven, he must lose it while on earth for Christ and the gospel (8:35). On account of Christ the believer must be willing to pay any price, give up anything dear, endure rejection, and suffer. Further, the soul is worth much more than anything that the world might offer (8:36-37). If one is ashamed of Christ and his words, and denies him, e.g. in time of persecution,¹¹ then Jesus, when he returns, will also deny those who did not really take up the cross in discipleship (8:38). After just talking about dying, Christ further says that some standing by would not die before they saw the kingdom of God after it "has come" (ε0ληλυκει=an, perfect tense) with power (9:1). Since some of Christ's disciples witnessed the Transfiguration, his words likely refer to that event.¹² Jesus' words seem to focus, not strictly upon the arrival of the

⁹ Brooks (*Mark*, 137) and many other scholars correctly recognize this fact.

¹⁰ Garland, "Mark," 256.

¹¹ Brooks (*Mark*, 138) rightly recognizes, "In the first century being ashamed of Jesus and his words had particular reference to denying him in time of persecution."

¹² The same words in the other Synoptic Gospels are also immediately followed by that event. For fuller discussions of Jesus' words in Mark 9:1 see the various commentaries, e.g. those by Brooks and France. Further, though not a part of Christ's correction per se, one might ask, "Where do the accounts of the Transfiguration (9:2-10), the disciple's question about Elijah (9:11-13), and the exorcising of a demon from a deaf and mute boy (9:14-29) fit into the context of Christ's discussion on discipleship?" The following remarks should help to answer the latter question. First, although Jesus had to suffer, the Transfiguration indicates that this was not his ultimate destiny. Second, the disciple's question about Elijah is prompted by his appearance on the mount and the uncertainty that still exists amongst the disciples about who Jesus is. Third, the exorcism provides insight into the nature of faith in discipleship. Explanations used in this summary are drawn from Brooks, *Mark*, 141, 144, 146.

kingdom of God, but rather upon “the point at which its presence, already a reality, is (a) visible and (b) displayed” in power.¹³

Christ’s Second Passion Prediction—9:31

Jesus’ second prediction of his passion occurs in 9:31. He again reminds his disciples that he is a suffering Messiah. This passion prediction differs from the first one in that it speaks of Christ, the Son of Man, being “handed over (paradi/dwmi) into the hands of men.”¹⁴

The Disciples’ Misunderstanding—9:32-34

The disciples again misunderstood Christ’s statement; further, they were afraid to ask him about it (9:32). Why? Maybe they were frightened because he had now spoken not once, but twice, of his suffering and death. Perhaps they reasoned from Jesus’ words that whatever was going to occur to him would also happen to them. Maybe the disciples began to grasp slightly what it meant to be a disciple of Jesus—and it scared them.¹⁵ However, that the disciples had still grossly misunderstood Christ’s words is evident from the fact that they were arguing about who was the greatest amongst them (9:34b), even though Jesus had earlier spoken about losing one’s life for the gospel. The disciples kept silent when Christ asked them what they were discussing (9:33-34a); evidently, they did not want him to know.

Christ’s Correction—9:35-37

Jesus taught that worldly values are reversed in his kingdom. To address the self-seeking attitudes and discord of the disciples, he made clear the paradox of the Gospel—that one must be a servant to be first in his kingdom (9:35). Jesus symbolically used a child to illustrate that disciples are to receive and care for any outcasts or persons of lowly status; when they do so, they “receive” Jesus and act as he himself would do (9:36-37). The meaning of Jesus’ symbolic illustration is lost if we do not recognize the lowly place that children occupied in antiquity.¹⁶ Unlike today, no romantic idea of children was present in the first century; children in Mark’s day had “no power, status, or rights”; they were not looked upon as “full persons and were regarded as somewhat

¹³ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark*. NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 344.

¹⁴ A search of the LXX reveals that paradi/dwmi frequently means to “hand over” to persons and/or things of hostility or destruction. For example, the term is used in the LXX to refer to the ill-fate of the Suffering Servant (cf. Isaiah 53:6, 12) and the prophets (cf. Jeremiah 26:24 [33:24, LXX]; 38:16; 39:17 [46:17, LXX]).

¹⁵ As Brooks (*Mark*, 149) suggests.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 150.

akin to property.”¹⁷ So, to put the lid on the disciples’ yearnings to be great, Jesus taught in these verses that greatness in God’s kingdom comes through ministry and service, not through human rank, prestige, or position.

Christ’s Third Passion Prediction—10:33-34

Christ’s third and most detailed statement of his passion occurs in 10:33-34. Unlike the other two predictions, this time Jesus explicitly spoke of being handed over to the Gentiles, and mocked, spit upon, flogged, and killed. Further, Mark mentioned for the first time that Jesus was “going up to Jerusalem,” where all of these things would take place.

The Disciples’ Misunderstanding—10:35-41

The disciples may have an idea at this point that events are coming to a climax in Jesus’ life and ministry, but they still badly misunderstand. James and John, the sons of Zebedee, ask Jesus to do for them whatever they ask (10:35). Christ asks them what they want him to do (10:36). Their reply is that they want him to arrange for one of them to sit on his right and one on his left when he is in glory (10:37). In other words, James and John recognized that “Jesus is destined for great power and ask for special distinction in his messianic kingdom.”¹⁸ In Jewish thought to “sit on the right” of a king was a place of the greatest importance; to “sit on the left” was the second greatest place (cf. 1 Kings 2:19; Psalm 110:1; etc.).¹⁹ Jesus tells them that they do not really know what they are asking; he then asks them, “Are you are able to drink the cup I drink, or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with” (10:38)? The terms “cup” and “baptism” are metaphors that Jesus uses to signify his coming suffering and death. The “cup” refers to the “cup of suffering from divine judgment” (Psalm 75:8; Isaiah 51:17, 22; Jeremiah 25:15, 28; 49:12), while “baptism” pictures being “submerged in suffering (Psalm 42:7; 69:1).”²⁰ James and John quickly respond that they were able to drink from Christ’s cup and undergo his baptism (10:39). Their careless reply shows that they still misunderstand what discipleship means. Jesus foretells that they indeed would share his suffering (10:39). Further, he replies that places of honor are not his to grant; they are given to those for whom they have been prepared (10:40). Jesus probably meant that the

¹⁷ Garland, “Mark,” 260.

¹⁸ Garland, “Mark,” 265.

¹⁹ Brooks, *Mark*, 167-68. Citing Tacitus *Hist.* 2.59 Garland (“Mark,” 265) says, “When Vitellius accepted the title of emperor in A. D. 68, he praised his generals and ‘placed them on either side of his curule chair.’”

²⁰ Garland, “Mark,” 265.

granting of such honored positions is the prerogative of God the Father—he has reserved those places. Notice also the despicable behavior of the other ten disciples—when they got wind of James’ and John’s request, they became angry with them (10:41). No doubt they wanted positions of honor in Christ’s kingdom for themselves.

Christ’s Correction—10:42-45

Christ called his disciples together (10:41) and used this event to teach them lessons concerning service and humility. He discouraged the disciples’ aspirations to be like Gentile rulers who lorded over their subjects with their authority (10:42). Contary to the disciples’ way of thinking, Jesus taught that whoever wanted to be great in God’s kingdom had to be a “servant” (dia/konoj) to others and “slave” (dou=loj) of all (10:43-44). Servants engaged in the most menial of tasks. Slaves, on the other hand, had no legal, civil, or human rights—indeed, “the slave’s entire life was at the disposal of the master.”²¹ Jesus is the example *par excellence* of one who had such an attitude. He did not come to be served but to serve (10:45)—and indeed he did so ultimately by giving his life as “a ransom in the place of many” (lu/tron aOnti\ pollw=n).²² A “ransom” (lu/tron) is the “price of release” for something or someone held captive; this term was often used to describe the “ransom money paid for the manumission of slaves.”²³ Through his death on the cross Jesus has redeemed others from the bondage of sin and death. Christ’s death was a penal, substitutionary, atonement for the sins of people. His life, ministry, and death was characterized by humility, service, and suffering.

Conclusion

What can we say by way of application from the heart of Mark’s gospel? First, those who profess to be disciples of Jesus must die to themselves, i.e. take up their crosses.²⁴ To “take up the cross” means that believers

²¹ As Garland (“Mark,” 265) rightly points out. In support of this point Garland cites Plato, *Gorgias* 491E, where Callicles asks, “How can anyone be happy when he is the slave of all?” Further, he also quotes Seneca, *On Benefits* 3.19.1, where a slave is characterized as one who “does not have the right to refuse.”

²² The preposition aOnti\ is used here as substitutionary language: “in the place of.” See the discussion in Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 364-67.

²³ BDAG, 605.

²⁴ For a practical article about what it means “to take up one’s cross,” see the inspirational sermon immediately following this article that Walter Norvell preached in a previous Midwestern Baptist Seminary chapel service. Norvell’s sermon is placed here because it serves as a complementary follow-up to the present article.

will be concerned first and foremost with what God desires in their lives. They must reject their will as master in their lives and follow the Lord Jesus wholeheartedly. Christians must be obedient, willing to give up anything dear, pay any price, endure any rejection or humiliation, and suffer like Jesus did if they are to be his disciples.

Second, Christ's disciples must be characterized by humility and service. This distinction means that Christians will think of other people as better than themselves and their interests as more important than their own (cf. Phil 2:4). They should have neither personal agendas nor selfish ambitions. They should not insist on their own way. They should not seek to control or manipulate others for gain. To be sure, no room exists for megalomania or narcissism in the Christian life. Such behavior is not becoming for believers.

The message found in the "heart of Mark's gospel" challenges our hearts. For, such thinking as that described above runs entirely counter to the world's values, but is absolutely imperative if we want to have a lasting impact upon our society, present an effective, credible witness to the world, and follow the Lord Jesus the way he meant for us to do.

The words of one who was saved and greatly influenced by Christ serve as an appropriate end to this article.²⁵ The apostle Paul wrote in Philippians 2:5-8,

Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross (NASB).

²⁵ I realize that Philippians is a different genre and has a different context/occasion than does the Gospel of Mark; however, the principles of taking up the cross and being a servant to others are present in this passage. In Philippians Paul urges his readers to advance the gospel together. To persuade them to do so in unity he encourages them to follow the selfless example of Jesus, who was wholly obedient to death on the cross and a servant to others.

Three Requirements for Following Jesus

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Sermon Purpose

To encourage listeners to follow Jesus through denial of self, taking up our crosses and dying for Him.¹

Text

Summoning the crowd along with His disciples, He said to them, “If anyone wants to be My follower, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me” (Mark 8:34, HCSB).

Introduction

Americans love life. We grab for all the gusto we can get. We lavish extravagances upon ourselves. We want it all and we will not stop until we get it. What is the American dream? What does it have to do with the abundant life? Turn to a neighbor sitting near you and talk about your answers to these questions:²

What does it mean to live the American dream?

What does it mean to live the abundant life?

Will you be happy in two years if a new convert today becomes like your typical church member?

Why?

Whatever your answer, you will likely admit that American believers get confused with these issues. About twenty-seven years ago, when I was about the wise old age of twenty-three, I had the opportunity to meet

¹ This sermon, based on a reference from the gospel of Mark, was preached in a Midwestern Seminary chapel service during the fall semester, 2002. The sermon was somewhat interactive as students were asked to discuss among themselves the opening questions. The sermon was further supported with a PowerPoint presentation and a scene from the *Jesus* movie. The text of this sermon has been altered slightly to update it for this publication.

² Time was allowed for chapel attendees to discuss the answers to these questions with one another.

and hear Dr. Helen Roseveare. Dr. Roseveare was a British medical doctor who served as a missionary in what was then the Belgium Congo in Africa in the early 1960s. While serving there she and her mission found themselves in a terrible Congolese civil war. She was captured, beaten, brutalized, gang-raped by her captors and held as a hostage by the Simba warriors. Her biography was written in *Daylight Must Come*. She never lost hope in her Savior. Later she wrote autobiographical books, *Give Me This Mountain* and *He Gave Us a Valley*. After Dr. Roseveare had given her testimony in our worship service, I was invited to have lunch with her, other guests, and our pastor. Polite conversation turned to what the pastor was doing in fostering maturity in the Christians in our church. As we talked about all we were doing to disciple people to maturity in Christ, Dr. Roseveare quietly sat down her fork. That simple motion called every eye at the table to her and when she knew she had every eye on her, she quietly said, "American Christians make me sick." Well, you could have heard that proverbial pin drop. Several mouths fell open, exposing large chunks of partially chewed gospel bird. After a few long, silent moments, a few heads nodded in agreement and someone swiftly changed the subject.

I sat there enraged. How dare this foreigner speak in our worship service, receive our love offering, eat our fried chicken, and say such a thing?

I had not thought much of Dr. Roseveare in many years until the fourth Sunday in June just past. I heard a sermon on the verse we will consider today and that verse will not let me go. In fact, in the last three weeks, this verse has been referenced two times in this chapel already. After the first time I thought God would let this verse rest but that speaker did not say what was on my heart. After the second time, I thought I could relinquish my burden with this verse, but God would not give me peace. It is not a verse I would have chosen to speak on. But I do so now, depending completely on him. So, I ask you to turn to a common verse, so common most everyone in this room can quote it. Yet, this verse, rightly understood, is one of the hardest sayings Jesus gave us. Please open your Bibles to Mark 8.

Jesus had just quizzed the disciples about what people were saying about him and what they thought about him. Peter proclaimed him to be the Christ and Jesus commended his insight. But from that time on, Jesus began to tell them about the suffering and death that lay ahead of him in Jerusalem. But Peter ruined the moment by pulling Jesus aside and tried to quiet him of such talk. Jesus rebuked him, even calling him Satan, because Peter was only seeing things from a worldly perspective.

Please stand in honor of God's word as I read aloud verses 34-38.

Summoning the crowd along with His disciples, He said to them, "If anyone wants to be My follower, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of Me and the gospel will save it. For what does it benefit a man to gain the whole world yet lose his life? What can a man give in exchange for his life? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels" (Mark 8:34-38, HCSB).

Let us pray. God, give us insight into the cost of discipleship. Give us the will and desire to follow Jesus fully. Amen.

In verse 34, Jesus gives us three requirements necessary to be his disciples. This verse is so straightforward in grammar and structure that there is really little to comment about; that is, until you consider the meaning of these words as they fell on the ears of Peter and the others.

I. Deny Yourself

Jesus' first requirement is to deny oneself. Now there's a concept foreign to our American culture. We don't deny ourselves much of anything. Thirty minutes worth of TV on any channel you choose, including the religious ones, will prove how skilled we are at indulging ourselves. A casual glance around the buildings of most American churches will bear it out as well. "Deny" means to separate. It is to forget one's self, or lose sight of one's self and one's own interests. The meaning is that we must separate from ourselves, our desires, and our independence. When we deny ourselves, we become objective enough to see ourselves as we really are. We must admit we have nothing beyond ourselves to give Jesus. Pink said that growth in grace has a downward dimension. Until we see our nothingness, completely and utterly unworthy of mercy, we cannot understand and receive the full mercy God offers us.

God didn't save me because he needs a few more good ideas. He didn't save me because no one else could do what I can do. He did not save me because I was worth saving. I am not. He saved me solely to show his mercy. And that's why he saved you as well.

We have some misconceptions about what is going on in our world. We think God's will is about us. It isn't. It's about Jesus. It's not about my contribution to the kingdom. It's about Jesus. It's not about my ambitions. It's about Jesus. It's not about my plans. It's about Jesus. It's not about my giftedness and talents. It's about Jesus. It's not about my church. It's about Jesus. It's not about my place in the association. It's about Jesus. It's not about people respecting my standing in theological education. It's about Jesus. It's not about whom I can control. It's about Jesus. It's not about being in charge. It's about Jesus. It's not about my

position in the SBC. It's about Jesus. It's not about what I want. It's about Jesus. It's not about me. It's about Jesus.

II. Take Up Your Cross

Because we are not living in first century Palestine, we lose the impact of the words, "Take up your cross." When Jesus said "cross," his hearers had a different mental picture than what we might get today. Crosses today are glittery and clean. They are small, lightweight and manageable. They are artwork and architectural. They are fashion statements. Not one of those images sprang into the thoughts of the disciples that day. The best historical definition I came across is this:

Cross: a well known instrument of most cruel and ignominious punishment, borrowed by the Greeks and Romans from the Phoenicians; to it were affixed among the Romans, down to the time of Constantine the Great, the guiltiest criminals, particularly the basest slaves, robbers, the authors and abettors of insurrections, and occasionally in the provinces, at the arbitrary pleasure of the governors, upright and peaceable men also, and even Roman citizens themselves.³

Jesus had just told the disciples what he would suffer and how he would die. Peter challenged it, but Jesus rebuked him and maintained his course. He might as well have said, "I am going to take up a Roman cross and I will die on a Roman cross. So pick up your cross and follow me."

Because we do not understand the historical setting of these words we ask what Jesus meant with the term "cross." A cross is not tough times. It is not the problems you face in life. It's not an infirmity that you may have. It is not your individualized set of disadvantages life has given you. It is not the difficulties of human existence. The cross means death. To follow Jesus, one must die.

These Jewish disciples knew it. No telling how many times they had seen the Romans wield the cross to execute their Jewish countrymen. Not only did they loathe the cross of Rome because of the oppression it represented, their own law told how loathsome the cross was.

If a man guilty of a capital offense is put to death and his body is hung on a tree, you must not leave his body on the tree overnight. Be sure to bury him that same day, *because anyone who is hung on a tree is under God's curse*. You must not desecrate the land the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance (Deut 21:22-23, NIV; emphasis mine).

³ Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 586.

To be hung on a tree was confirmation that God's curse, his utter rejection, was upon you. What Jew would willingly take up a cross?

The meaning of the cross has really not changed. The cross means you will pay any price, endure any suffering, and face any shame and humiliation for the sake of Jesus. The cross means you will die, if need be, for Jesus' sake. Jesus' death on the cross paid the debt of sin and God's justice was satisfied. That is a payment none of us is worthy to make. Only Jesus could do that. But we must pay the price of discipleship. While most of us will not likely pay the ultimate cost of discipleship, we must reckon ourselves crucified. I don't have the time to trace Paul's concept of the crucified life, but hear a summary in Paul's words:

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me (Gal 2:20, NIV).

The cross is the greatest paradox in human history. The cross was his cross, but it was my cross. He died on my cross. My sin put him there. I deserved that cross but he took my place on it. The cross was a tool of death, yet it is the means to life. The cross calls me to die, but in that dying I find union with the Savior and he lives his life through me. Jesus commanded us to take up our cross, but our obedience to that command is voluntary.

In John 6 followers of Jesus began to understand what he was calling them to do. They began to grumble and complain. Finally, many no longer followed him. Jesus let them go. You see, death to self is no easy death. Death to self is always terrible. If you expect dying to self to be a pleasant experience, you are wrong. We fight death to self like a drowning man fights for another gasp of air. Death to self is the radical command of the Christian life. To take up your cross meant one thing: you were going to a certain death and your only hope was in the resurrection power of Jesus Christ.

Are you God-centered or self-centered? Jesus presents quite a "grown-up" gospel to us here, one that does not merely pander to our desires, but challenges us in our deepest being.

