

# AFRICANUS JOURNAL

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## Goals of the *Africanus Journal*

The *Africanus Journal* is an award-winning interdisciplinary biblical, theological, and practical journal of the Center for Urban Ministerial Education (CUME). Its goals are to promote:

- a. the mission and work of the members and mentors of the Africanus Guild Ph.D. Research Program of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Boston;
- b. the principles of the Africanus Guild (evangelical orthodox Christian men and women who are multicultural, multiracial, urban-oriented, studying a Bible without error in a cooperative way);
- c. Christian scholarship that reflects an evangelical perspective, as an affiliate of GCTS-Boston. This is an interdisciplinary journal that publishes high quality articles in areas such as biblical studies, theology, church history, religious research, case studies, and studies related to practical issues in urban ministry. Special issues are organized according to themes or topics that take seriously the contextual nature of ministry situated in the cultural, political, social, economic, and spiritual realities in the urban context.

Scholarly papers may be submitted normally by those who have or are in (or are reviewed by a professor in) a Th.M., D.Min., Ed.D., Th.D., ST.D., Ph.D., or equivalent degree program.

Two issues normally are published per year. <http://www.gordonconwell.edu/resources/Africanus-Journal.cfm>

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## Life of Julius Africanus

Julius Africanus was probably born in Jerusalem, many scholars think around A.D. 200. Africanus was considered by the ancients as a man of consummate learning and sharpest judgment (*Ante-Nicene Fathers* 6:128). He was a pupil of Heracles, distinguished for philosophy and other Greek learning, in Alexandria, Egypt around A.D. 231–233. In A.D. 220/226, he performed some duty in behalf of Nicopolis (formerly Emmaus) in Palestine. Later he likely became bishop of Emmaus (Eusebius, *History*, VI.xxxi.2). Origen calls him “a beloved brother in God the Father, through Jesus Christ, His holy Child” (*Letter from Origen to Africanus* 1). Fellow historian Eusebius distinguishes him as “no ordinary historian” (*History*, I. vi.2). Eusebius describes the five books of *Chronologies* as a “monument of labor and accuracy” and cites extensively from his harmony of the evangelists’ genealogies (*History*, VI. xxxi. 1–3). Africanus was a careful historian who sought to defend the truth of the Bible. He is an ancient example of meticulous, detailed scholarship which is historical, biblical, truthful, and devout.

Even though Eusebius describes Africanus as the author of the *Kestoi*, Jerome makes no mention of this (*ANF* 6:124). The author of *Kestoi* is surnamed Sextus, probably a Libyan philosopher who arranged a library in the Pantheon at Rome for the Emperor. The *Kestoi* was probably written toward the end of the 200s. It was not written by a Christian since it contains magical incantations (*Oxyrhynchus Papyri* III.412).

The Greek text of Africanus’ writings may be found in Martinus Josephus Routh, *Reliquiae sacrae* II (New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1974 [1846]), 225–309, and Martin Wallraff, Umberto Roberto, Karl Pinggéra, eds., William Adler, trans., *Iulius Africanus Chronographiae: The Extant Fragments, Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller* 15 (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2007).

The extant writings of Julius Africanus may be found in vol. 1, no 1, April 2009 edition of the *Africanus Journal*.

## Other Front Matter

*Editorial team for the issue:* Jennifer Creamer, J. Saemi Kim, Seong Park, Nicole Rim, John Runyon, Aída Besançon Spencer, William David Spencer

### *Resources*

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### *Summary of Content*

This issue has three articles related to the nature of God: the Trinity on the relationship between the Persons of the Trinity and the nature of Jesus’s sacrifice for humanity and numerous reviews of books in the disciplines of Bible, theology, missions, history, ministry, the arts, ecclesiology, counseling, and psychology.

# THE AFRICANUS GUILD



L to R: Quonekuia Day, Mark Chuanhang Shan, Jennifer Creamer

*“If not for the Africanus Guild, I would not even think of getting a Ph.D. and would not have had the chance to teach my own course at Gordon-Conwell, and be trained to be a Bible teacher, and for this I am most grateful.” –Benjamin Fung*

Benjamin Fung’s Ph.D. was received from North-West University in South Africa 2017  
Quonekuia Day and Mark Shan are Ph.D. candidates with London School of Theology.  
Jennifer Creamer received her Ph.D. from North-West University in 2016.

The Africanus Guild is a support program set up to assist selective, underrepresented constituencies to pursue research Ph.D.s from North-West University and London School of Theology. The Guild is especially oriented to the multicultural, multiracial urban scene. Accepted students are mentored by a Gordon-Conwell faculty member. Candidates may complete the Th.M. at the Boston campus and then apply to the Guild.

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THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

# The Need for Caution in the Use of Eternal Birth Language for Jesus Christ in the Early Church and Today<sup>1</sup>

WILLIAM DAVID SPENCER<sup>2</sup>

This article examines the overly flexible, immensely popular, but, perhaps, essentially non-biblical doctrine called “the eternal generation of the Son of God” by viewing its use in the hands of several representative orthodox and heterodox theologians both in the early church and today. I begin with Eusebius of Caesarea’s use of this doctrine to mitigate the conclusions of Nicaea and review some of Athanasius’s responses. Then I move briefly to Arius and his followers’ perspective, with reference largely to Origen’s thought. Having laid this groundwork, I then note some of our present contemporary revival of interest in it by reviewing examples of current competing interpretations of its significance for theology today. I believe such radical disagreements are due to the imprecision this doctrine causes. While I hope my treatment evidences my most sincere respect for those fellow orthodox Christians thinkers who have in the past and do in the present hold it, I am compelled to ask serious questions. Despite the present fervor of support, I conclude that acceptance of this doctrine of the eternal birthing of the Son should never become a badge of orthodoxy required of all believers and, further, that care and caution must be observed for all choosing to adopt and employ it. As a delimitation, please note that this brief article is not intended to be a history of the origins of this doctrine, or an exhaustive examination of all its permutations. My focus explores some aspects of its effect as originally an omission and later as an addition to the intentions of Nicæan credal orthodoxy. I also question whether it is dogmatically necessary or universally helpful in undergirding belief in the pre-existence of Jesus Christ and whether the initial Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325) that drew up the Creed of Nicaea answered the question of its essentiality in the negative by omitting it from the wordings it chose to select from the Creed of Caesarea to include in Nicaea’s original creed. Finally, I want to underscore the difference in wording between the original Creed of Nicaea (A.D. 325) and the later document dubbed The Nicene Creed (A.D. 381), in order to clarify for readers that these are two separate documents and not identical. Their difference is at the root of our discussion.

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1 This article was originally presented as a paper in progress at the Evangelical Theological Society – Northeast Section Annual Meeting in March, 2016, at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Hamilton campus, then revised and presented at the Other Voices in Interpretation study group of the national meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in Providence, Rhode Island, November 2017. It has been further revised for this article.

2 I dedicate this article to the wonderfully God-loving and scholarly seminary students I have had the privilege to teach since 1974 to the present day. They are mostly urban-based and from a variety of ethnic and denominational backgrounds. For 26 of those most recent years, I have been teaching at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary’s Boston Center for Urban Ministerial Education (GCTS/CUME), before that for 4 years at New York Theological Seminary (NYTS) and for a decade intermittently during that time at The Caribbean Graduate School of Theology (CGST in Kingston, JA). During these years, the proliferation of knowledge on the internet which influences the world in which all of us now live and minister has washed a deluge of opinions over all topics and seeping into every connected home. Further, in the urban environment the inundation of heterodoxical interpretations of Christianity’s most treasured doctrines overflows because these opinions are not just sounded through disembodied script or voice, but flowing out from people active on every block. For example, for CGST students, Rastafarians are not simply singing on Pandora, they are proselytizing in their neighborhood and often enough in their own families. At NYTS and even GCTS/CUME, Oneness followers are not simply met on the street, but they enroll in our classes from time to time. The city is an ocean of varying theologies and questioning every one of them is the business of the pastor who wants to steer a church responsibly. While one always hopes for a peaceful voyage, sometimes an excursion on seas like these can be a rather stormy activity that can put a strain on friendships and family relations. I hope I have reached my intention here to have treated all living authors with whom I deal respectfully and have given offense to none in the questions I have raised.