III. Follow Christ

Finally, Jesus gives us the third requirement to be a disciple: follow him. Follow him in obedience to the Father. Follow him through suffering and pain. Follow him in proclamation. Follow him to Calvary and to die.

This verb "follow" occurs 93 times in the New Testament, most of those occurrences in the Gospels. Almost all the occurrences in the

Gospels carry this same meaning: to follow one who proceeds, join him as his attendant, accompany him, to join one as a disciple, become or be his disciple.

Sometimes we think fellowship is easy. Yet there are costs. Five years ago in July of 1999, the pastor of our church (we belonged to Wedgwood Baptist Church, Fort Worth, Texas) began to share with us that he sensed that God wanted to give our church a greater platform from which to proclaim his gospel. He challenged us to pray for that end. We did. We asked God to do whatever he wanted to do with us, to give us greater opportunity to witness for him. We have various things in mind: plant a new church, start a TV broadcast, expand our apartment ministries. But God had a different plan entirely. It would cost a little more than buying airtime on a local TV channel. It would cost a little more than planting a new church. In fact, it would cost dearly. In less than three months, a crazed gunman would walk into our church, fire off about a hundred rounds of ammunition, set off a pipe bomb, kill seven saints, wound seven others, and terrorize hundreds. In less than ten minutes, God gave us a greater platform.

Nothing I can say in the time allotted here will allow me to communicate effectively the terror of those moments as my family and I were eye-witnesses to those events. The aftermath was gut-wrenching and life-changing. Yet, as we begin to process that event and heal, we began to see God's hand at work all around us. Yes, God gave the church there an unprecedented platform to testify of God's sustaining love and grace in our lives. Through that testimony we saw dozens upon dozens come to know Jesus. We saw families reunited. We saw lives changed. But the price of discipleship was costly.

Just a few weeks ago, our campus gathered for a day of prayer. I heard my colleagues and our students praying for revival. I left those meetings scared. We pray for God to work but are we willing to do what he wants done? Will we join Jesus in the fellowship of his suffering? Are you willing to die so revival might come?

In C.S. Lewis' wonderful children's book, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, four human children are transported to the mythical land of Narnia. It was under siege by the wicked white witch, but ancient prophecies foretold that two sons of Adam and two daughters of Eve would come, and Aslan, the character representing Jesus, would then set Narnia free. When all four children arrive in Narnia, they are greeted by talking beavers and hidden from the white witch. The beavers told them how Narnia was awaiting deliverance by Aslan, son of the Great Emperor. One of the girls asked, "What kind of man is Aslan?" Mrs. Beaver replied, "Goodness, child. Aslan is no man. He is the King, the king of beasts." "You mean he's a lion?" "Yes, dears, he is the lion."

Another child asked, "But, is he safe?" Mr. Beaver answered, "No, he is not safe. But he is good."

I do not follow Jesus because he is safe. I follow Jesus because he is right. I do not follow Jesus because he will bless me. I follow Jesus because he is the blessing. I don't follow Jesus because I know what his plan is. I follow Jesus because he knows what his plan is.

I've been listening since June as people have talked about living their lives, about the state of their churches. I hear someone say, "Oh, I'm surviving." I hear a pastor say, "The church is getting by." Maybe we don't need to be surviving. Maybe we don't need to be getting by. Maybe we need to understand the cross of Jesus. (At this point the congregation viewed the crucifixion scene from the *Jesus* movie).

The only way to follow Christ is to deny and die. If a church wants to follow Christ, they must be led to deny and die. Church leaders must model denying and dying. A church leader's job is to lead people to die. Jesus did not call to us, "Follow me and survive." He said, "Follow me and die." Martyred missionary Martin Burnham said, "God did not call me to be a missionary. God did not call me to the Philippines. God called me to follow Him." Southern Baptist missionary Jan Johnsonius, who lost her husband in a terrible accident in Argentina said, "When a missionary goes on the field, they have already died." Are you that kind of missionary, that kind of disciple?

Our banner is a cross.

Our expression is water burial.

Our memorial is a supper of sacrifice.

Our calling is to die.

Go lead people to die.

Edwards was Extraordinary

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“Edwards was extraordinary.”¹ That is how George Marsden begins the introduction to his recent monumental biography of Jonathan Edwards, and I have tried to outline some of the ways I also believe that to be true in articles that I have written for previous volumes of this journal. But Marsden also wrote these words as the opening sentence to his preface of that same volume: “A number of people of common sense have asked me something like, ‘Isn’t there a good bit written on Jonathan Edwards already?’”² Believing that also to be as true as Marsden’s previous statement, and having been one of those who has been guilty of writing “a good bit on Jonathan Edwards” both in issues of this journal and in my two published volumes on Edwards, *The Blessing of God*, and *The Honor and Glory of God*,³ I offer this additional previously unpublished sermon with very little by way of introduction, except that I have included a brief chronology, that might help to give some appreciation by way of a glimpse, of what Edwards achieved and why he really was extraordinary.

Edwards preached this sermon within months of the First Great Awakening having broken out, and only a matter of weeks before he preached his infamous “Sinners” sermon.⁴ There is no evidence Edwards reworked this sermon for reproaching and the length of this sermon is very typical of many of Edwards’ sermons. As for its themes, there are three to which I would particularly draw your attention. The first is the question of which sinners are called by Christ and how one might know whether one is called or not. The second theme is that of the value of praying as a sinner, when God has told us he will not hear the prayers of

¹ George M Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 1.

² *Ibid.*, xvii.

³ Michael D. McMullen, *The Blessing of God* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2003), and *The Glory and Honor of God* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2004).

⁴ Edwards’ sermon is largely transcribed just as it was written in his manuscript. That is to say, only some minimum punctuation was added, but no considerable effort was made to make sentences out of sentence fragments, nor to add words to make his notes or statements read smoother, etc.

the wicked. And the last, is that even though Christ calls all sinners to him, he is not in any way obliged to save any.

Chronology (Adapted from various sources, including Marsden’s biography, *Jonathan Edwards* by M. X. Lesser,⁵ and my own additional research.)

- 1703 Born 5 October, in East Windsor, Connecticut, the only son among ten daughters of Timothy Edwards, Pastor, and Esther Stoddard
- 1716 Enters Yale College
- 1719 Writes *Of Insects, Of Atoms*, and other scientific and philosophical papers
- 1720 Graduates first in his class from Yale; stays for M.A. in theology
- 1721 Experiences conversion, “a new sense of things”
- 1722 August, accepts call to a New York City Presbyterian Church; begins his *Resolutions* and *Diary*
- 1723 April, leaves New York Church; November, offered tutorship at Yale; rejects settlement of Bolton Congregational Church, Connecticut
- 1724 May 21, appointed tutor at Yale
- 1726 November 21, invited to assist his grandfather, Solomon Stoddard, at First Church, Northampton, Massachusetts
- 1727 February 15, ordained; July 28, marries Sarah Pierrepont
- 1728 August 25, daughter Sarah born, first of eleven children
- 1729 February 11, Solomon Stoddard dies; Edwards installed as full pastor
- 1731 *God Glorified*
- 1734 *A Divine and Supernatural Light*; Northampton and Connecticut Valley Awakening
- 1737 *A Faithful Narrative*
- 1738 *Discourses on Various Important Subjects*; preaches on charity and its fruits
- 1739 Begins his *Personal Narrative*; preaches on the history of redemption
- 1740 The Great Awakening.
- 1741 July 8, *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*; September 10, *Distinguishing Marks of the Work of the Spirit of God*
- 1742 Preaches on religious affections

⁵ M. X. Lesser, *Jonathan Edwards* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1988).

- 1743 *Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival of Religion in New England; Great Concern*
- 1744 *True Excellency*
- 1746 *Religious Affections; The Church's Marriage*
- 1747 *True Saints; An Humble Attempt*
- 1748 *A Strong Rod; death of daughter Jerusha*
- 1749 *Life of David Brainerd; Humble Inquiry; Christ the Great Example*
- 1750 June 22, dismissed by his congregation; July 2, preaches farewell sermon; writes the preface for *True Religion Delineated* by Joseph Bellamy
- 1751 *A Farewell Sermon; August 8, installed as pastor and missionary to the Housatonic Indians at Stockbridge, Massachusetts*
- 1752 *Misrepresentations Corrected*
- 1753 *True Grace*
- 1754 *Freedom of the Will*
- 1757 Completes manuscript on original sin; chosen as President of the College of New Jersey (now Princeton University)
- 1758 February 16, inducted as president; March 22, dies of smallpox inoculation complications; *Original Sin*
- 1765 *Personal Narrative; Two Dissertations*
- 1774 *A History of the Work of Redemption*
- 1852 *Charity and Its Fruits*

**What Induces Christ to Pity and Help Sinners
Is Not That They Deserve It But That They Need It**

Mark 2:17

When Jesus heard it he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.

We often find the Pharisees and other Jews that were had an high esteem of themselves for their religion and piety, murmuring against Christ for taking so much notice of them that were accounted great sinners. So when he so graciously received Mary Magdalene when she washed his feet with her tears, Simon the Pharisee, at whose house he was entertained, murmured and said within himself, This man if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, for she is a sinner, Luke 7:39. And so when Christ went to be guest with Zacchaeus, there was a great murmuring of it amongst the Jews saying, he is gone to be a guest with a man that is a sinner, Luke 19:7. And particularly it was a great offence to them that he should so

often be conversant with the publicans that were a sort of men that were very odious in their eyes and accounted some of the worst of men.

Though we are told in the beginning of Luke 15, then drew near to him all the Publicans and sinners for to hear him, and the Pharisees and Scribes murmured saying, this man ruineth sinners and eateth with them. And so in the context there is the like complaint as in the two verses next preceding the text. The Pharisees thus esteemed themselves and were esteemed by others the most righteous and holy sort of men of any in the land, had the least honor and respect shown them by Christ, and were more than any others sharply reproved by him from time to time, and the publicans that on the contrary were accounted the worst sort of men of any among them, were often treated with great mercy and tenderness by Christ, and many more of this sort men were gained and became Christ's disciples and followers than of the Pharisees, Matthew 21:31, Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.

In the text Christ gives the reason of this his conduct.

1. In the former part of the verse we have it represented in a similitude of a physician, and,
2. In the latter part of the verse the similitude is explained, I came not to call.

The Pharisees looked upon themselves to be righteous, and if it was so they stood in no need of a savior. But they looked upon the publicans to be greater sinners, and if it was so, they stood in so much greater need of a savior, and therefore there was so much more reason that he should take notice of them. The Pharisees looked on themselves to be whole, and if they were so, they did not need the physician, and certainly the physician was not to be blamed for neglecting, nor was he to be blamed for taking notice of those that were sick and stood in great need of him, and were sensible of it.

Doctrine. What induces Christ to pity and help sinners is not that they deserve it but that they need it.

- I. Christ is never induced in any wise to pity or afford any help to any sinners whatsoever because they deserve it.

1. He did not come into the world and die for sinners because any of them had deserved any pity or help at his hands. When he undertook for them with the Father before the foundation of the world, he beheld them as altogether undeserving of anything but eternal destruction. When he saw them undone and fallen and standing in great need of a savior, he beheld them as enemies both to his Father and him that hated him and deserved to be hated of him.

He knew they did not deserve any love or pity at all but to be destroyed without mercy, all that he died for were undeserving. Though there is a great deal of difference in the sinners that he shed his blood for, some are much more wicked than others. Some of them are comparatively beastly sort of men, and some of them have a good moral temper and many natural endowments that recommend them to the esteem of the world, and do many acts of moral righteousness, and yet there is not one of them all but what is a viper in his heart, and deserves to be cast away into the same eternal fire that is prepared for the devil and his angels.

2. He never bestows converting grace on any because they deserve any good at his hands. Sinners that are seeking converting grace are want to hope for success in this ground because they imagine they deserve some pity or help from Christ. They will retain this conceit. They are taught otherwise and will be free to say that they deserve nothing at the hands of God, but when they say so 'tis contrary to the inward thought of their hearts. They do really think they do deserve something. They will acknowledge that they are great sinners, but yet they think they are not so great sinners as many others and they imagine that they deserve some pity upon that account.

God has pitied and helped many that are worse than they, and they imagine therefore that it will not be just for him not to save them, and utterly refuse to have any pity upon them. They think they deserve pity because they pray earnestly for it. It seems to them it will sit hard if God's heart won't be at all moved by all their earnest cries. They have asked a great many times and they have pleaded very importunately and if God rejects them, it seems to them he will be hard. If one man in misery cries for relief of another that can help them if he will, and he won't help them, this is accounted very hard, and so it seems to them it is hard if God won't be moved by all that they can say.

Sinners often think they deserve pity because they have reformed their lives. 'Tis true they did live wickedly but now they have reformed and have forsaken their old ways of sin, and it may be that they have denied themselves very much so to do, and it seems to them very hard if God will always remember their former miscarriages against them now

they have forsaken them. They think they deserve God's help because they do what they can. They attend all means, they neglect no known duty. They take as much pains as they can and would God have more of them. It seems to them that if he casts them into hell, when they have done as well as they could and taken all the pains they could it will not be just.

But Christ never yet bestowed converting grace on any one sinner because they deserved any pity or help at all. If they that have lived moral lives are converted it is not because their morality recommended them to it. If God hears the importunate and earnest prayers of sinners when they cry for mercy, 'tis not because their importunate prayers deserve it any more than the yellings of the devils in hell. He never bestowed converting grace on any person for his reforming his life, his denying himself and resisting his sinful inclinations, or because he is anymore deserving of his pity now since he is reformed than he was when he was going on in a career in sin and gave themselves their full serving in wickedness.

And if they do what they can, if they take never so much pains, do never so much and suffer never so much, never any yet obtained converting grace of God by any the least obligation that those things lend God under to bestow any influence that they had inclines him to it. But,

II. When Christ pities and relieves sinners 'tis out of their respect to their need of it. Every creature is in himself empty. The holy angels have fullness of their own, God is their fullness. And therefore in some sense they may be said to stand in need. God stands in no need of them but they stand in need of him. They are utterly insufficient for themselves. But man is needy in a very different sense. He has not only no fullness of his own but he has lost the Divine fullness that once he had and is left empty of all good and is become miserably poor, an empty, destitute, lost creature. Sinners stand in need of happiness. They have natures that crave it. The nature of man thirsts insatiably after happiness and it is impossible that it should be at rest till happiness be obtained. But sinners are destitute of it. They are separated from the fountain of happiness and vainly endeavor to substitute other things in the room of it. They wander about from one thing to another seeking happiness, seeking something to satisfy the carvings of their souls, Psalms 4:6, There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.

They are not happy but miserable. Christ sees them to be wretched and miserable, that they are in a state of bondage and captivity. He sees that they are in a lost state. He sees that they are ensnared and imprisoned. He sees that they are in a state of darkness and death. He

sees that they are condemned and in extreme danger of dreadful, everlasting destruction and that they cannot help themselves. He knows that all their endeavors to help themselves will be utterly in vain and to no purpose. He sees if he doesn't pity them and help them they are gone and must perish. And 'tis from respect to this state they are in and not anything at all in them to recommend them or to render them acceptable to him. He sees that the poor, lost creature can have no help if he doesn't reach forth the arm of his power and grace and help him.

Application.

I. Use of Instruction. First Inference from the Doctrine: Hence we may learn the reason why God sometimes hears and answers the prayers of natural men when they cry to God for converting grace. The Scripture teaches us that the prayer of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, which is doubtless true not only of those that are naturally wicked or those that live in vicious practices but of the most moral, strict and religious natural person upon earth. The Scriptures don't make such a distinction between what men call some of them that are openly, vicious, wicked men, but others of them by some softer name. They are all revealed together. There is not so great a difference between them in the sight of God as there is in the sight of men.

They must all dwell together as companions of devils hereafter being cast into the same pit of darkness and furnace of fire. And they are all, even the best and most exact of them, wicked and abominable dogs and vipers, and the children of hell in the sight of God. And 'tis true though the best religious performances of the best and most shining of them are an abomination to him. Thus natural men often make an objection against praying to God so they say, If this be the case why should I pray? God hates to hear me. And how can I then expect I shall be as answered. I am taught there is nothing in my prayers to incline God to hear me, there is nothing to win his heart, but on the contrary to provoke him more, to bring more guilt and I do only make him more angry with me than he was before. And if my prayers be not heard why should I pray? To what purpose should I pray if I know beforehand that God won't hear my prayers?

But the doctrine affords an answer to the objection, for though God never answers the prayers of natural men for the worthiness or any goodness of their prayers, yet he sometimes is pleased to hear their prayers as it is the voice of their misery or necessity. Let all natural persons be sensible that there is no goodness in their prayers. No respect to God. No love, no honor. No more goodness than in the cry of devils. No acceptableness to God. All the behavior of an enemy than in the

exercise of enmity. All that you do is loathsome because you are a viper in God's eyes.

All the acts of so loathsome a creature as a viper that we have a great detestation of appear hateful to us. The prayers of natural men are called howlings, Hosea 7:14, And they have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds: they assemble themselves for corn and wine, and they rebel against me. There is nothing pleasing or amiable in their most earnest, most affectionate cries, anymore than in the yellings of the doomed in hell. And therefore 'tis never upon the account of any goodness or acceptableness in any of your prayers that God will ever hear them.

But yet God may hear them and answer and oftentimes is pleased, as 'tis the voice of their misery and necessity as we are taught in the doctrine that he has no respect to sinners' worthiness but he has respect to their necessity. So but as a sense their necessity and misery is expressed in their prayers, so God is pleased sometimes to hear them and answer them in the bestowment of saving blessings upon them and delivering them out of this miserable state and condition that they are in. He is pleased of his sovereign mercy to hear the cry of a miserable viper, one that has no love and no honor in his heart to him and one that at the very moment when he cries and howls is full of enmity.

Though his crying expresses no honor or respect in the world to him yet it does express his misery, it expresses the need he stands in of God's help. And God hears it no other way than as the voice of their misery and necessity and not at all as the voice of love or honor to him or dependence upon him. And the reason why God will sometimes hear the voice of wicked men in the world and not in hell, is not because they have any more goodness. Therefore remember this you that are naked persons that are now seeking. Remember always when you go before God that you are in his sight a viper and that God knows that your prayers, your seeming respect and honor is mere hypocrisy, and that if it was not for fear of hell you would never so go, and that God never will answer those prayers from any acceptableness to him.

But yet you ought to pray for you are miserable and necessitous and nature itself teaches a poor creature in great misery to cry. If you don't cry for help when there is a possibility of help for such wretched creatures as you, you will sin even against nature itself. And God may hear your prayers as 'tis the voice of nature, the voice of misery though not as the voice of respect to him. And when you pray to God, don't expect that God will hear you any other way. Cry as the publican did, as a sinner, a viper, an enemy.

And remember that though God sometimes hears the cry of poor sinners for converting grace from respect to their misery and necessity,

yet that necessity lays no obligation upon him to hear you. If God heard you for your worthiness, your worthiness would lay God under some obligation, but God sees no worthiness to have respect to but only the creature's necessity, that misery lays God under no obligation. He may hear your cry or he may refuse it as it pleases him. He sometimes is pleased to hear the cry of his enemies from respect to their necessity, but he has made no promise that he will. He has respect to the necessity of some sinners and pities and relieves them but 'tis not all that are in necessity that he relieves. Some that are in as great necessity as any person whatsoever are left to perish without mercy.

God is not obliged to have regard to the necessities that sinners have brought themselves into by their own folly and rebellion against him and after they have foolishly been bringing themselves into more and more necessitous circumstances by going on in willfully striving against him against all his commands and warnings. God is not obliged to have respect to the necessities of those that have had no respect to his honor and glory that is a thing of much greater importance than their necessities. He is not obliged to have regard to their necessity of interest that have had no regard to their necessity of duty.

Therefore in all your prayers remember these things and let them not only be in your mind but in your mouth when you go before God. But this brings me to the

Second Inference from the Doctrine: If it be so that Christ pities and helps sinners it is not out of respect to their worthiness but their necessity. Then hence we may learn that 'tis much more proper and prudent for sinners to go to God in prayer with their sins than with their righteousness. That is the course that sinners commonly take. But that commonly is a very improper and imprudent course for 'tis certain that God never will bestow mercy upon them out of respect to their righteousness or any of their duties.

But if they instead of going to God with their sins would go with all their sins and wickedness and spread that before God those are the things that show their misery and necessity and that doctrine teaches that God sometimes is pleased to bestow from respect to that. Therein lies your sickness on the account of which you need a physician up to your good qualifications. Those things are those with which you make yourself whole. For a person to go to God in prayer hoping to be heard for his own righteousness is just as if man should go to a physician and cry of him to pity him and help him and at the same time make use of this as an agreement induce him to it that he is well in health and doesn't need him.

Certainly it becomes a man under a desperate disease that pleads with a physician to help them, to plead the greatness and malignity of his

disease and to lay open his wounds before him. Your sins and wickedness of heart and life in your words that you should lay open. Those God may have respect to as they then your necessity but to go and say at the same time in your heart that you are whole, have a righteousness of your own.

II. Use of Exhortation. Labor to be sensible of your own disease and your necessity of the physician. The misery of many is the same with that of the Pharisees who imagined themselves to be whole. This is the case of all that are deceived and think themselves converted when they are not. That is the case of all that rest in their morality and it is the case of all unwashed sinners that they don't see that desperate disease they are consuming away with. 1 Kings 8:38, What prayer and supplication soever be made by any man, or by all thy people Israel, which shall know every man the plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hands toward this house. That you may see your disease you must be sensible of the dreadful nature of sin the guilt that it brings.

And if you see something of your disease you must also see that you can't be your own physician and that there is no other physician to be found but Christ. Innumerable are the ways that sinners take in vain for healing. Like the woman that had an issue, Luke 8:43, And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any. So it was with Israel of old, Hosea 5:13, When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound, then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to king Jareb: yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound.

III. Use of Encouragement. This last use may be to encourage such as see their misery and necessity to come to Christ though their sins are very great. You are not the less invited to come to Christ because you are a great sinner for Christ says in the text, I come not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. Sinners commonly go the wrong way to work to determine whether they are invited to come to Christ. They enquire whether they are righteous.

They think that if they could find such and such good things in them they should take encouragement; they should hope that they were invited to come to Christ. If they were so and so innocent and as good as other persons be they should hope that Christ meant them. Whereas on the contrary to know whether Christ invites them they should not enquire whether they are righteous or innocent, but whether they are sinners. And if they find upon examination that they are great sinners, and so standing in very great need of a savior, then they may know that they are invited, for Christ came to call to sinners, he came to call those that need a

mediator to stand between them and an angry God. He came to call those that stand in need of a great sacrifice to be offered for their sins, a greater sacrifice than either men or angels can offer. He came to call those that do very much need his precious blood to cleanse them from great guilt.

If you upon examination find that you are a very great sinner with great aggravations, quenching the Spirit, then you be sure that character of those belongs to you that Christ came to call, for he tells us he came to call sinners, the greater your sins are so much the more evidently are you of this sort. The Great Physician invites not the whole but the sick. Therefore you that are very sick, you that are sick with a very mortal disease, you that have a disease that none other can cure but Christ. Do you go to him if you see your disease is very desperate, has seized your vitals, even your whole body? Then you need a very skillful physician therefore, such a one as Christ. And Christ calls such in a spiritual manner. Therefore don't be discouraged.

If you have been terrified with the thunder of God's anger as the children of Israel were, yet consider what the prophet says to them, 1 Samuel 12:16-17, Now therefore stand and see this great thing, which the Lord will do before your eyes. Is it not wheat harvest to day? I will call unto the Lord, and he shall send thunder and rain; that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which ye have done in the sight of the Lord, in asking you a king. The greatness of your sins need not discourage you going to Christ for pardon. You may make use of the greatness of your sins as an argument with him to pardon you, as the Psalmist says in 25:11, For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great.

I would now therefore renew the invitation of the Great Physician to all you that are great sinners, young people that have been very vile sinners, come all wretched, poor, old, and blind sinners.

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Ad Fontes Purissimi:
Is There a Place for Scripture Memorization
in Biblical Studies?

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One of the most enduring aspects of the legacy of Erasmus of Rotterdam, the famous Dutch scholar and humanist, can well be summarized by the *ad fontes* dictum. Even though he was unsurpassed both in his mastery of classical languages and in his virulent criticism of the abuses of the church, it still seems that his greatest influence on biblical studies was the passion with which he called the theologians of his day to return to the true sources of their theology, *ad fontes purissimi*. One of several such calls reveals an interest that remained constant throughout his life:

I have discovered that hitherto there have been some theologians whose previous neglect of the very reading of Holy Writ was such that they scarce could turn the pages, even of the *Book of Sentences* and in fact never touched anything but the riddles of the *Questions*. Isn't it some benefit for such persons to be recalled to the true sources?¹

This particular quotation appears in his correspondence during his fruitful stay in Cambridge between 1511 and 1514. At a time when the study of theology in most European universities consisted primarily of a blend of Thomist dogmatics and Aristotelian logic, Erasmus' vision to change the focus of theology from the subtleties of medieval logic to the writings of the New Testament, indeed, to the study of the Scriptures in the original languages, made a long-lasting contribution across the continent. His challenge eventually led the divinity schools to an appreciation for and renewed interest in the classical languages, especially the languages in which the Scriptures were written. Here is Erasmus again, bewildered by the hostile reception of his ideas from the established centers of theological studies:

¹ D. F. S. Thomson and H. C. Porter, *Erasmus and Cambridge* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1963), 196.

Or does this class of men grieve that more people are henceforward to read the Gospels and the apostolic Letters, and read them more attentively too? And are they pained by the waste of even such a short time as this upon studies to which every single moment could properly be devoted? Would they prefer a man's whole life to be spent on the trifling subtleties of the *Questions*?²

Erasmus' concern for a return to the "truest sources" was not purely theoretical; it soon manifested itself in the first published edition of the Greek New Testament in Basel, which, with all its limitations and shortcomings, stands as a landmark in the history of the text of the New Testament.³

Today, the reissuing of a similar call to those engaged in theology, whether scholars or students, for a return to the "truest source," to the Bible, might be deemed redundant, if not anachronistic, in an age with more printed Bibles than ever in the history of written texts, with more research resources and tools for the study of Bible than ever imagined, and with more divinity schools and Ph.D. specialists than ever before.

I myself would have thought that this was the case had I not spent the last fifteen years in theological education, on both sides of the lectern. The concern that led to this article is the perceived danger of a diminishing contact between the student and the text of the Scriptures. In the midst of an ever-escalating volume of secondary literature there is the real risk that the very source of theology, the Scriptures themselves, can become secondary at best, and neglected at worst.

This article proposes the discipline of Bible memorization as a way of securing intense and consistent contact with the word of God in theological education; memorization not of separate verses, not even of mere passages, but of entire books of the Bible. Indeed, for those engaged in the study of the Scriptures in the original languages, the article proposes moving one step further, memorizing the Scriptures not in a translation, as good as this enterprise might be, but in the original languages. I have used this approach with great success for the past decade, first at the Emanuel University in Oradea, Romania, and later at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

While memorization is not a new spiritual discipline, I have not yet encountered an approach to theological education based on the memorization of entire books of the Bible. In Christian academia one can safely say that Scripture memorization, while not completely absent, is certainly not a dominant presence. Furthermore, even outside the

² *Ibid.*, 195.

³ Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), 98ff.

established institutions for theological education, Scripture memorization, which in the past was a prominent spiritual discipline, seems today an unpopular practice. When not altogether forgotten, Bible memorization is conducted primarily via a topical approach.⁴ Scripture memorized in this fashion is seldom understood in its original literary context, and it runs the risk of conveying more the thoughts of the study aid's author than those of the biblical author. This a-contextual memorization of the Scriptures is vulnerable to the dangers associated with an atomistic study of the Scriptures, an endeavor whose problems are known all too well to students of God's word.

It should be noted at the outset that the endeavor of memorizing the large portions of Scriptures is not without precedent in Christian academia. There seems to be a constant flow of anecdotal information about several prominent exegetes who did just that. It is said that Professors C. F. D. Moule and G. B. Caird knew the entire Greek New Testament by heart, as did F. F. Bruce, who allegedly knew by heart both Testaments in their respective languages.⁵ Likewise, it is reported that Rudolf Bultmann knew the Greek New Testament by heart, as likely did many other German theologians. While this information is difficult to verify, it does seem to indicate that memorizing significant portions of the Scriptures was considered part of the theologian's trade. Unfortunately, the arrival of computers and electronic databases seems to have eroded the time-honored tradition of mastering the text of the Scriptures for oneself.

It should also be mentioned that memorization, as an indication of one's devotion to one's holy book, is not without parallels in other faiths; it is reported that millions of Muslims know the Koran by heart.⁶ Neither is memorization lacking in other academic disciplines. There are classicists who know by heart entire classical Greek texts, there are actors who recite huge portions of Shakespeare's writings, and there are musicians who store the entire corpus of Bach's *Orgelwerke* in their memories. Should the Christian scholar value the word of God less?

The proposal advanced in this paper is a commitment to memorize entire books of the Bible, with nothing less than the entire canon as a lifetime goal. Such a goal might seem unachievable to most, but when

⁴ Two of many such memorization programs are the Navigator's Topical Memorization System and the Ten Basic Steps of Campus Crusade for Christ. Both of them adopt a thematic approach to Scripture memorization.

⁵ So contends L. D. Hurst with regard to G. B. Caird, in L. D. Hurst and N. T. Wright (eds.), *The Glory of Christ in the New Testament. Studies in Christology. In Memory of George Bradford Caird* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), and W. Ward Gasque with regard to F. F. Bruce, in W. Ward Gasque, and L. Gasque, "F. F. Bruce, 1910-1990" *The Reformed Journal* 40 (Oct. 1990).

⁶ TV program on the Muslim faith, aired on BBC 1, UK, 1998.

one is committed to memorizing the Scriptures, several decades of disciplined memorization can achieve surprising results.⁷

This article will address several aspects pertaining to memorizing the Scriptures. First it will give brief consideration to some of the major benefits of memorizing the Bible book by book. Second, it will offer several practical guidelines in memorizing entire books or larger portions of the Scriptures. Finally, it will discuss a sampling of the results from a personal encounter with the memorized PROS GALATAS.

Why Memorize the Bible Book by Book?

This subsection addresses two distinct aspects of memorization, the practice of memorizing the Scripture and one particular approach to Scripture memorization in a book-by-book fashion.

B. Gerhardsson's significant study, "Memory and Manuscript," explores the importance given in antiquity to the memorization of classical texts, be they the works of Homer, in the Hellenistic schools, or the Torah, in pre- and post-Rabbinic Judaism.⁸ Gerhardsson contends that Judaism in New Testament times regarded highly the process of memorization and its benefits, since it gave the children "the traditional wording of the text which forms the basis of all further Scripture study."⁹ Gerhardsson's analysis makes a compelling case for memorization of the biblical text as essential for an array of aspects of religious life, from the study of Scriptures to the transmission of the text, and therefore no further consideration will be given here.

Memorizing the Scripture book by book is just one approach to memorization. The main rationale for choosing this method, besides its practicality, is the fact that the Bible itself consists of a canonical collection of originally separate writings. To memorize the Bible book by book primarily does justice to the intrinsic nature of the Scriptures, which, as we have them, are the result of a very complex process of

⁷ This article is also a tribute to the thousands of Romanian intellectuals who perished in communist prisons after the Second World War. Intellectuals from all walks of life, statesmen, politicians, historians, clerics, artists, philosophers, and scientists, were persecuted because of their unwillingness to collaborate with the communist regime. Their memoirs record that in many places an informal tutorial system sprang up in which each prisoner disciplined the others in his area of expertise. It was not unusual for a prisoner who had survived his prison term to come out with an encyclopaedic mind and with the ability to converse intelligently on several topics including philosophy, history, theology, science, arts and the like. Memorizing either the Scriptures or literature was a God-given respite in the inhuman conditions of their detention. To an entire generation so brutally annihilated goes my greatest admiration.

⁸ B. Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript. Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells, 1961).

⁹ *Ibid.*, 65.

writing, preserving, collecting and canonizing which was done on a book-by-book basis. The emphasis on the individuality of the biblical books does not and should not minimize the importance of their inter-relatedness and intrinsic unity; on the contrary, it enhances it. When Scripture is memorized in this fashion several benefits will become evident. Some of the more significant ones, with either cognitive or spiritual value are discussed below in random order.

First, memorizing an entire book gives the student a solid, thorough knowledge of the biblical text, something that cannot be achieved at this level by any other exegetical means. The primary cognitive benefit of memorization is a mastery and intimate grasp of the biblical text in its canonical form. Issues such as vocabulary and style of the author, themes deemed important by the author, the overall message of the book, the atmosphere of the writing, particular theological nuances, the structure of the argument, and many other aspects are depicted by book memorization with more ease and precision than by any other ways of exploring a book. During the memorization process, probably due to the activity of human memory, the analytic and synthetic processes of thought bring together in a unified and coherent message the apparently scattered details of the text.

Second, memorization yields great spiritual benefits, well known to those familiar with the Psalms, or with the Savior's knowledge and use of the Scriptures. One benefit in particular merits highlighting: the joy of memorizing the Scriptures. The spiritual exercise of memorization promises a level of spiritual satisfaction and inner joy that has been personally unsurpassed by any other spiritual discipline. There is nothing more thrilling than to know that ideas, which once were in the mind of the divine author, and then were passed through the channel of divine inspiration to the human author, are there in the Scriptures to be found, explored, gathered, and enjoyed. I can confidently say that for me no spiritual experience can surpass the spiritual benefit and enjoyment of Scripture memorization.

Most certainly, Scripture memorization is not an antidote for all the ailments caused by sin in our lives. It offers however the closest contact with the word and the will of the only one who can cleanse and change our lives. Even more, when one considers the great amount of idle moments in an ordinary day, memorization provides a very profitable way to fill at least some of them with thoughts of God, mined from the Scriptures, stored not on paper, nor on an electronic device, but in the mind.

A further benefit from memorization is acquiring the ability to assess critically the work of other specialists. To memorize a book does not mean to withdraw from the theological dialogue. On the contrary,

memorization is a means of entering into that dialogue with vigorous personal convictions on central issues in the scholarly debate. Memorization is particularly beneficial as preparation to face the massive volume of secondary literature. It provides the best platform to understand better the positions held, to be more able and informed as a critic, to assess more easily the arguments and the reasons why a particular position is taken. Knowing a text by heart proves to be an antidote to calm the perhaps guilty conscience of the scholar who might give priority to secondary literature over the Bible; the escalating number of studies, commentaries, and monographs easily becomes the focus of research, threatening to push aside the Bible itself. There is nothing inherently wrong in secondary literature; but does the seminarian who can devote only so many hours a week to theological studies do justice to the importance of the biblical text?

Another cognitive profit of Scripture memorization is directly related to memorizing the text in the original languages. The emphasis on studying the Scriptures in the original languages is deemed by many as the *sine-qua-non* of advanced theological studies. Seminary programs require the acquisition and proficiency in biblical languages, and most students become convinced of the importance and benefit of this endeavor for their future ministry. They embark on two or three years of assiduous work with introductory and advanced grammars, lexica, the memorization of vocabulary and paradigms, which equip them with the basics for reading, exegeting, and interpreting the Scriptures in the original languages. After memorizing a first book of the *Novum Testamentum Graece*, it dawned on me that memorizing the biblical text in the original languages is far more beneficial for acquiring proficiency in biblical languages than the classical approach. Memorizing verses in the original languages automatically leads to a good grasp of vocabulary, morphological paradigms, syntactic functions and discourse style, just a few aspects which are better perceived in their natural, linguistic context, and not in the artificial context of a lexicon or manual of grammar.

I would conclude this brief list of memorization benefits with the passing remark that book memorization lends an almost inexhaustible resource for lecturing, preaching and teaching on that particular book to the delight of both the speaker and the audience. Memorization is indeed one simple tool that has the ability to explore the depths of the word of God in a way that few other approaches to Scripture can.

The Practice of Memorization

The following presentation of the praxis of memorizing the Scripture book-by-book is based on my own program of memorization, which has been in use for more than a decade now. It claims no general validity

since an approach that works for some might be completely unproductive for others. Nonetheless, this is the approach that I have used personally, and have encouraged the students in my classes to use, and so far it has proven to be successful.¹⁰ I always start by choosing one book that will become the focus of my studies for the following months. The process of memorization then comprises of four distinct phases.

Phase One

This phase is probably the most difficult of the four since it requires time, commitment and discipline, and progress may be disappointing at first. The goal of this phase is to be able to recite the entire book, with the aid of the text as needed. When I work on a book in a translation (Romanian or English) I set the goal of memorizing a chapter a day so that at the end of the first week a medium sized book (4-6 chapters) can be committed to memory. By the end of the week, the book should be recited entirely from memory, glancing at the text when needed. For longer books, splitting the book in half for the initial stage usually works best. When the two halves are mastered, the book can be reviewed as a unit. Working in Greek or Hebrew is considerably harder; I usually cover a chapter in about one to three weeks. It goes without saying that any aid to the memorization process should be used. I found for myself that sentence diagramming the text helps me best, as well as reading or reciting the text out loud.

Phase Two

For the following four to five weeks, I set the goal of reciting the book daily, in preferably one, but no more than two sittings. The goal for this phase is to be able to recite the entire book from memory, quite fluently, without any need to check the text. Obviously, dependence on the written text will diminish with each repetition of the book, and more significantly, fluency and speed of recitation improve considerably.

During this phase the first fruit of memorization will become evident. As the text is recited, each time several new aspects appear. During this phase one becomes very familiar with the main lexical stock of the book, its central ideas, its natural division into paragraphs, its atmosphere, and the style of the author. Foremost, the intratextuality of the book comes

¹⁰ My most recent trial was during a class of New Testament Survey, for which the students had the option of memorizing one epistle of their choice—Hebrews and Romans were among them. I was also able to test the approach in a Greek Exegesis on Galatians class, in which the student could have opted for memorizing the entire Greek text of PROS GALATAS. The response of most students could not have been more enthusiastic.

alive; the intricate inner tapestry of ideas, themes, motifs, and words is discerned with considerable ease and great delight.