## A Subject of Controversy in the Early Church

Eusebius, the overseer of the church at Caesarea, is renowned today for his extensive efforts in collecting and correlating early writings into a progressive church history from Christ's day to his own in the early A.D. 300s. He was also famous in his own day and by his skills became the functional leader of what are called the moderates in the debate on the Trinity.<sup>3</sup> As a result, as Henry Bettenson and Chris Maunder note, "At the council of Nicaea ([A.D.] 325) Eusebius of Caesarea, the historian, suggested the adoption of the creed of his own church."<sup>4</sup> Such a proposal obviously made sense to Eusebius. He was, in his mind, a leader in the mediating position; he was a distinguished church overseer and active scholar, and, if the council signed on to what he considered the middle position, everyone could wrap up and go home.

Eusebius was not alone in his opinion, for his suggestion weighed heavily particularly with the eastern theologians and overseers, but only in part with the Council of Nicaea itself. As a result, the Council adopted the opening phrase of Caesarea's creed essentially word for word as well as some of its other phrases to describe Jesus (e.g., "And in one Lord Jesus Christ," "begotten of the Father," "only begotten," "God of God," "Light of Light," "through whom... all things were made," and that the Son of God "was made flesh").<sup>5</sup> But Nicaea's Creed also chose to add more about the nature of the divinity of Jesus Christ the Son of God than in Caesarea's creed. It added "of the substance of the Father" and "of one substance with the Father," "true God of true God," "begotten not made," and it also marshaled a set of anathemas against those who were claiming "There was when he was not," "Before he was begotten he was not," "He came into being from what-is-not," and "the son of God is 'Of another substance or essence,' or 'created,' or 'changeable,' or 'alterable.'" It also omitted some birth language from Caesarea's creed: some of it scriptural, as "Son only begotten, Firstborn of all creation," and a phrasing that was not scriptural, "begotten of the Father before all the ages."<sup>6</sup>

One major reason that the council may have hesitated on including eternal birth language is because "Arius and his friends" seized on the doctrine of a birth in eternity, adapted it to their viewpoint, and then featured it in a letter in their own defense to Bishop Alexander. Here is what they wrote:

We acknowledge One God, alone Ingenerate, alone Everlasting, alone Unoriginate, alone True, alone having Immortality, alone Wise, alone Good, alone Sovereign...who generated an Only-begotten Son before eternal times, through whom He has made both the ages and the universe; and generated Him, not in semblance, but in truth; and that He made Him subsist at His own will unalterable and unchangeable; perfect creature of God, but not as one of the creatures; offspring, but not as one of things generated...nor of Him who was before, being afterwards generated or new-created into a Son.<sup>7</sup>

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3 See "Eusebius," in F.L. Cross, and E.A. Livingstone, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York, Oxford, 1974), p. 481, col. 1.

4 Henry Bettenson and Chris Maunder, eds., *Documents of the Christian Church*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford, 2011), p.26.

5 Ibid.

6 Henry Bettenson and Chris Maunder, eds., *Documents of the Christian Church*, pp. 26-27.

7 Arius and Friends, "To Our Blessed Pope and Bishop, Alexander, the Presbyters and Deacons." Cited by Athanasius in "Epistle of S. Athanasius, Archbishop of Alexandria, Concerning the Councils Held at Ariminum in Italy and at Seleucia in Isauria" (hereafter called *De Synodis*), in *Select Treatises of S. Athanasius, Archbishop of Alexandria, in Controversy with the Arians*. Trans. Members of the English Church (John Henry Newman) in *A Library of Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church, Anterior to the Division of the East and West* (Oxford: Parker; Rivington, 1842), Vol. 8.#1. Chap 2. ¶15.sec. 2.¶16. sec. 3, pp. 94, 97.