Phrase Three

Phase three is what must be considered to be the most spectacular stage in book memorization. While the length of this phase depends on each individual, I usually spend three to four months on one book, daily reviewing it and making notes on special features. The true joy of memorizing peaks during this phase, since, as will be experienced early on, hardly an occasion of reciting the book will pass without seeing something new in the text. By now the fluency of recitation is at its peak, which shortens the time needed for the daily review of the book. This is really the phase during which I feel drawn into what seems to be a vivid dialogue with the author of the book; an author that no longer seems like a distant person who once penned the text, but a vivid presence, if the metaphorical language could be excused, infused within the text, who opens the door to perceive the complexity of his thinking, the passion, the nuance of expression, the urgency, and the relevance of his message imbedded in the written text. This is the phase of experiencing and living the joy of discovering God's truths in the written text.

After this phase, the book will be so well engraved in one's mind, that it can safely be stored in the long term memory, phase four, and start the process all over again with a different book.

Phase Four

Once the book is not reviewed daily, or weekly, it will gradually move out of the quick access memory, and the ability to recite it flawlessly, on demand, will diminish significantly. This is not necessarily an unfortunate thing; after all, it allows one to move on to the next book. It is refreshing to know, however, that with only a small effort—a matter of a couple of hours—a medium sized book can be brought back to the quick access memory at any given point after phase four.

The Outcome of Memorization—Test Case PROS GALATAS

The conclusion of this article consists of a sampling from a long list of exegetical and theological observations gleaned from PROS GALATAS, on which I worked through the stages outlined above.¹¹ Space considerations mandate brevity in both the breadth of issues addressed and depth of exploration. For the sake of a more structured

¹¹ While the following remarks have in view book memorization in the original languages, they are applicable to memorizing in a translation of choice.

presentation, the material is divided in five sections: lexical considerations, intratextuality, author's style, structure of the book, and theological insights. The classification is approximate and somewhat artificial since several of the examples discussed could feature under more than one rubric.

Most Pauline scholars will find no new material here; certainly nothing spectacular that would justify the effort needed in memorizing PROS GALATAS. After all, a computer program specialized in biblical analysis of the text could enable one to reach the same conclusions and to do so much more. I have no counter-argument to this objection, only to say that the arguments for the superiority and the benefits of memorization will be easily perceived by anyone who will engage in memorizing the book.

Lexical Stock

One of the first benefits of book memorization is an almost immediate grasp of the important lexical units employed by the author. Leaving aside conjunctions, prepositions, and other particles, which are high frequency words in any writing, the more frequently a word is employed the higher its importance in the lexical stock used by the author in conveying the message. Individual words, such as *apo stoloj* or *no moj*, or contrasting pairs of words, such as *sa rc* and *pneu~ma*, or combined noun-verb cognates, such as *pi&stij~pisteu&ein*, *cu)agge&lion~ cu)aggeli&zesqai*, *xa&rij~xari&zesqai*, *qe&lhma~qe&lein*, *peritomh&~ perite&mnesqai*, *e!rgon~e)nergei~n*, *zwh/~zh~n*, or antithetical concepts, such as *e)leu&qeroj~dou~loj / e)leuqeri&a~doulei&a / e)leuqerou~n~douleu&ein*, or interconnecting concepts, such as the intrinsic connection between *e)paggeli&a~e)pagge&llesqai* and *klhronomi&a~klhronomei~n* and *ui(o&j~ui(oqesi&a*, have a statistical dominance in the epistle that is easily spotted during memorization. The prominence of these lexical units is further confirmed by the fact that almost each one of these words has been the focus of intense research in Pauline theology, either with regard to PROS GALATAS, or the entire Pauline Corpus.

As important as the statistically dominant words are in appreciating the lexical stock of an author, they are not the only lexical units crucial to the message of the epistle. There are also other words that prove to be just as important even though they might not be numerically superior. Semantic importance is not intrinsically associated with the frequency of usage; words are not just to be counted, they must be weighed, to echo a textual criticism principle. I believe that memorization helps focus on these words with more precision than any other exegetical tool. For example, the key phrase, *h(a)lh&qeia tou~ cu)aggeli&ou*, while it is

used only twice in the epistle, *i#na h(a)lh&qeia tou~ eu)aggeli&ou diamei&nh| pro_j u(ma~j (2:5)*, and *ei}don o#ti ou}k o)rqopodou~sin pro_j th_n a)lh&qeian tou~ eu)aggeli&ou (2:14)*, could well sum up Paul's major theological interest in the epistle. The importance of the phrase *h(a)lh&qeia tou~ eu)aggeli&ou*, taken either as attributed genitive,¹² or genitive of content, or even expegetic genitive,¹³ to mention just a few, is inverse-proportionate to the frequency of its usage. Its semantic dominance established by the occurrences in chapter 2, is further confirmed by the other usages of the noun *h(a)lh&qeia* employed on its own, or by its verbal cognate *a)lhqeu&ein*, which surface in Paul's personal appeal in the latter chapters, *w#ste e)qxro_j u(mw~n ge&gona a)lhqeu&wn u(mi~n; (4:16)* and *ti&j u(ma~j e)ne&koyen [th~] a)lhqei&a| mh_ pei&qesqai; (5:7)*. The truth of the gospel, the truth revealed by and imbedded in the gospel, was one of the central issues at stake in Paul's corrective dialogue with the churches of Galatia.

Likewise, the phrase *ei}nai& ti*, and its various forms, is used only a few times in the epistle. It punctuates, however, the nagging concern of Paul at several junctures, either with the authority of the apostolic leaders in Jerusalem, *a)po_ de_ tw~n dokou&ntwn ei}nai& ti - o(poi~oi& pote h}san ou)de&n moi diafe&rei pro&swpon [o(] qeo_j a)nqrw&pou ou) lamba&nci (2:6)*, or with the external assault of the trouble-makers on the congregations in Galatia, *o(de_ tara&sswn u(ma~j basta&sei to_ kri&ma, o#stij e)a_n h}| (5:10)*, or with the danger of having a congregation ethnically or socially stratified and not united in Christ *ei} ga_r doki~ tij ei}nai& ti mhde_n w!n, frenapata~| e(auto&n (6:3)*. A fourth usage of the expression, likewise negative, is to be found in Paul's verdict on the inefficiency of either circumcision or uncircumcision in producing a life pleasing to God, *ou!te ga_r peritomh& ti& e)stin ou!te a)krobusti&a (6:15)*. What really is both the essence and the mark of Christianity is the inner transformation, the new creation worked out by the Spirit, *ou!te ga_r peritomh& ti& e)stin ou!te a)krobusti&a a)lla_ kainh_ kti&sij (6:15)*, which is the only reality capable of producing faith working out in love, *ou!te peritomh& ti i)sxu&ei ou!te a)krobusti&a a)lla_ pi&stij di0 a)ga&phj e)nergoume&nh (5:6)*.

The appreciation for the author's lexical preferences enhanced by memorization could also help in reaching a decision on several exegetical issues. Two examples are in order.

¹² D. B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 89.

¹³ Cf. Gal 5:7, *ti&j u(ma~j e)ne&koyen [th~] a)lhqei&a| mh_ pei&qesqai;*

First is the issue of the two different pronominal adjectives *allos* and *heteros*. The difference in their meaning, *allos* “another of the same kind,” and *heteros*, “another of a different kind,” could be significant in understanding the contrast set by Paul between his gospel and the so-called one of his opponents, *euaggelion, osouton allos* (1:6, 7). If the lexical distinction between the two adjectives is to be held in 1:6, as most commentators would agree, it should be considered the exception rather than the norm in *PROS GALATAS*. Indeed, in subsequent usages the alleged semantic divergence could not be detected. For example, only several verses later, James, the brother of the Lord, is referred to as *heteros apostolos* (*heteros apostolos kuriou* (1:19)). The fact that he is mentioned as *heteros apostolos* and not as *allos apostolos* should not imply that Paul considered James to be an apostle of a different kind (inferior?) to Peter. Likewise, the use of *allos* in *euaggelion . . . outon de allos fronthsete* (5:10) and of *heteros* in *to te ei j e(auto non tou kaima ecei kai ou)k ei j tou heteron* (6:4) point against maintaining a semantic distinctiveness between the two types of adjectives.

The second case touches on the distinctive way in which the author uses some lexical units. This is most evident in the peculiar use of the preposition *pro* in Paul’s narration of the episode in Antioch, *allo the outon oti ouk orqopodousin pro thn alhtheian tou euaggeliou* (2:14). The preposition *pro* is used only nine times in the epistle, considerably less than the dominant prepositions, *en* (41 times), *ek* (35 times) and *ei j* (30 times). While most usages in the epistle conform to the normal employment of the preposition, 2:14 has been noticed by commentators as perhaps requiring a different, somewhat unusual connotation, “according to, in conformity with,” demanded by the context. To opt away from the usual meaning of the preposition in this case, however, does seem to be neither necessary nor the best alternative, since the main meaning of the preposition *pro*, “for,” makes quite good sense of the text. Paul’s vehement disagreement with Peter in Antioch and with the rest of the Jews was not triggered by their lack of conformity to the truth of the gospel, but rather by their failing to give an opportunity for the truth of the gospel to advance, and not be hampered; they did not come to the aid of the truth of the gospel.

It should be mentioned that another important aspect of lexical analysis for which memorization is highly effective is the area of intratextuality, to which a separate section is devoted. Memorization helps not only to compute mere statistics of the dominant words, or to appreciate the important, even if not dominant words, but also to observe their interdependence. While this phenomenon is visible first on the level

of single words, it is also noticeable in the area of semantic synonymy of phrases. For example, one can easily notice that the epistle construes the two phrases by which Isaac is described, $\omicron(\text{de_e})\text{k th}\sim\text{j e)leuqe\&raj di}\underline{\text{Q}}\text{ e)paggeli\&aj}$ (4:23) and $\text{to_n kata_ pneu}\sim\text{ma}$ (4:29), as virtually semantic synonyms. The semantic overlap between the two concepts e)paggeli\&a and $\text{pneu}\sim\text{ma}$, which highlight two different aspects of the patriarch's life, will prove seminal in their theological exploration in the fifth chapter of the epistle. Likewise, the sentences $\text{eu)aggeli\&zwmai au)(to_n e)n toi}\sim\text{j e!qnesin}$ (1:16), $\omicron(\text{diw\&kwn h}(\text{ma}\sim\text{j pote nu}\sim\text{n eu)aggeli\&zetai th_n pi\&stin h}\#\text{n pote e)po\&rqi}$ (1:23) and $\text{kai_ a)neqe\&mhn au)toi}\sim\text{j to_ eu)agge\&lion o\$ khru\&ssw e)n toi}\sim\text{j e!qnesin}$ (2:2) portray Paul in a distinct but parallel fashion, implying that the expressions $\text{eu)aggeli\&zesqai au)(to\&n [i.e. Xristo_n O]hsou}\sim\text{n}$], $\text{eu)aggeli\&zesqai th_n pi\&stin}$, and $\text{khru\&ssein to_ eu)agge\&lion}$ should be construed as different ways to express the same truth. Memorization gives a fuller appreciation of the flexibility of expression of the biblical author.

Intratextuality

Intratextuality can be summarily defined as a literary phenomenon in which passages within a text that present striking similarities were intended by the author to be read in light of each other.¹⁴ The following discussion focus on instances of intratextuality within PROS GALATAS, highlighting several phrases that display similarity of expression and whose reading in light of one another lead to a broader perspective on the issues addressed individually. Exploring the phenomenon of intratextuality ranks among the most profitable aspects in acquiring a fuller understanding of the book's message, as well as of the most enjoyable components of memorization. Far above any other exegetical approaches, memorization enables one to investigate and to appreciate the inner texture of ideas and themes in the book, providing not only the opportunity of acquiring a holistic picture of the writing, but also of the individual nuances which each relevant passage bears.

At times, the intratextual elements are detected with ease, since they are located in close proximity. This is the case of the dual use of the phrase $\text{e)cape\&steilen o}(\text{qeo\&j}$ in the first part of chapter four, $\text{e)cape\&steilen o}(\text{qeo_j to_n ui}(\text{o_n au)tu}\sim$ (4:4) and $\text{e)cape\&steilen o}(\text{qeo_j to_ pneu}\sim\text{ma tou}\sim\text{ ui}(\text{ou}\sim\text{ au)tu}\sim$ (4:6). The two sentences are almost identical in their morphology, syntax and lexical stock, and

¹⁴ In its literary aspect, intratextuality is a more complex phenomenon than it might appear from the above definition; cf. M. G. Brett, in R. J. Coggins and J. L. Houlden (eds.), *A Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1990).

present the two stages of God's "sending" activity, the incarnation with its primary outcome "the adoption" (4:6a), and the indwelling of the Spirit, with its primary outcome "a new creation" (6:15). This "sending" activity of God is understood more fully when two cognate nouns are considered. First, the noun *apo&stoloj* is used in reference to Paul, *apo&stoloj ou)k a)p0 a)nqrw&pwn ou)de_ di0 a)nqrw&pou a)lla_ dia_ 0Ihsou~ Xristou~ kai_ qeou~ patro&j* (1:1), and to the apostles in Jerusalem, *e#teron de_ tw~n a)posto&lwn* (1:19). Second, the noun *apostolh&* describes both Peter's apostolic mission for the circumcised and Paul's for the uncircumcised, *o(ga_r e)nergh&saj Pe&trw| ei)j a)postolh_n th~j peritomh~j e)nh&rghsen kai_ e)moi_ ei)j ta_ e!qnh* (2:8). These two nouns draw attention to the fact that God's mission is carried out not only by the main (divine) participants, *o(ui(o_j au)tou~* and *to_ pneu~ma tou~ ui(ou~ au)tou~*, but also through the participation of human agents. God's setting aside, calling and appointing of his servants are indispensable stages that prepare and enable them to fulfill the God-given task.

Other times the intratextual elements are separated by several chapters, as in the case of the similar phrases referring to the trouble makers in Galatia, *ti&j u(ma~j e)ba&skanen* (3:1) and *ti&j u(ma~j e)ne&koyen* (5:7). In reading the two descriptive phrases together, one can decipher the primary tactics used by Paul's opponents in their attempt to win the Galatians to their side, to bewitch the eyes that behold the crucified Christ and to prevent them from obeying the truth. A fuller picture of the opponents can be traced inductively from the text itself, especially from 1:6ff., 2: 4ff., 3:1ff., 4:15ff., 5:7ff., and 6:12ff.

At times intratextuality functions on the level of lexical units, such as the recurrence of the important verb *anagka&zecin*, employed three times in the epistle. The first two occurrences are in connection with the verb "to circumcise," which very probably was the key issue of discord between Paul and his opponents in the context of the epistle, *ou)de_ Ti&toj o(su_n e)moi&, #Ellhn w!n, h)nagka&sqh peritmhqh~nai* (2:3), and *ou{toi a)nagka&zousin u(ma~j perite&mnesqai* (6:12). This pinpoints a basic requirement of the so-called gospel of Judaizers: no one can be an heir of Abraham, or become a member of God's people, outside the circumcision. The third usage of the verb *anagka&zecin* is in connection with the hapax verb *0Ioudai5zein*, which, as Paul indicates, might have been the outcome, if not a synonym for very essence of "circumcision," *ei) su_ 0Ioudai~oj u(pa&rxwn e)qnikw~j kai_ ou)xi_ 0Ioudai"kw~j zh~j, pw~j ta_ e!qnh a)nagka&zejj 0Ioudai5zein;* (2:14).

Other times, intratextuality involves an expression or even a more developed thought, such as the parallel expressions that link together the

argument of chapters 5 and 6, e)n ga_r Xristw~| Qlhsou~ ou!te peritomh& ti i)sxu&ei ou!te a)krobusti&a a)lla_pi&stij diQ a)ga&phj e)nergoume&nh (5:6) and ou!te ga_r peritomh& ti& e)stin ou!te a)krobusti&a a)lla_kainh_kti&sij (6:15). Neither the circumcision nor the uncircumcision possesses functional (5:6) or ontological (6:15) effectiveness in the life of the Christian. They are a far cry from what really counts, having life in the Spirit and being a new creation.

The following examples survey three issues bound together by intratextuality, first, the relationship between Paul and his opponents in Galatia, second, the relationship between Paul and the converts in Galatia, and finally, some considerations regarding history, language and theology.

Paul and His Opponents in Galatia. The exact identity of Paul's opponents in Galatia and their argument against Paul's gospel has been debated extensively. While memorizing the text of Galatians might not necessarily take the discussion much further, it helps one in creating a profile of these opponents based on an intimate knowledge of the text, which helps at least in sorting out and evaluating solutions proposed by various scholars. Much of the information regarding Paul's opponents is processed from the texts in which Paul makes explicit mention of them, even though most of the data has to be filtered through a mirror-reading of the epistle.¹⁵

The following comments are limited only to a pair of similar phrases which underline the main accusations leveled against Paul by his opponents: ei) e!ti a)nqrw&poij h!reskon (1:10), implying that Paul stood accused by his opponents as a man-pleaser, and ei) peritomh_n e!ti khru&ssw (5:11), implying that Paul was charged with preaching circumcision. The form of these two rhetorical sentences is almost identical, the conjunction ei) followed by the temporal adverb e!ti, and a 1st singular indicative verb, an aspect that is easily detected during memorization. While memorization helps in marking out intratextuality

¹⁵ The range of descriptive language with reference to the opponents is impressive: oi(tara&ssontej u(ma~j kai_ qe&lontej metastre&yai to_ eu)agge&lion tou~ Xristou~ (1:7), ei! tij u(ma~j eu)aggeli&zetai parO o\$ parela&betae (1:9), dia_ de_ tou_j pareisa&ktouj yeudade&lfouj, oi#tinej pareish~lqon kataskoph~sai th_n e)leuqeri&an h(mw~n h\$ n e!xomen e)n Xristw~| Qlhsou~, i#na h(ma~j katadoulw&sousin (2:4), ti&j u(ma~j e)ba&skanen (3:1), zhlou~sin u(ma~j ou) kalw~j, a)lla_ e)kklei~sai u(ma~j qe&lousin, i#na au) tou_j zhlou~te (4:17), ti&j u(ma~j e)ne&koyen (5:7), o(de_ tara&sswn u(ma~j basta&sei to_ kri&ma, o#stij e)a_n h} (5:10), o!felon kai_ a)poko&yontai oi(a)nastatou~ntej u(ma~j (5:12), o#soi qe&lousin eu)proswph~sai e)n sarki&, ou{toi a)nagka&zousin u(ma~j perite&mnesqai (6:12) and oi(peritemno&menoi au)toi_no&mon fula&ssousin a)lla_ qe&lousin u(ma~j perite&mnesqai (6:13).

at the level of similar sentences, it also helps in collating these sentences with two further instances of opposition in words or in deeds to Paul and his message: ko&pouj moi mhdei_j parexe&tw (6:17), and e)gw_ de&, a)delfoi&, ei) peritomh_n e!ti khru&ssw, ti& e!ti diw&komai; (5:11), both implying that Paul was, at the time of writing, the object of persecution on behalf of the “cross of Christ”.

Furthermore, the dominant verb in 5:11, diw&kesqai, is very important throughout the epistle. It is used by Paul to describe the relationship between what he calls “Judaism,” e)n tw~| Qloudai"smw~| (1:13, 14), which is the Judaism in which pre-Damascus Paul grew-up and embraced, on the one hand, and the church, on the other. Paul describes himself as a persecutor of the church of God, o#ti kaqQ u(perbolh_n e)di&wkon th_n e)kklhsi&an tou~ qeou~ kai_ e)po&rquon au)th&n (1:13), and was remembered as such by the churches of God in Judea, o(diw&kwn h(ma~j pote nu~n eu)aggeli&zetai th_n pi&stin h#n pote e)po&rqi (1:23). His conversion and commission has only set him, so to speak, at the receiving end of persecution, e)gw_ de&, a)delfoi&, ei) peritomh_n e!ti khru&ssw, ti& e!ti diw&komai; (5:11), a treatment which the trouble-makers in Galatia were trying to avoid precisely by preaching the circumcision, mo&non i#na tw~| staurw~| tou~ Xristou~ mh_ diw&kwntai (6:12). The importance of the verb, however, goes even further; it is a hermeneutical lens through which the true identity of the people of the promise and the people of slavery are to be recognized. This is the concluding argument of the allegorical piece on Abraham’s two sons, a)llo w#sper to&te o(kata_ sa&rka gennhqeij e)di&wken to_n kata_ pneu~ma, ou#twj kai_ nu~n (4:29). The identity of Abraham’s offspring, as being either the sons of the promise or the sons according to the flesh, was and continues to be directly linked with the status of the persecuted or of the persecutor.

Paul and His Relationship with the Galatians. Paul’s opening argument in 1:6-9 is a very strong denunciation not only of the Judaizers, but also of any messenger who would preach a different gospel, be he an angel, or, in the most extreme case, even Paul himself, a)lla_ kai_ e)a_n h(mei~j h@a! ggeloj e)c ou)ranou~ eu)aggeli&zetai [u(mi~n)parQ o\$ eu)hggelisa&meqa u(mi~n, a)na&qema e!stw (1:8). The stern words of the a)na&qema e!stw curse show just how serious the situation was. The reference to an angel in 1:8 is quite intriguing when read in light of Paul’s depiction in 4:12f. of the reception the Galatians have given him, w(j a!ggelon qeou~ e)de&casqe& me, w(j Xristo_n QIhsou~n (4:14). The lofty position attributed to Paul by the Galatians is not surprising in the context of the importance played by angels in the revelatory process

of the Old Covenant, o(no&moj . . . diatagei_j di@ a)gge&lwn e)n xeiri_mesi&tu (3:19).

Throughout the epistle Paul frequently refers to the Galatian believers in terms reminiscent of his own experience; there seems to be a commonality of experience which both Paul and the believers in Galatia share. They were called through grace a)po_ tou~ kale&santoj u(ma~j e)n xa&riti (1:6), just as Paul was, kale&saj dia_ th~j xa&ritoj au)tou~ (1:15). And while they are different than Paul as far as the agency of the gospel is concerned, their experience with the gospel is the same, they have received the gospel par@ o\$ parcla&bete (1:9), just as Paul has received it, pare&labon au)to& (1:12). While the language is similar, it is important to note the contrast between the two recipients of the gospel. The Galatians received it “from men,” while Paul received it “not from men.” Likewise, terms describing Paul’s mission mh& pwj ei)j keno_n tre&xw h@ e!dramon (2:2) are duplicated in similar terminology used for the Galatian believers e)tre&xete kalw~j (5:7). The reciprocal language has its fullest expression in the appeal by Paul to the Galatian believers to reciprocate towards him the same thoughts, feelings and behavior that he himself has towards them, gi&nesqe w(j e)gw&, o#ti ka)gw_ w(j u(mei~j, a)delfoi&, de&omai u(mw~n (4:12).

History, Theology, and Language. The intratextuality can be seen in several temporal clauses in the epistle. One noteworthy aspect of these clauses is the observation that Paul refers to plain historical events on the one hand, and to special revelatory events, on the other, using the same language. Thus Peter’s visit to Antioch, o#te de_ h}lqen Khfa~j ei)j @Antio&xean (2:11), is referred to in similar fashion to that of the fulfillment of time in God’s economy, o#te de_ h}lqen to_ plh&rwma tou~ xro&nou (4:4), and the visit of James’ delegation to Antioch, pro_ tou~ ga_r e)lqei~n tinaj a)po_ @lakw&bou (2:12), is coined in identical fashion with that of the pre-faith age, pro_ tou~ de_ e)lqei~n th_n pi&stin u(po_ no&mon e)frourou&meqa (3:23). History and revelation converge linguistically in Pauline theology.

The key verse 3:28 provides one last example of intratextuality in operation. Paul lays out in this verse three pairs of contrasting entities that have been made one in Christ, ou)k e!ni @Ioudai~oj ou)de_ #Eilh_n, ou)k e!ni dou~loj ou)de_ e)leu&qeroj, ou)k e!ni a!rsen kai_ qh~lu: pa&ntej ga_r u(mei~j ei)j e)ste e)n Xristw~| @Ihsou~ (3:28). That these contrasting pairs are not merely theoretical entities for Paul or the epistle is seen plainly in the fact that the first two pairs are explicitly documented in the letter in the most palpable way. The first one, ou)k e!ni @Ioudai~oj ou)de_ #Eilh_n (3:28) is mirrored in the example of Peter, ei) su_ @Ioudai~oj u(pa&rxwn (2:14), and Titus, Ti&toj o(su_n

e)moi&, #E!lhn w!n (2:3). The second contrast, ou)k e!ni dou~loj ou)de_ e)leu&qeroj (3:28), is mirrored by the case of Abraham's two wives, two sons, and two covenants, QAbraa_m du&o ui(ou_j e!sxn, e#na e)k th~j paidi&skhj kai_ e#na e)k th~j e)leuqe&raj (4:22). The third pair, ou)k e!ni a!rsen kai_ qh~lu (3:28), while it has no explicit counterpart in the epistle, is mirrored at the level of allegorical language in Paul's reference to God's fatherhood, xa&rij u(mi~n kai_ ei)rh&nh a)po_ qeou~ patro_j h(mw~n (1:3), and to heavenly Jerusalem's motherhood h(de_ a!nw QIerousalh_m e)leuqe&ra e)sti&n, h#tij e)sti_n mh&thr h(mw~n (4:26).

Author's Style

Familiarity with the author's writing style is among the most important benefits of book memorization. Doubtless, the issues involved in charting the literary style of an author are multifaceted and would need to take into consideration a panoply of various aspects, not least the intrinsic unity of the writing, the complex relationship between an author and his amanuenses, and when the writing took place in the author's life. Even so, it seems that throughout the epistle there are some stylistic constants that could be considered as characteristics of the author's literary style. Granted, the fine line between a theologically significant detail of a text and the peculiarities of an author's style is not always easy to draw, but an appreciation for stylistic features could be a reliable guide.

The first example is the change in the number of nouns or verbs used in several places in the epistle. In the opening verse of the epistle, Paul switches from a plural noun to a singular, ou)k a)pQ a)nqrw&pwn ou)de_ diQ a)nqrw&pou (1:1). While there might be a theological reason behind this change, it could be better interpreted as a stylistic preference on the author's part than as an indication of a distinction that Paul might have made between human source and agency as far as his apostleship goes. This change in number of nouns or verbs is probably a stylistic variation operative also in the case of Paul's remarks about the trouble-makers in Galatia, when he uses a plural participle, oi(tara&ssontej u(ma~j (1:7), and a singular participle, o(tara&sswn u(ma~j (5:10). It is also evident in the description of Paul's team which evangelized Galatia, described first by means of a plural verb, eu)hggelisa&meqa u(mi~n (1:8), and later as a singular verb, eu)hggelisa&mhn u(mi~n (4:13). The same phenomenon could be traced when the author deals with some theologically loaded concepts such as "the promise," to which he refers both as a plural noun, tw~| de_

QAbraa_m e)rre&qhsan ai(e)paggeli&ai (3:16), and as a singular noun, ei)j to_ katargh~sai th_n e)paggeli&an (3:17), or when he discusses the Galatians' status as adopted "sons," using both the plural o#ti de& e)ste ui(oi& (4:6), and the singular ei) de_ ui(o&j (4:7), or as "heirs," plural, as a group, kat0 e)paggeli&an klhrono&moi (3:29), and singular, as individuals, kai_ klhrono&moj dia_ qeou~ (4:7). A similar observation could be made with regard to the changes in mid-sentence kai_ a!rti pa&lin le&gw (1:9), or mo&non tw~n ptwxw~n i#na mnhmoneu&wmen, o\$ kai_ e)spou&dasa au)to_ tou~to poihsai (2:10); or from 1st plural to 2nd plural, o#ti de& e)ste ui(oi&, e)cape&steilen o(qeo_j to_ pneu~ma tou~ ui(ou~ au)tou~ ei)j ta_j kardi&aj h(mw~n kra~zon (4:6).¹⁶

The fact that number is sometimes very important theologically is evident from Paul's treatment of "the seed" in 3:16, where he builds the case on precisely the number of the noun: kai_ tw~| spe&rmati au)tou, ou) le&gei, Kai_ toi~j spe&rmasin, w(j e)pi_ pollw~n, a)ll0 w(j e)f0 e(no&j, Kai_ tw~| spe&rmati& sou. Other times, however, the change in number might be just a stylistic variation and not carry any exegetical significance. Memorization of the text is particularly helpful in deciding between the two options for each individual case.

The second example of a possible stylistic feature is collected from Paul's use of proper names. There are several proper nouns used throughout the epistle. First, there are names of persons, such as Paul himself, Pau~loj (1:1, 5:2), or of persons associated with Paul: Khfa~j (1:18, 2:9, 11, 14), QIa&kwboj (1:19, 2:9), QIwa&nnhj (2:9), Ti&toj (2:1, 3), Barnaba~j (2:1, 9, 13), and of well-known characters from the Old Testament: QAbraa&m (3:6, 7, 8, 9, 14, 16, 18, 29, 4:22), QIsaa&k (4:28) and QAga&r (4:24, 25).¹⁷ There are proper names of geographical locations, such as those of the regions in which Paul conducted his ministry, Galati&a (1:2), QIoudai&a (1:22), Suri&a (1:19), Kiliki&a (1:19), and QArabi&an (1:17, 4:25), and of several cities QIeroso&luma (1:18, 2:1, 4:25, 26), QAntio&xeia (2:11), and Damasko&j (1:17). All these proper names pose no particular problems for exegesis. In chapter 2 however, there is a conundrum in Paul's using twice Peter's name, Pe&troj (2:7, 8) as opposed to that of Khfa~j, which he generally uses (1:18, 2:9, 11, 14). It is difficult to know the exact reason for Paul's preference for using the name Peter in these two verses. It could be a

¹⁶ The text-critical issues have to be assessed for each case, since there are variant readings that use consistently the same person.

¹⁷ It is noteworthy that Sarah's name is not mentioned explicitly, nor that of Ishmael. Paul prefers to refer to these using descriptive language and not their proper names, h(e)leuqe&ra (4:22, 23, 30), and o(e)k th~j paidi&skhj (4:22, 23).

purely stylistic change with no hidden motive; however, it could be a change that reflects Paul's preference to preserve a received or well-known tradition. Thus in 2:7, 8 he chooses to use the name Peter because this was the name traditionally associated with the *primus inter pares* apostle of the Lord, and his apostolic mission to the Jewish people, a tradition which is confirmed by the Synoptics. When Paul refers to Peter's apostolate to the Jews, he preferred to leave the tradition unchanged and thus to use the name traditionally associated with this apostolic mission of Peter. The preference to stay within the limits of a historical tradition is probably operative also in the cases where scriptural tradition is concerned. This seems to be the case in chapter 4, which explores the quotation from the Greek version of Isaiah 54:1. Paul consistently uses the noun *te&knon*, (4:25, 28, 31) in accordance with the Greek text of the quotation from Isaiah 54:1 (LXX): *o#ti polla_ ta_ te&kna th~j e)rh&mou ma~llon h@ th~j e)xou&shj to_n a!ndra*, even though outside of this context, he uses exclusively the noun *ui(o&j* and its cognates (3:7, 26, 4:5, 6, 7). The same preference for preserving a scriptural tradition could explain the use of two different names for Jerusalem, *QIerousalh&m* in 4:25, 26, in the context of the Septuagintal tradition of Abraham and his two sons, and *QIeroso&luma*, the Hellenistic rendering used by Paul in the historical accounts of his post-conversion trips to Jerusalem (1:17, 18, 2:1).

Structure

The exercise of memorizing a book yields considerable results in understanding the structure of the epistle. Reviewing the text over and over again gives one a sure grasp not only of the natural divisions in the text but also of the logic behind their sequence.¹⁸ The present article explores only two examples that pertain to the structure of the book, which were noticed in the early stages of memorization.

The first case is the chiastic arrangement in the first major division of the book, 1:6–2:14, which consists of a historical narrative rehearsing the events leading up to and following Paul's Damascus event. It seems that the record of Paul's post-conversion history is presented in several segments, which could be partitioned into five episodes. The introduction to each episode follows a chiastic arrangement,

¹⁸ As far as PROS GALATAS is concerned it would be difficult to improve on the work of Betz, *Galatians* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), who explored the structure of the epistle along the lines of Greco-Roman rhetorical discourse, and while not all commentators agree with the precise layout of his proposal or with some presuppositions, it will continue to be the standard for any further research on the structural analysis of the epistle. Cf. F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on Galatians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 58.

o#te de& . . .	(1:15) followed by a 3rd singular verb
e!peita meta& . . .	(1:18) followed by a 1st singular verb
e!peita . . .	(1:21) followed by a 1st singular verb
e!peita dia& . . .	(2:1) followed by a 1st singular verb
o#te de& . . .	(2:11) followed by a 3rd singular verb

This example is not meant to endorse the overall chiasm on the level of the entire epistle proposed by Bligh.¹⁹ It is simply an observation that helps to partition neatly the literary record of the historical events in the life of the author. Noteworthy is the threefold use of the adverb e!peita, embedded in the inclusio formed on the temporal particle o#te. There are two similar ways in which Paul reports periods of elapsed time, e!peita meta_ e!th tri&a (1:18), and e!peita dia_ dekatessa&rw n e)tw~n (2:1). The difference between the two expressions, while perhaps strictly stylistic, could be significant in the way the “fourteen years” of 2:1 might be calculated, not from the first trip to Jerusalem, but rather from the point of conversion. The importance of this aspect is well known in deciding for an early or a later date for the epistle.

The second case is that of inclusio, the literary device often used by writers to signal division within the structure of text, which can be seen several times in the epistle. Needless to say, memorization detects this literary device quite easily and while inclusions do not offer precise guidance in the overall structure of the book, they do help considerably in delimiting the stages of argument within the book. Three examples from PROS GALATAS suffice. First, in 3:1-5, after the opening sentence, the text is bracketed by two similar expressions, e)c e!rgwn no&mou . . . h(@ e)c a)koh~j pi&stewj; (3:2) and (3:5). This inclusio marks the transition paragraph from the thesis exposition 2:15-21, to the defending argument of the thesis 3:6 ff. Second, in the midst of the theological argument of chapter 3 Paul returns to particular points in the thesis exposition by using almost identical phrases: they are the confirmation that no one is to be justified on the basis of the law, o#ti de_ e)n no&mw| ou)dei_j dikaiou~tai para_ tw~| qew~| dh~lon (3:11), which answers to the earlier usage ei)do&tej [de_] o#ti ou) dikaiou~tai a!nqrwpoj e)c e!rgwn no&mou e)a_n mh_ dia_ pi&stewj QIhsou~Xristou~ (2:16) and, the act of justification on the basis of faith, i#na e)k pi&stewj dikaiwqw~men (3:24), which answers to the earlier expression i#na dikaiwqw~men e)k pi&stewj Xristou~ (2:16). In the same way, the grouping of three lexical elements, “to receive,” “spirit,” and “faith” in e)c e!rgwn no&mou to_ pneu~ma e)la&bete h(@ e)c

¹⁹ J. Bligh, *Galatians in Greek* (Detroit: 1966).

a)koh~j pi&stewj: (3:2), and in i#na th_n e)paggeli&an tou~ pneu&matoj la&bwmen dia_ th~j pi&stewj (3:14), may well indicate the presence of an inclusion intended by the author.

Theological Issues

The fifth aspect of memorization presented in this article comes under the broad heading of theological issues, since it is in grasping the whole message of a book, the theology of a book, or that of a biblical author, that memorization is supremely helpful. If there is one aspect in where memorization leaves its impact, surely it is in the area of biblical theology. Memorization helps the exegete to go beyond an atomistic understanding of the biblical text to a holistic understanding of the writing, and implicitly of its author, which is unrivaled by any other methods of exegetical probing. Due to space constraints, the following remarks will address only three aspects, the corporate identity of believers, the meaning of the phrase a)poka&luyij QIhsou~ Xristou~, and the hotly debated phrase, pi&stij Xristou~.

u(mei~j ei{j e)ste. First is a brief observation of the usage of the numeral “one,” which is central for Paul’s argument at several junctures. Noteworthy are the verses in which the author explores the consequences for the corporate identity and unity of the believers, following their adoption in Christ (3:26, 27), ou)k e!ni QIoudai~oj ou)de_ #Ellhn, ou)k e!ni dou~loj ou)de_ e)leu&qeroj, ou)k e!ni a!rsen kai_ qh~lu: pa&ntej ga_r u(mei~j ei{j e)ste e)n Xristw~| QIhsou~ (3:28). The frequent change in number and person throughout the epistle points to the intricate balance between individual and group aspects of the faith, both as far as the identity and the responsibility of the people of the covenant go.

One such text stands at the heart of Paul’s argument in chapter 3, in which he explicitly builds on the grammatical number of the noun involved, a singular as opposed to a plural, ou) le&gei, Kai_ toi~j spe&rmasin, w(j e)pi_ pollw~n, a)llo w(j e)lle(no&j, Kai_ tw~| spe&rmati& sou, o#j e)stin Xristo&j (3:16), and further down, o(de_ mesi&thj e(no_j ou)k e!stin, o(de_ qeo_j ei{j e)stin (3:20). The best illustration within PROS GALATAS of the dynamics between the “many” and the “one” is offered by Paul in his remarks about the Law being fulfilled in “one” command. Paul is in unison with several of his contemporaries when he states that o(ga_r pa~j no&moj e)n e(ni_ lo&gw| peplh&rwta*i*, e)n tw~| QAgaph&seij to_n plhsi&on sou w(j seauto&n (5:14). The key word in this verse is the same numeral ei{j. This one command is representative of the entire set of laws and

regulations of the Torah, the “one law” that sums up “the many,” the one that fulfills the Law in its entirety. And the principle was operative not only in the Old Covenant, as the reader of 5:13ff. might think, but also in the New Covenant, as is explicitly outlined later in the epistle in the summary phrase *pi&stij di0 a)ga&phj e)nergoume&nh* (5:6).

a)poka&luyij 0Ihsou~ Xristou~. The discussion of this example revolves around the famous genitive construction *di0 a)pokalu&yewj 0Ihsou~ Xristou~* (1:12). The phrase could be construed either as a subjective genitive, “through the revelation given by Jesus Christ” (with . . .) or as an objective genitive, “through the revelation which has Jesus Christ as its object,” with (. . .). The decision between the two grammatical options is indeed difficult because both ideas find support within the epistle. Even seasoned exegetes such as F. F. Bruce seem to be less than consistent about the meaning of the phrase. In the NIGTC commentary, Bruce favors the objective genitive reading, “that *0Ihsou~ Xristou~* here is an objective genitive is rendered most probable by the wording of vv. 15f.: God ‘was pleased to reveal his Son in me’.”²⁰ However, in his useful paraphrased rendering of the Pauline epistles, he translates the phrase as a subjective genitive, “It was not from men that I received it [the Gospel] or learned it; it was a direct revelation from Jesus Christ.”²¹

In favor of the objective genitive stands the context immediately following, 1:15ff., in which Paul reminds the Galatians, in an autobiographical note, of God’s revelatory act toward him, a revelation that had as its object the person of His Son, *o#te de_ eu)do&khsen [o(qeo_ j] . . . a)pokalu&yai to_ n ui(o_ n au)tou~ e)n e)moi_* (1:15,16). In light of this paragraph, *di0 a)pokalu&yewj 0Ihsou~ Xristou~* (1:12) must be read as God’s revelation to Paul, which had as its object the person of Jesus Christ.

In favor of the subjective genitive, however, stands the context immediately preceding, *gnwri&zw ga_r u(mi~n, a)delfoi&, to_ eu)agge&lion to_ eu)aggelise_ n u(p0 e)mou~ o#ti ou)k e!stin kata_ a!nqrwpon: ou)de_ ga_r e)gw_ para_ a)nqrw&pou pare&labon au)to& ou!te e)dida&xqhn a)lla_ di0 a)pokalu&yewj 0Ihsou~ Xristou~* (1:11, 12). The thrust of these verses is Paul’s determination to dismiss any possible allegation from his opponents that he had received the gospel through human agency or instrumentality. The message he proclaims was received through direct and unmediated divine revelation,

²⁰ F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on Galatians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 89.

²¹ F. F. Bruce, *An Expanded Paraphrase of the Epistles of Paul* (Palm Springs: Ronald N. Haynes Publishers, 1981), 21.

and hence a subjective genitive makes more sense. It would be indeed unusual to have the first part of the sentence dealing with matters of agency of revelation, only to abruptly change in mid sentence to matters of revelation's object. In light of the immediately preceding paragraph, *diŃ a)pokalu&yewj ŃIhsou~ Xristou~* (1:12) could be construed more correctly as a subjective genitive; Jesus Christ was the agent providing the revelation, the subject (grammatically speaking) of the verb "to reveal." While memorization did not play a determinant part in opting for the subjective genitive interpretation, it did help in confirming the validity of this choice, by encouraging the reading of 1:12 in light of the first verse of the epistle, *Pau~loj a)po&stoloj ou)k a)pŃ a)nqrw&pwn ou)de_ diŃ a)nqrw&pou a)lla_ dia_ ŃIhsou~ Xristou~ kai_ qeou~ patro&j* (1:1), which delineates the unique agency of Pauline apostleship, divine as opposed to human.

pi&stij Xristou~. The third case is the interpretation of the much debated phrase *pi&stij Xristou~* within the theology of Galatians. Although quite late for its first usage in the epistle, *nu~n eu)aggeli&zetai th_n pi&stin h#n pote e)po&rqi* (1:23), the group *pi&stij–pisteu&cin* ranks among the most important theological aspects in Pauline thought, not only on account of its statistical dominance (the noun 22 times, the verb 4 times), but also because of its role in the argument of the epistle. Among the most noteworthy aspects related to "faith," one should first include the range of connotations given in Pauline usage. Limiting the perimeter of investigation only to *PROS GALATAS*, "faith" is used to connote a message to be proclaimed, *nu~n eu)aggeli&zetai th_n pi&stin* (1:23), roughly equivalent with the noun "gospel," *to_ cu)agge&lion o\$ khru&ssw e)n toi~j e!qnesin* (2:2), or with the "good news about Christ," *i#na eu)aggeli&zwmai au)to_n e)n toi~j e!qnesin* (1:16). It is also employed to connote the doctrinal tenets of the church, the theological reason for Paul's pre-conversion persecution, *th_n pi&stin h#n pote e)po&rqi* (1:23), especially when this verse is read in light of Paul's autobiographical note, *e)di&wkon th_n e)kklhsi&an tou~ qeou~ kai_ e)po&rquon au)th&n* (1:13). "Faith" is also used as an identity indicator which demarcates between believers and non-believers, *e)rgazw&meqa to_ a)gaqo_n pro_j pa&ntaj, ma&lista de_ pro_j tou_j oi)kei&ouj th~j pi&stewj* (6:10). Quite important is also the use of "faith" to designate a (new) age in the history of Salvation, the age of "faith" to supersede the age of "law," most clearly evident in two sentences, *pro_ tou~ de_ e)lqei~n th_n pi&stin u(po_ no&mon e)frourou&meqa sugkleio&menoi eij th_n me&llousan pi&stin a)pokalufqh~nai*, (3:23) and *e)lqou&shj de_ th~j pi&stewj ou)ke&ti u(po_ paidagwo&n e)smen* (3:25). The most

significant use in the epistle, however, is that which construes “faith” as synonymous with the act of believing/trusting. This meaning dominates the usages in the epistle, and is found especially in prepositional clusters, dia_ pi&stewj, e)k pi&stewj, e)n pi&stei, as well as in the verbal occurrences.

This article will address only one aspect with regard to “faith,” the meaning of the kernel phrase pi&stij Xristou~, whose meaning has been hotly disputed in recent years.²² There is really no need to rehearse in detail the arguments for taking pi&stij Xristou~ either as an objective genitive or as a subjective genitive. The key verse for this debate is Galatians 2:16, which is one example of Paul’s launching into a diatribe by stating a thesis followed by further clarifications, to pave the way for engaging in the actual diatribe. The verse is neatly divided in four segments:

- 2:16a ci)do&tej [de_] o#ti ou) dikaiou~tai a!nqrwpoj e)c e!rgwn
no&mou
e)a_n mh_ dia_ pi&stewj QIhsou~ Xristou~,
2:16b kai_ h(mei~j ei)j Xristo_n QIhsou~n e)pisteu&samen,
2:16c i#na dikaiwq~men e)k pi&stewj Xristou~ kai_ ou)k e)c
e!rgwn
no&mou,
2:16d o#ti e)c e!rgwn no&mou ou) dikaiwqh&setai pa~sa sa&rc.

The verse can be set in the following chiasmic arrangement:

- A (2:16a) ou) dikaiou~tai (negative passive verb)
B (2:16b) e)pisteu&samen (1st plural verb)
B' (2:16c) dikaiwq~men (1st plural verb)
A' (2:16d) ou) dikaiwqh&setai (negative passive verb)

²² The bibliography for tracing this debate is very extensive. Some of the key participants include G. Howard, “On the ‘Faith of Christ,’” *HTR* 60 (1967), 459-65; L. T. Johnson, “Romans 3:21-26 and the Faith of Jesus,” *CBQ* 44 (1982), 77-90; M. D. Hooker, “PISTIS XRISTOU,” *NTS* 35 (1989), 321-42; J. D. G. Dunn, “Once More, PISTIS XRISTOU,” in *SBL 1991 Seminar Papers*, (ed. David J. Lull; Atlanta: Scholars Press 1991) 730-44; R. B. Hays, “PISTIS and Pauline Christology: What is at Stake?” in *SBL 1991 Seminar Papers*, (ed. David J. Lull; Atlanta: Scholars Press 1991), 714-29; D. A. Campbell, “Romans 1:17—A Crux Interpretum for the Pi&stij Xristou~ Debate,” *JBL* 113 (1994), 265-85; B. W. Longenecker, “Defining the Faithful Character of the Covenant Community: Galatians 2.15-21 and Beyond,” in J. D. G. Dunn (ed.), *Paul and the Mosaic Law* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1996), 75-97; B. Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on St Paul’s Letter to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); and R. B. Matlock, “Detheologizing the PISTIS XRISTOU Debate: Cautionary Remarks from a Lexical Semantic Perspective,” *NovT* 42 (2000), 1-23.

This chiasmic arrangement has a less important value for the argument, since it is only one of several possible structures for this verse. Similar arrangements can be found if other lexical units (faith or law), or morphological units (nouns, verbs, or prepositions) are chosen as the determinant elements. The chiasm, however, is helpful in highlighting the semantic structure of the verse. The verse gravitates around two principal clauses, an indicative clause $h(mei\sim j\ ei)j\ Xristo_n\ \underline{Q}Ihsou\sim n\ e)pisteu\&samen$ (2:16b) and a subjunctive one, $i\#na\ dikaiwqw\sim men\ e)k\ pi\&stewj\ Xristou\sim\ kai_ou)k\ e)c\ e!rgwn\ no\&mou$ (2:16c), linked to the former by supplying the reason for “we believed in Christ Jesus.” These two main sentences are supported by the other two sentences, $ei)do\&tej\ [de_]\ o\#ti\ ou) dikaiou\sim tai\ a!nqrwpoj\ e)c\ e!rgwn\ no\&mou$ $e)a_n\ mh_ dia_ pi\&stewj\ \underline{Q}Ihsou\sim\ Xristou\sim$ (2:16a) which provide a further theological basis for 2:16b and a scriptural basis $o\#ti\ e)c\ e!rgwn\ no\&mou\ ou) dikaiwqh\&setai\ pa\sim sa\&rc$ (2:17b) for the main two sentences.

The crux here, of course, is the meaning of the phrase $e)k\ pi\&stewj\ Xristou\sim$ in 2:16a, which could be translated either as “faith in Christ,” if construed as an objective genitive, or “faith(fulness) of Christ,” if construed as a subjective genitive. Prior to memorizing PROS GALATAS, I leaned slightly toward the objective genitive interpretation, but without a great deal of personal conviction. After memorizing the epistle, I have clearly and decidedly positioned myself within this camp, and construe the phrase $pi\&stij\ Xristou\sim$ as an objective genitive. The following reasons were determinant and each one was affected by the memorization of the text.

Argument from Style. The first argument is essentially stylistic: 2:16b functions as a synonymous parallelism to 2:16a, in which the sentence $ei)j\ Xristo_n\ \underline{Q}Ihsou\sim n\ e)pisteu\&samen$ corresponds to and restates the phrase $dia_ pi\&stewj\ \underline{Q}Ihsou\sim\ Xristou\sim$ from 2:16a. This seems to be the most natural reading of the verse and to reject this argument on the basis of superfluous or pleonastic duplication would be against the very nature of parallelism. Furthermore, it would go against Paul’s typical flexibility in expressing the same truth, in the same context, in more than one form. Scores of examples from Galatians can be adduced to support this affirmation. In discussing the curse under which those who want to be justified through the “works of the Law” enter, Paul makes the following two remarks, $o\#soi\ ga_r\ e)c\ e!rgwn\ no\&mou\ ei)si\&n,\ u(po_kata\&ran\ ei)si\&n$ (3:10), and $o\#ti\ de_ e)n\ no\&mw|_ou)dei_j\ dikaiou\sim tai\ para_ tw\sim|_qew\sim|_dh\sim lon$ (3:11). It seems very obvious that the phrases $e)c\ e!rgwn\ no\&mou$ in 3:10 and $e)n\ no\&mw|$ in 3:11 are set in synonymous parallelism: to be $e)c\ e!rgwn\ no\&mou$ amounts to seeking to be justified $e)n\ no\&mw|$. The same phenomenon can be seen

in 3:18, ei) ga_r e)k no&mou h(klhronomi&a, ou)ke&ti e)c e)paggeli&aj: tw~| de_ QAbraa_m diQ e)paggeli&aj kexa&ristai o(qeo&j. The two expressions, e)c e)paggeli&aj and diQ e)paggeli&aj, clearly refer to the one and only way in which the inheritance was given to Abraham; it was given by God through a promise, diQ e)paggeli&aj, and therefore it came about on the basis of that promise, e)c e)paggeli&aj, lit. “out of the promise,” as the result of a promise. The need to clarify a statement by restating the same truth in a slightly modified way, involving necessarily a stylistic variation, cannot be denied to any author. In light of this quite evident phenomenon in PROS GALATAS, the more reasonable reading of 2:16 is to construe 2:16c as a restatement of 2:16b. In other words, “we also believed in Christ” is restating in verbal form the same truth which the phrase “righteousness on account of faith in Christ” states in nominal form. One can go even so far as to contend that 2:16c was necessary precisely in order to avoid reading 2:16b as a subjective genitive.

The same argument could be formulated against charging Paul with pleonastic repetition in 3:22, another important verse in the pi&stewj QIhsou~ Xristou~ debate. This verse could be divided in the following way:

- 22a a)lla_ sun&kleisen h(grafh_ ta_ pa&nta u(po_ a(marti&an,
- 22b i i#na h(e)paggeli&a
- 22b ii e)k pi&stewj QIhsou~ Xristou~
- 22b iii doqh~| toi~j pisteu&ousin

It is often argued that e)k pi&stewj QIhsou~ Xristou~ (3:22b ii) must refer to “the faithfulness of Christ,” or else the end of the verse, doqh~| toi~j pisteu&ousin, (3:22b iii) would be an unnecessary addition. Contrary to being superfluous, the addition stands as another example of Paul’s habit of restating a truth in a different syntactical form, without altering its meaning. The ones believing, toi~j pisteu&ousin (3:22b iii), are the ones to whom the promise was given on the basis of their faith in Christ, e)k pi&stewj QIhsou~ Xristou~ (3:22b ii).

Abraham Believed—the Faith of Abraham. An even stronger argument against the subjective genitive reading of pi&stij Xristou~ is adduced from a different expression used by Paul to convey the idea of faithfulness. The proponents for the subjective genitive usually demand the reading “faithfulness of Christ” on the basis of grammatical antecedents, i.e. the clusters in which pi&stij is the *nomen regens* does seem to favor statistically the subjective genitive, “faith/faithfulness of.” In PROS GALATAS, however, Paul makes use of a different syntagm when he wants to highlight the faithfulness of a person. When Paul refers

end in itself. Even after the biblical text has been mastered, a considerable task awaits, as Professor Hengel reminded the scholars in a recent address.²⁵ What memorization does, however, is to guarantee that the theological construct is not built merely upon familiarity with the biblical text, but rather on a deep and thorough understanding of it. The results of a theological education based on such a superlative knowledge of the text will not fail to produce substantial results.

²⁵ Martin Hengel, "What is the next horizon for evangelical scholarship?" A lecture delivered at Tyndale House, Cambridge, England, 2002, available on the web at <http://www.tyndale.cam.ac.uk>.

Book Reviews

The Jewish Study Bible. Edited by Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, xxiii, 2208 pp. + 9 maps, \$29.99 paper.

Christians are pretty familiar by now with study Bibles. The last two decades have produced a significant number of them, all dedicated to one or another aspect of the Christian faith (e.g., Believer's, Disciples', Life Application, Women's, etc.) Ostensibly, it is the particular focus of the study Bible that gives it appeal to the average reader.

The focus of this study Bible makes it very unique! As far as I know it is the first modern Jewish study Bible ever published in English. That's right! This is a *Jewish* study Bible. It has the look and feel of a Christian study Bible, but it does not cover the New Testament at all. The focus of this study Bible is only on the thirty-nine books of the Tanakh, otherwise known to Christians as the Old Testament.

Just like Christian study Bibles each book is prefaced with a fairly concise introduction treating typical scholarly concerns such as date, authorship, historical context, and literary background. Sometimes, an outline is included. (Deuteronomy, 362-63; Jeremiah, 920). In addition, explanatory side bars are given for selected portions of the text of each book. Special words in the text, place names, and people are discussed here, as well as interpretive issues and cultural and background concerns. Special maps and charts are also interspersed throughout the text (cf. "The Temple and palace of Solomon," 684).

A number of general essays on a wide range of Bible topics are collected at the end of the volume (cf. "The Bible in The Dead Sea Scrolls", 1920; "Languages of the Bible", 2062; etc.) Charts on weights and measures, a biblical timeline, and a chronology of rulers are placed after the essays. A chart on the Jewish calendar and a table of weekly Sabbath readings are also included. An excellent glossary of biblical and Jewish terms and an index of the subjects found in the side bar notes and the essays follow the charts. Finally, nine New Oxford Bible Maps are appended to the end of the edition.

Why should a *Christian* periodical review this book, and why should *Christians* be encouraged to purchase it or read it at all? What value would a Jewish study Bible prove to be for non-Jewish students? These are good questions, and there are many answers, a few of which are found below.

The editors themselves hope that "*The Jewish Study Bible* will serve as a compelling introduction for students of the Bible from other backgrounds and traditions, who are curious about contemporary academic Jewish biblical interpretation" (ix). Two stated goals clarify the direction of this hope. For the editors, the first goal "is to convey the best of modern academic scholarship on the Bible, that is, scholarship that reflects the way the Bible is approached in the university" (ix). Berlin and Brettler do not believe that this secular approach undermines Judaism. Instead, it "can add significant depth to Jewish belief and values" (x).

The second goal, on the other hand, is "to reflect, in as broad a fashion as possible, the range of Jewish engagement with the Bible over the past two and a

half millennia” (x). While this “engagement” includes “a wide range of modern approaches,” it also means sensitivity “to Jewish readings of the Bible, to classical Jewish interpretation, and to the place of the Bible in Jewish life” (x). Berlin and Brettler point out there is no single authoritative Jewish biblical interpretation. However, in addition to the sensitivity mentioned above, all of the contributors share as common beliefs that the Tanakh is complete in itself and not a prelude to the New Testament, that the term “Hebrew Bible” is redundant in the Jewish view, and that the traditional Hebrew (Masoretic) text of the Bible is to be taken seriously (x). Consequently, Christians who wish to educate themselves concerning the way modern Jewish scholarship has engaged both current academic scholarship and their own Jewish tradition (Jewish readings of the Bible, classical Jewish interpretation, etc.) need to purchase this book and read through the notes and appendices.

Jewish biblical interpretation can provide insights not readily known to evangelicals. For example, *The Jewish Study Bible* points out that the phrase “dwell together” in Psalm 133:1 is legal terminology meaning to live in joint tenancy. “The psalm is not about harmonious family life (a common reading based on a misunderstanding of the verb and adverb), but is about brothers holding land together” (2102). As such, this is “a metaphor for the (re)unification of Israel and Judah.”

From the inception of the first Jewish study Bible—that is, the Rabbinic Bible, the *Miqra’ot Gedolot* (published by the Christian printer Daniel Bomberg in 1516)—the focus has always been on the text of the Tanakh, the Jewish Holy Scriptures. This concern is no less the case with *The Jewish Study Bible*. The Jewish Publication Society’s revised and corrected second edition translation of the Tanakh of 1999 forms the basis of this study Bible. The translation was to rely on the traditional Hebrew text and avoid emendations. It would translate the Hebrew idiomatically (like the NIV, for example) and reflect contemporary scholarship (xiv). Made up of Jewish scholars and Rabbis, the translation team “lived and breathed” Hebrew in such a way that I believe any *goy* would be hard to match. Christian students who wish to connect with this Jewish perspective need to purchase this book and read through the translation of the text of the Tanakh.

Finally, it should be noted that Paul declared that the Jews “were entrusted with the oracles of God” (Rom 3:2). How the Jews have understood “the oracles of God” and how they have employed them in their faith is the focus of two (“Jewish Interpretation of the Bible” and “The Bible in Jewish Life and Thought”) of the three major sections of the essays found at the end of this volume. Because I went to a Jewish graduate school (Hebrew Union College—Jewish Institute of Religion) many students have asked me what Jews today believe on a wide range of biblical subjects and texts. I often tell them that the situation is a lot similar to the Baptist world—there are about as many interpretations as there are Baptists! Now I can say: “Anyone who desires to acquire a feel for the many varieties of Jewish biblical interpretation needs to purchase this book and carefully read all of it!”

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Libraries in the Ancient World. By Lionel Casson. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001, xii + 177 pp., \$12.95 paper.

Lionel Casson's monograph suffers from the same myopic and chauvinistic misconception that many students of the Western World possess: all ideas, concepts, institutions, and individuals of note—or at least worthy of study—had their origins or reached their apogee in Greek or Roman civilization. Not surprisingly, eight of the nine chapters in this work focus on the development of the library in the Greco-Roman world. Consequently, this book is mis-titled. It should be called *Libraries in the Greco-Roman World*.

Only the first chapter—sixteen pages—examines the beginnings of archives and libraries in the ancient Near East. But these few pages turn out to be a quick sweep through more than 2500 years of archival and library development. It would appear that Casson included this chapter in order to set aside the true origin and development of the library concept with a quick wave of the hand:

“In sum, Near Eastern collections were of a specific nature that answered to the needs of the civilization of which they were part. They ceased to exist when that civilization came to an end: they were not the seed which engendered the libraries with their far wider horizons that were to arise in the world of Greece and Rome” (15).

But no information about the many archives and libraries that existed in the ancient Near East after the time of Ashurbanipal is given or discussed in the book. Casson has simply ignored this later important evidence.

In like manner, Casson is also able to dismiss the libraries of Egypt. Since we have little evidence for these, they do not matter—they add nothing “to the history of libraries” (16). This is a pretty strong statement to make; especially in light of the fact that documental material of choice for the Egyptians was the easily perishable papyrus. The lack of evidence is not evidence of lack in this case.

Casson seems to possess a preconceived modern definition about the nature and function of personal and public collections of ancient writings. Anything that does not fit this definition is ignored. According to Casson, the real library—“the library as we know it, with shelves full of books on all subjects and doors open to readers with interests in all subjects (17)—had to await the coming of the Greeks. Only the Greeks could do this:

“For they were a people endowed with what was needed to bring it into existence—a high level of literacy and an abiding interest in intellectual endeavor” (17).

It is unfortunate that Casson ignores much of the evidence for the development of the library in the ancient Near East. The idea of a library as a collection of materials available to be studied and perused developed out of the various types of archives in the ancient Orient. Royal, economic, and administrative archives from the ancient Near East were indeed the seed which

engendered the development of the libraries in the Greco-Roman period as well as our own.

Libraries in our sense did exist in the ancient Near East (cf. Ernst Posner, *Archives in the Ancient World* [Cambridge: Harvard, 1972], 28, 36, 61). Many of these were temple libraries attached to temple schools. Special techniques were developed for the control of library material that were different from those applied to archival holdings (cf. Mogens Weitemeyer, "Archive and Library Technique in Ancient Mesopotamia," *Libri* 6 [1956]: 225-232).

Despite this unfortunate misunderstanding, Casson's study does provide valuable information and insight into the libraries of the Greco-Roman world. For example, chapter 8, "From Roll to Codex," examines the origin and development of the codex. The earliest reference to a codex is found in a poem by Martial in A.D. 85/86. Martial gives "the distinct impression that such editions were something recently introduced" (124). The codex was the descendent of the older wooden writing tablets that had been strung together with cords. The Romans were credited with substituting parchment for the wooden boards, and thus developing what was the ancestor of the modern book (125).

The superiority of the codex over against the roll was not immediately recognized. Casson compares data on Greek literary, scientific, and other writings from the first to fifth centuries. In the first and second centuries a mere 1.5 percent of all 1,330 documents dating to that period are written on codices. In the third century this figure climbs to 17 percent; by the fourth century it reaches 50 percent. The fourth and fifth centuries see a marked preference for the codex with 80 and 90 percent respectively (127).

Casson notes that one exception to this progress is striking. From the very beginning Christians favored the codex for their copies of Scripture and other religious writings (129). This is in stark contrast to pagan writings of the same sort in which only 3 percent at the time were on codices (130). I would add that this Christian penchant for the codex would also probably be in contrast to normal Jewish practice. Although the Dead Sea Scrolls date a few centuries earlier all of them are on scrolls. The earliest codex of any portion of the Hebrew Bible known to me dates from the ninth century (Codex Cairensis, A.D. 895).

This last point is important for the study of the Old Testament canon. Since the invention of the codex was a late affair and not so quickly accepted by Judaism, it would appear unwise to make any conclusion about the date of a book or its point of acceptance into the canon based on the order or place of the book in a late codex. This would appear to me to mean that the concept of canonicity (i.e., the date of the acceptance of an OT book as Scripture) must not in any case be confused with the process of codification (i.e., the date of the inclusion of a book into a collection or "codex").

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Ancient Judaism and Christian Origins: Diversity, Continuity, and Transformation. By George W. E. Nickelsburg. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003, pp. vii + 264, \$23.00 paper.

The stated goal of Nickelsburg's *Ancient Judaism and Christian Origins* is to answer two questions: "How have the Dead Sea Scrolls and revolutions in the methodology of biblical scholarship in the past two generations changed our perceptions of Judaism in the Greco-Roman period, and how do—or should—these developments lead us to rethink the origins of Christianity?" (xv). Nickelsburg argues that NT scholars ignore or neglect the rich harvest of early Jewish studies, much to their and their students' detriment. His thesis is that, within a history-of-religions perspective, the insights from the study of early Judaism necessitate a reevaluation of our understanding of earliest Christianity. While it is the case that many groundbreaking discoveries and advances of the last fifty years challenge our understanding of ancient Judaism, the degree of the need for a new reassessment of early Christianity, and Christian theology in particular, is still an open question.

Each chapter of the work is divided into two main sections. The first outlines the findings of contemporary research in early Judaism while the second considers some of the implications of these findings for the origins of Christianity. In chapter one ("Scripture and Tradition") he takes up the complex field of biblical interpretation and formation. Nickelsburg provides a clear introduction to the issues impacting the stability and range of scriptural texts and how the different manuscript traditions preserved in the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) collection affect our understanding of the collecting and interpreting of OT texts. Though the evidence is complex, which should encourage great scholarly humility, Nickelsburg is quick to conclude that there was no fixed, authoritative Scripture for first-century Jews "in all places" (20). Scholarship is divided on this point, with many asserting that a large portion of Jews accepted a core group of texts which were normative for practice and belief. But Nickelsburg is correct in pointing out the evidence provided by the DSS discoveries is indispensable to our understanding of the formation and interpretation of Israel's Scriptures.

In chapter two ("Torah and the Righteous Life") Nickelsburg takes up the contentious issue of the relationship between the law and righteousness in first-century Judaism. Here the "stereotyped" view of post biblical Judaism as a faith that "perverted biblical religion by advocating perfectionist observance of the Torah" comes under sustained critique (58). Nickelsburg maintains that evidence from a wide variety of Jewish texts demonstrates that the zeal for maintaining Torah observance was not separated from faith and trust in the God of Israel's covenant. And thus the caricature of first-century Judaism as founded upon "works righteousness" is inadequate.

This complex of issues bleeds over into Nickelsburg's discussion of "God's Activity in Behalf of Humanity" and "Agents of God's Activity" (chapters three and four respectively). He insists that developments in our understanding of early Judaism points up the fact that God's activity among humanity incorporates more than salvation from sin. In other words, God's activity with humanity as illustrated in second temple Jewish thought included deliverance

from one's enemies, revelation of divine wisdom, healing from physical illness, and so on. Thus the traditional focus on God's salvific activity epitomized in Jesus' sacrificial death for others is set within the context of the various other activities of God with humanity and challenges the notion that humanity's primary problem is sin and the need for forgiveness. Yet, placed upon this first-century Jewish background, Nickelsburg recognizes that "the principal factor that differentiates Christianity from its Jewish matrix is the centrality and indispensability of Jesus Christ" (88). Nickelsburg also takes up the issue of first-century Judaism understood or expected of God's agents. He concludes that "It is reductionistic to identify God's agent in the world as 'the messiah.'" Rather he asserts that "God operates through a variety of human and transcendent agents . . ." (189). This complex of issues more than any other has become the pressing interest of many scholars attempting to piece together a new reconstruction of earliest Christianity's view of justification and the law (cf. the varying perspectives of N. T. Wright, J. D. G. Dunn, E. P. Sanders, K. Stendahl and the responses by S. Kim, D. A. Carson, *et al.*).

The heightened eschatological expectation in all its varieties within postbiblical Judaism forms the content of chapter five ("Eschatology"). Chapter six ("Contexts and Settings") considers the social, ideological, and political situation within which the documents of postbiblical Judaism were written. Both chapters describe a time of trouble and difficulty including religious persecution, martyrdom, social oppression, occupation of the Holy Land, and the destruction of Jerusalem. Understandably, an eschatological outlook permeates Jewish reflection at this time as a horizon in which the present evil finds final retribution and justice. Through it all Nickelsburg stresses the variety of Jewish reaction to these troubles and attempts to place early Christianity within this matrix.

Finally, chapter seven ("Conclusions and Implications") draws these insights together to argue that there are many more similarities between Judaism and Christianity than more polemic paradigms allow. As the fruits of the last fifty years of research in ancient Judaism ripen, students of the New Testament must harvest and digest these insights if we are to understand Christianity in its first century context. Nickelsburg concludes with "three axioms for exegetical and historical study"—scholarly humility and tentativeness, awareness of the social construction of knowledge, and recognition of the diversity in early Judaism and early Christianity (198). Though the framework and starting presuppositions underlying these axiomatic conclusions may be contested, this survey of research points us toward a serious study of both the Jewish and Christian primary sources and toward an openness to understanding how they are related.

This is a very important work produced by an eminently respected scholar (see the new two volume Festschrift: *George W. E. Nickelsburg in Perspective: An Ongoing Dialogue of Learning* [Leiden: Brill, 2003]). And though working from a history-of-religions perspective, it should be read by all serious students of the NT in order to correct an outdated understanding of first-century Judaism and its relationship to early Christianity. The work will benefit upper level university students and postgraduates along with scholars in other fields as an introduction to this complex set of issues. The two major shortcomings of the

work are the lack of an extended bibliography for further research and the lack of a subject index.

Darian R. Lockett
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Christianity and the Roman Empire: Background Texts. By Ralph Martin Novak. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2001, 340 pp., \$28.00 paper.

The author traces the origin of this book to a course he taught in 1996, entitled "The Roman Empire's Perspective on Christianity." This was no college or seminary course, but a lay adult education course at a church in Texas. Consequently, the book embodies that primary purpose—to present the history of early Christianity primarily to students rather than to scholars.

However, this has not resulted in a superficial presentation, but in a very detailed, well-organized, and helpfully critical historical narrative. Believing that for all that has been written on early church history, the sources of that history are, "widely scattered, difficult to find, and generally unknown to a layperson," Novak declares on page one, that the purpose of his work is to "assemble these ancient texts into a single continuous account of the political and social relationship among Christians, the Roman government, and the peoples of the Roman Empire."

As has already been noted, Novak has clearly met that aim, in what will surely become a standard in the field. For this is no mere fragmentary collection with brief introductions, but to achieve his purpose of serving a more general readership, Novak begins with a brief but very helpful introduction to the historical method itself. He then, chapter by chapter, examines each of the first four centuries of the early church. Those chapters are concluded by one in which the author gives a much more concentrated focus on what he calls, "The Scouring of Alexandria, ca. 361-416 CE." This is followed by a total of five appendices: "Rome's Accommodation with Judaism," "Accusations of Christian Immorality," "The Worship of the Roman Emperor," "The Formulation of the Nicene Creed," and "Determining the Dates of the Life of Jesus." Novak completes his work with a detailed list of sources and translations, together with two indices of texts and subjects respectively.

Novak tells us on page viii that a primary goal of his work "has been to direct the reader along the path of the majority historical consensus without being so intrusive as to obscure the majesty and power of the texts themselves." And the manner in which he has judiciously selected his texts, his extended citations, his detailed commentaries, and his most interesting excursions into areas including the introduction to historical method, the detailed examination of charges made of Christian immorality, and the issues involved in determining the dates of Jesus' life, all work together to make his work a most valuable resource for those who are studying the history of early Christianity.

We are not told a great deal about the author, which seems something of a lack. What we are told is that he has taught several classes in two Texas

churches, and that he holds a Master's Degree in Roman History from the University of Chicago.

Michael D. McMullen
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Second-Century Christianity: A Collection of Fragments. Second edition. By Robert M. Grant. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003, 111 pp., \$19.95.

Robert M. Grant, an Emeritus Professor at the University of Chicago Divinity School, and a recognized authority on early Christian history, first published this collection of fragments in 1946. Grant declared that the impetus behind his work was a letter from an Anglican archbishop, urging him to publish "a little corpus of these odds and ends which link the New Testament period with the developed Catholicism of the end of the second century." And so was born Grant's original *Second-Century Christianity*, aiming to do just as Philip Carrington of Quebec had asked. Grant's work became a firm favorite and a standard by which to judge the many other collections of primary text fragments that would later appear.

In this expanded edition are included select Gnostic texts, making what was a valuable tool for both students and teachers of the history of early Christianity into an even more valuable one. Through his selections, organization, introductions and translations, Grant enables a firsthand encounter with the early church, especially as it grows, spreads, develops and wrestles in what was probably, the most formative period of its life. And that is the real strength of Grant's work, it focuses on one narrow period, and that for the particular aim as described above. Yes, there are other collections of primary texts, maybe somewhat of an abundance, but here we are given vivid insight into one very important period of the early church.

The book is divided into three main parts. First, there is a section entitled "Pagan Witnesses," which gives us valuable insights into how early Christianity was viewed by those Grant refers to as "outsiders." The next section consists of texts from Christians themselves, which appears under the title "Christian Churches." Grant approaches them geographically. This section includes extracts from the churches of Alexandria, Jerusalem, Antioch, Asia Minor, Greece, Carthage, Gaul, and Rome. The last section is entitled "Identifying Heresy," and this includes texts from such figures as Justin, Basilides, Valentinus, and others.

The only real criticism to be made arises from the very quality of the work, and that is that one might wish for the commentary to be more developed.

Michael D. McMullen
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The Reformation in Britain and Ireland: An Introduction. By W. Ian P. Hazlett. London: T & T Clark, 2003, 241 pp., \$29.95 paper.

If Professor Hazlett's volume was only a modern introduction, survey, and summary of the Reformation period in Britain and Ireland, then the quality of his work alone, would be enough to make it a desirable volume. The writing style is engaging, the results of his research are well-written and well-documented, and the overall attention to detail is excellent. Moreover, the information is presented in an organized and highly accessible form.

But there is much more to this book. Hazlett, a Reader in Church History at the University of Glasgow, Scotland, who specializes in Reformation studies and who is of international standing in this area, justifies such a volume by arguing quite correctly, that previous introductions have invariably concentrated on England, with lesser attention given to Scotland and Wales, usually ignoring Ireland altogether. And so by deliberately departing from that traditional approach, he has produced a work which seeks and succeeds in giving a much fuller treatment to the fascinating and often very different but interrelated experiences in England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland. He does this by comparing and contrasting long-term developments and reactions in all four countries, and then offers assessments of the results of more recent research.

This volume had its origins in the Kerr Lectures Hazlett delivered at the University of Glasgow. The author declares that the intention of his reworked version is three-fold: to provide synoptic accounts of the events, processes and figures associated with the Reformation in the British Isles; to extend the declared purview into the *early* 17th century; and to familiarize readers with some of the ways and means, past and present, of writing about the Reformation in the respective lands. Hazlett is clearly aware of current, critical research and this is evidenced throughout his work as he provides very thorough analyses of the material he presents.

One thing noted about the book's length is that while the book does consist of 241 pages, there are actually only 172 pages of text, for notes take up 33 pages, there are 22 pages of a select and very helpful bibliography, and 13 pages of indices.

This work will be of great value to both students and teachers within associated fields, but for all its specialization, it should not be beyond the grasp of most who have a real interest in this turbulent but fascinating period of religious and intellectual history.

Michael D. McMullen
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Meet Jonathan Edwards: An Introduction to America's Greatest Theologian/Philosopher. By W. Gary Crampton. Morgan PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 2004, 147 pp., \$12.95.

Last year saw the tercentennial of the birth of Jonathan Edwards. Consequently, there was the expected appearance of a number of commemorative volumes on

Edwards. However, the sheer amount of material that appeared was to such a degree that it confirmed Edwards' place in Christian history. That resurgence of interest has not abated, and the invitation of this introduction to Edwards and his thought and significance is a part of that ongoing resurgence.

Crampton has produced a very helpful introduction to both Edwards and his thought. There are seven brief but interesting chapters which survey Edwards the man, his views of knowledge, revelation, Scripture, God, Christ and Christian experience. Edwards has been proclaimed to be America's foremost philosopher and rightly so. But some books have been written on Edwards ignoring the fact that he was a Christian. Crampton's brief book is the beginning of an antidote to this sort of thinking. And clearly, this is one of the author's main aims, to introduce Edwards as not only a great intellect, but one who used that intellect to attempt to better understand who God was, what it was that God wanted, and to understand and apply the Bible. As Crampton says in quoting John Piper from his book, *God's Passion for His Glory* (Wheaton, IL, Crossway, 1998, 77), "Edwards's mind was in love with God" (vii).

This introduction stands in the tradition of John Gerstner's *A Mini Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1987), only this volume is a little more developed. There is a more detailed introduction to the man, together with a helpful survey of some of the most significant areas of his theology. To that end the author achieves a helpful balance. And that is part of the strength and attractiveness of this book, that the author has included a good degree of detail in such a relatively brief volume. He has also exhibited a knowledgeable grasp of primary material, especially of the sermon manuscripts of Edwards, together with showing clear evidence of a mature use of the available secondary sources.

One thing this volume reminds readers of in a timely yet somewhat indirect manner, and which by its nature may be of particular interest and relevance to Southern Baptists, is that notwithstanding the ascription that Edwards was America's greatest theologian and philosopher, he was not perfect. One example of this occurs on page 63, where Edwards' "Miscellany number 694" is quoted in which he amazingly argues that, "baptism by sprinkling" (or "pouring") is, "a more lively representation of the thing signified by baptism than dipping or plunging."

By way of criticism of the book, it is nowhere revealed who exactly the target audience is seen to be. The closest the author seems to come, is when he says, that we who live in the early years of the 21st century would do well to study Edwards' teachings because of the message he preached, a message he says, that remains relevant to every age because it has the life of Christ in it. To that I would wholeheartedly agree. I would also suggest that this is a much needed book which will be of real value to those who are seriously interested in learning more about Edwards' life and theology (the book has more than 12 pages of bibliography). One other minor point noticed is that the author's doctoral degree as given on the attractively presented front cover, does not match the doctoral degree given on the title page.

Michael D. McMullen
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Jonathan Edwards at Home and Abroad: Historical Memories, Cultural Movements, Global Horizons. Edited by David W. Kling and Douglas A. Sweeney. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2003, 330 pp., \$59.95.

In the press release issued for this book by the University of South Carolina Press, the claim is made that this is a “major contribution” to studies on Edwards. The concern one might have, however, is that in the past three years, primarily due to the tercentennial celebration of Edwards’ birth in 2003, there has been a proliferation of books about this imposing figure, any of which it could and probably has been claimed, that they too are major contributions.

That being said, however, I do believe that the 15 scholars involved in this ground-breaking approach have created a collection of essays worthy of such a description. The contributors include George Marsden, who recently produced his own detailed biography of Edwards, and who writes here on the search for the historical Edwards. There is also an interesting essay by Catherine Brekus on Edwards’ ministry to children. But for me other significant contributions are also worth noting. David Bebbington provides much needed research concerning the international scope of Edwards’ legacy. Bruce Hindmarsh looks particularly at the reception of Edwards by early evangelicals in England, while Christopher Mitchell examines Edwards’ Scottish connection. Andrew Walls uses his own missionary expertise to examine the relationship between Edwards and David Brainerd, and Stuart Piggin assesses Edwards’ influence on missionary thinking in a broader context. Finally M. X. Lesser concludes with a very detailed and most helpful chapter on Edwards in print abroad.

The two editors, David W. Kling, Associate Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Miami, and Douglas A. Sweeney, Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Church History and the History of Christian Thought at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois, have divided the book into three clear sections examining Edwards’ ministry per se, the effect of his writings on later American culture, and his influence abroad, especially in Britain. This last section also includes Edwards’ effect on the rise of the modern missionary movement.

The chapters are actually the fruit of an Edwards conference that was held on March 9-11, 2000, in Miami, Florida, which not surprisingly, had as its focus, Edwards’ legacy at home and abroad. The chapters are revised versions of the papers that were presented at that conference.

I strongly suspect that this work will be the impetus to many others investigating similar issues and areas. While it is true that there has been a tremendous amount of material published analyzing Edwards the man, his ministry, his life, his thought, his preaching, his sermons, and so on, this is really the first to examine in any serious or sustained manner, Edwards’ historical legacy throughout the world. It really is true that Edwards had an exceptional influence in Britain, especially in Scotland, and as someone with a personal interest in that area, Kling and Sweeney are to be commended for this important pioneering work. Surely the hope must now be that this collection will succeed in moving the discussion about Edwards beyond the borders of America. New areas in Edwards studies have here been opened and the contributors have

mapped clear directions for further study and research; this can only be for the good.

My hope reflects the sentiment expressed in the recommendations by the Edwards scholars Smith and Conforti on the rear cover, *viz.* that the essays in this well-documented volume should finally put to rest the notion that Edwards was a brilliant but tragic figure, who squandered his considerable genius defending an outmoded Calvinism, thereby leaving no enduring religious legacy.

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The Puritan Pulpit American Series: Jonathan Edwards. Edited by Don Kistler. Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 2004, 285 pp., \$25.46.

The academic center at Yale Divinity School that facilitates scholarship on the many and diverse manuscripts of Jonathan Edwards has been working for fifty years to produce an accurate, critical edition of the bulk of his writings. However, funding issues have resulted in only three volumes of sermons being printed in the prestigious Yale series of Edwards' writings. This is only a tiny fraction of the sermonic material available, because most of what remains unpublished are the sermons. In fact, almost 1200 sermons are extant, although not all are unpublished. The announced aim of the Yale series is to produce an electronic edition of everything Edwards wrote, including every sermon. I say all this, because until that project is funded and completed, volumes like this present one will continue to appear, publishing for the first time small collections of Edwards' sermons.

This volume is by Soli Deo Gloria, a press whose mission is to provide "instruction in righteousness" to the church "through the reprinting of classical Christian literature." They are more usually known for their puritan reprints. However, this is the first volume in a new series by the press entitled, "The Puritan Pulpit." The series will be divided into "The English Puritans" and "The American Puritans." So this volume of mostly previously unpublished material is something of a different venture for them. Proposed figures in the American series include Edwards' grandfather Solomon Stoddard, Thomas Hooker, Increase Mather and John Cotton. Proposed English contenders include Thomas Watson, Jeremiah Burroughs, James Ussher, Joseph Alleine, and William Guthrie. This important series is projected to take 15 years to complete and is expected to finally number more than 30 volumes.

This introductory volume in the series consists of 16 sermons, 14 of which have never previously been published. Edwards' message was clear and uncompromising, he labored tirelessly and passionately to make the Gospel known to all who would hear, and to call the converted to continue to live for Christ and be weaned from the world. For this alone, any volume which would encourage believers of today to do the same must be valuable.

There has been a recent resurgence of interest in Jonathan Edwards, and this collection of biblically-based sermons will surely only add to that. In fact, the

current interest in Edwards' writings is evidenced by the fact that only recently another volume consisting of unpublished sermons was nominated as a finalist for the Gold Medallion award of the Evangelical Christian Publishers' Association. Edwards here reminds us in a very relevant, timely, and forceful way, how God never changes his mind; that it is well for us that God is not as we are; that men's addiction to sin is no excuse but an aggravation; that a man may eternally undo himself in one thought of his heart; that God does what he pleases; that God is everywhere present; and that God really is a being of transcendent mercy.

All of the above being said, however, those who look for even a brief introduction to Edwards or his sermons will be as disappointed as I was. There is also no indication of where or when any of the sermons were originally preached. That unexplained omission did make the sermons a little distant, in that Edwards usually dated his sermons, especially after the mid-1730s. He would also usually add the place of preaching. Nevertheless, these sermons are full of the passion of Edwards' message and though there is no indication of target audience, I am convinced that this attractively presented volume will be a valuable addition to anyone's library.

Michael D. McMullen
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

D. L. Moody on Spiritual Leadership. By Steve Miller. Chicago: Moody Press, 2004, 196 pp., \$9.99 paper

Many and varied are the books written for the purpose of informing and assisting those who serve as leaders within the Christian community. Steve Miller's contribution to the aforementioned and ever increasing number of volumes is clearly significant and personally appreciated. Carefully researched, well documented, and logically presented, the book is informative, inspirational, and a must read for all who serve the body of Christ.

Miller's work is beneficial to everyone, not just the ordained among us. After investigating the disciplined and mystifying lives of Edwards, Whitefield, Baxter, Spurgeon, Bunyan, or other extraordinary individuals, one sometimes feels intimidated and reluctant to attempt replicating their habits. It is likely unwise and unhealthy for most mortals to even attempt such. However, this writer finds Miller's work refreshingly applicable to any and all who wish to improve the character, quality, and effectiveness of Christian ministry. This is a book for anyone eager to enhance their leadership skills in order to more effectively serve.

This suitability for universal application is due in part to the person whose life and ministry is being scrutinized. Anyone familiar with Moody's life and work will not speak of such as being average. However, Miller clearly identifies attributes of Mr. Moody's personality, limitations, and idiosyncrasies with which common people can identify. We lesser mortals will find encouragement on each page. The author informs us by way of a comfortable book that Moody was in most ways an ordinary man whom God used to accomplish extraordinary

things. Miller's purpose is to show us how this occurs in Moody's life and how we might experience similar results. In the writer's opinion, he is successful.

To set the stage for accomplishing his goal Miller writes, "There were many reasons Moody should never have become one of the most prominent evangelists and ministers of his day" (11). Clearly Moody lacked credentials, formal training, and did not take the "tried-and-true paths of leadership that other Christian leaders had taken" (11). Readers will immediately be drawn into the book seeking an answer to the question, "How then does one explain, understand and make use of Moody's secret to successful service?" Miller's answer is refreshing and noteworthy.

In a day when most Christian literature addressing leadership is permeated with pragmatic advice gleaned from secular social sciences (e.g., psychology and sociology) and carefully reframed in church vocabulary, Miller's definitive work is appreciated. His assessment of Mr. Moody's ministry is captured in this sentence ". . . our great God can do very extraordinary works through very ordinary people" (12). This thesis is supported by numerous quotations from Moody, his colleagues, and reputable historians.

If the reader is searching for inspiration and practical help advantageous to growth in character and skills essential in the endless pursuit of effective yet authentic Christian leadership, this book is for you. If, however, one is seeking a step-by-step plan attainable by anyone in any business environment achieved by natural means, thus void of the ministry of the Spirit of God and in no way dependent upon personal holiness and divine unction, this book is not for you. The author provides a model for leadership void of the seemingly endless pragmatic "silver bullets" promising to make all a glowing success and rising star in modern evangelical circles. Miller presents Moody as a humble, godly, loving, and faithful servant, effectively fulfilling his ministry by means of divine initiative and spiritual anointing. One discovers an untouched portrait of a common man whose example and contributions to the kingdom must be appreciated and meticulously followed.

Perhaps a brief summary of the book's content will prove helpful. Citing twenty-six different authors, numerous articles, letters, and carefully chosen quotes from Mr. Moody's sermons and writing Miller arranges the book to answer the question, "What exactly was it that made Moody so effective as a spiritual leader" (13)? A listing of the chapter titles is informative: *A Life Fully Surrendered*, *An Abounding Love for People*, *A Passion for Reaching Lost Souls*, *A Constant Readiness for Prayer*, *Dependence Upon the Spirit's Power*, *A Dedication to God's Work*, *A Faith that Believes and Trusts God*, *A Fervent Commitment to Holiness*, and *A Heart Marked by Humility*. Even a casual reading informs us that the emphasis is on character, not methods. Herein lies the refreshing if not reviving consequence of reading the book. Miller's emphasis is on the work of God in Moody's life and ministry—not on how Moody worked for God.

One should not believe that Moody did not employ methods and systematic plans. Clearly he did. However, it is profoundly obvious, and at times personally convicting, that Mr. Moody was a man of faith and unction far beyond the experience of many, if not most, contemporary ministers who attempt spiritual work employing mostly pragmatic and, perhaps even, carnal methods. Miller

writes, “D. L. Moody’s example is powerful proof for us that it’s the right kind of person God uses—not the right program, right method, or right techniques” (13). How refreshing! How profound! How encouraging!

Each chapter is informative, wonderfully documented, and supported by numerous quotes. Miller skillfully interprets Moody by means of Moody’s own words and the comments of some who knew him and many who have researched his life. Readers will find the quotations of Moody’s biographers useful. Some may agree with this writer who finds the unedited words of Moody most informative. For example, “[Humility] consists not in thinking meanly of ourselves, but in not thinking of ourselves at all . . . If humility speaks of itself, it is gone” (163). This statement alone is worth the price of the book.

A seemingly endless flow of literature on leadership continues to issue forth from secular and Christian book publishers. Most are worth the price and time it takes to read them. A few are likely to become classics. Among them will be Steve Miller’s inspirational, practical, and wonderfully written volume *D. L. Moody on Spiritual Leadership*. This book is a must read.

Tony L. Preston
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Debating Calvinism: Five Points, Two Views. By Dave Hunt and James White. Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah Publishers, 2004, 427 pp., \$17.99 paper.

Reasoned discourse on subjects that evoke a great deal of passion is a very difficult thing to find. *Debating Calvinism* is an example of what happens when two Christians who have a good track record of opposing blatant heresy turn on each other with the same vigor concerning matters of disagreement among orthodox Christians. In this case, the subject for debate is soteriology. Taking the Calvinist position is James White. White is widely published and two of his best known books are *Letters to a Mormon Elder* and *The King James Only Controversy*. Taking the non-Calvinist position is Dave Hunt, perhaps best known for a work he wrote with Ed Decker, *The God-Makers* (a critique of LDS theology).

The editors at Multnomah should be commended for a well-organized volume. Divided into two parts, the first half of the book consists of seven chapters in which James White presents the pro-Calvinist position. Dave Hunt offers a brief response to each of the pro-Calvinist points followed by a further defense by James White. Each author is then allowed final remarks. This same pattern is followed in the second half of the volume. Again, there are seven chapters in which Dave Hunt begins by stating a non-Calvinist position followed by a response by James White, a defense by Hunt, and final remarks by both authors.

In this debate, James White offers a more internally consistent argument than Hunt. White also presents his position in a more positive way. For example, White begins his presentation with this premise: “God is all-sufficient, and all life, glory, goodness and blessedness are found in Him and in Him alone” (35). In contrast, Hunt begins his presentation with an *ad hominem* against Calvin and

says, “How can anyone call Calvin a great exegete, considering his faulty reasoning and false doctrines” (227)? The clear winner in this debate is James White.

Having declared a winner, there are flaws in both men’s argumentation. Perhaps the most frustrating aspect is that both are guilty at times of asserting as fact things that are simply not accurate. For example, White begins his concluding remarks in the chapter on “Particular Redemption” by saying, “In this section on the atonement I have tried, more than once, to invite Mr. Hunt to engage the real issues, but so far he has not done so” (195). It is perhaps more accurate to say that what Hunt has done is to express in a very passionate way a position with which White simply disagrees. In a similar way, Hunt states, “[White] offers inferences, but not one Scripture that clearly states that unregenerate man is unable to believe the Gospel” (75). Again, it is more accurate to say that White has forcefully presented a position with which Hunt disagrees, but the charge of not presenting “one Scripture” is certainly inaccurate.

The major weakness of this book is that the authors should have begun with a statement defining the issues on which they *do* agree. Specifically, both men certainly believe in the Trinity, the deity and humanity of Christ, and other crucial doctrines. Both men are Christian brothers! A general statement of overall unity would have moderated the overall “tense” nature of the debate. It would have been helpful if both men would admit that this is an “in-house” debate among orthodox Christians. Unfortunately, they charge into each other (fellow Christians) with the same tenacity they have both taken into debates with heretical sects. In this sense, the book fails as a model for healthy and lively debate among Christians. Finally, the book would have been marvelously improved if Hunt and White would have agreed to make an evangelistic in-home visit *together*! I believe the tenor of the debate would have been much different after they both joined in an effort to share their faith in Jesus Christ with a non-Christian prior to writing.

Alan Branch
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Safe & Sound: Protecting Personal and Ministry Relationships. By Steve Hayes. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2002, 156 pp., \$14.99.

This morning, hours before classes were scheduled to begin, I picked up Tom Johnston, our evangelism professor, in order to attend to attend a church planting breakfast in the south of Kansas City. When we arrived, our host informed us that our keynote speaker—a church planter of renown—had confessed to a moral failure and was unable to attend. As we interceded in prayer for our fallen brother, I could not help but wondering, “Would this have happened if he had read this book?”

The title of this book is clear and concise. Two recent studies, one by the Barna group and the other by Hartford Seminary, indicate that the divorce rate for vocational ministers is only marginally lower than the general population.

Some reports, such as the one cited by *Newsweek* (July 28, 1997) suggest that the marriage failure rate for men in vocational ministry is actually higher than the national average. The breakdown of marriages among ministers can only result in what is best described as carnage. In a majority of ministerial divorces, infidelity is involved. The irony is that many of these men faithfully taught lessons and preached sermons on the topic of family and the biblical standard for marriage. The problem is that these same men often failed to safeguard their own marriages. The magnitude of this problem is grounds to add *Safe & Sound* to the vocational minister's library.

Tom Tyndall in his endorsement writes, "Title this book *A Course You Should Get in Seminary* . . ." Joe Beam writes, "Steve Hayes has written a must read for everyone in Christian leadership." Not long ago, I would have dismissed such a declaration as hyperbole. However, during the past ten years I have seen too many Christian leaders throw away their ministries and marriages due to moral failure. What makes *Safe & Sound* effective is the way Hayes communicates his message.

Safe & Sound tells the story of Sam and Karen. Like an Aesop Fable, the story contains a poignant moral. Sam is the senior pastor of a healthy but short of perfect church. He puts in long hours to keep the church moving forward, taking his wife and family for granted. At the same time, his relationship with God is on "cruise control." Most readers will relate to times in the ministry when, like Sam, such a description could just as easily applied to them.

It is during this time of spiritual and relational apathy that Sam is vulnerable to the subtle process that ultimately leads to moral failure. If the goal of this book is to get the attention of church leaders before they cross the line of moral failure, Hayes hits a home run. As the reader follows Sam's digression through the phases of temptation, Hayes provides a biblical commentary drawn from James 1:13-16. In each chapter, Hayes provides a response for those who are reading the book and find themselves in a particular phase of temptation. These response sections are appropriate for ministers who find themselves in the role of interventionist.

The "Human Condition" is the first phase in Sam's journey. Here the reader is confronted with the reality of man's nature and susceptibility to sin. A simple scale used to evaluate one's level of resistance to temptation is included at the end of this chapter. Enticement is the next phase covered. In this phase, one is tempted to satisfy a God-given need in an ungodly way. The key to overcoming temptation at this phase is "don't panic." In the third phase, sin is conceived and the choice is made to satisfy and justify crossing the line. In each of the first three phases of temptation, the opportunity to repent and overcome is available. From this point onward, the web of sin becomes increasingly entangled in each subsequent phase.

In phase four, sin matures and compromising behavior becomes a pattern. In this phase, Hayes introduces two key false assumptions. The first is that one can manage two relationships without violating either one. The second is that one can engage in an extramarital relationship and keep it from getting out of hand. In the fifth phase, sin manifests itself. The result is death. The author writes, "Death is the most accurate word one can use to describe the impact of adultery on a marriage and a ministry." The final phase is "Exposure—Discovery and

Consequences.” Here, like in many of God’s graces, the author shows help from an unexpected source. However, the sad consequences of Sam’s sin are not minimized.

Safe & Sound is not necessarily a book to give to those in need of healing and restoration—a tempting response if we find a ministry colleague in need. It is best used as a prophylactic. *Safe & Sound* is one of a couple of books I would recommend for those getting started in ministry. Others, such as *Beneath the Surface* by North American Mission Board president Bob Reccord, and *Loving Your Marriage Enough to Protect It* by Jerry Jenkins, share Hayes’ objective. Each of these books serves to help those in ministry recognize the magnitude of the morality crisis, as well as how to employ a biblical response to temptation. The strength of Hayes’ book over others of this genre is his engaging story line. *Safe & Sound* has its limitations and shortcomings. For one, the book does not address the etiology of the problem, nor does the author go into any degree of detail as to the process of restoration. Considering the size of the book, these limitations are understandable.

Hayes writes in his preface, “Any minister who is determined to complete his journey with his marriage and ministry intact must examine himself, the spiritual realities with which he will have to contend, and the known challenges of his course.” This book provides the tools needed to understand the complexities of our journey and the wiles of our common enemy, temptation.

Rodney Harrison
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