Athanasius, then around his late twenties, serving as secretary for Alexander, overseer of Alexandria, witnessed all of this and the machinations against a high Christology deeply angered him, as this pliable doctrine positing an ingenerate Person of the Godhead actually being generated before eternal times and not just at the incarnation was being used not only as a tool to undercut the orthodox doctrine of the pre-existence of Christ by Arius himself, but also as a means of equivocation in affirming Christ's complete equality in the Trinity for the moderates as well. Writing about Eusebius's self-considered mediating role, Athanasius observed:

Eusebius of Caesarea in Palestine, who had denied [the orthodox position] the day before, but afterwards subscribed, sent to his Church a letter, saying that this was the Church's faith, and the tradition of the Fathers; and made a public profession that they were before in error, and were rashly contending against the truth. For though he was ashamed at that time to adopt these phrases, and excused himself to the Church in his own way, yet he certainly means to imply all this in his Epistle, by his not denying the "one in substance," and "of the substance." And in this way he got into difficulty; for while he was excusing himself, he went on to attack the Arians, as stating that "the Son was not before His generation," and thereby hinting at a denial of His [Christ's] existence before His birth in the flesh.<sup>8</sup>

Now, what exactly is the focus of Athanasius's concern? It is clearly denial of the eternal existence of Christ. And what exactly is Athanasius claiming about Eusebius from the evidence of this letter? Well, for one thing, that Eusebius and his fellow supporters were "moderates" in their own minds principally and only by some standards to others. Why would Athanasius draw that conclusion? Through Eusebius's prior opposition to a statement that the Council of Nicaea had added: its own definitive emendation that the Son was "of one substance with the Father." But, now, even though appearing to accept this doctrine of ontological unity, Eusebius was filtering it through the same eternal birth language that the Council of Nicaea had refused to include from the Creed of Caesarea. The use of the doctrine of the "eternal generation of the Son," in the hands of Eusebius, had become an equivocating tool in Athanasius's eyes, just as it became a tool of denial for Arius, to undermine in both cases to varying degrees the place of Jesus Christ in the Trinity. How did Eusebius do that in this seemingly innocuous missive to his parishioners in Caesarea?

Today, we still have extant Eusebius's carefully worded letter so we can review just what Eusebius confided to his people about the ruling of the Nicæan Council. At the outset of his report to his church, Eusebius reiterates Caesarea's own creed, including its "Son Only-begotten, first-born of every creature, before all the ages" provision, and then emphasizes this distinction: "the Father truly Father, and the Son truly Son, and the Holy Ghost truly Holy Ghost."<sup>9</sup> Sixteen years later, Eusebius's insistence on distinguishing the three Persons of the Trinity by birth language that is obviously incarnational but not necessarily eternal would be employed in A.D. 341 at the dedication of the Emperor Constantine's Golden Church to drive a radical separation between the Persons of the One God, dividing the Godhead so that, as Henry Bettenson and Chris Maunder observe, "A shorter version of this creed was made soon afterwards, and this became the basis of Arian confessions in the East," in the "attempts to overthrow" the Nicæan "Formulas"<sup>10</sup> by these so-called former moderates, or semi-Arians, in league with the remaining Arians. Keying off the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19 to baptize in "the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,"<sup>11</sup> The Dedication Creed echoes Eusebius's wording, "of Father being truly

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8 Athanasius, "Epistle of Athanasius Archbishop of Alexandria in Defence of the Nicene Definition." Trans. Members of the English Church (John Henry Newman), *Select Treatises of S. Athanasius, Archbishop of Alexandria, in Controversy with the Arians* in A Library of Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church, Anterior to the Division of the East and West, (Oxford: Parker, Rivington, London, 1842), vol. 8.#1. Chap 2. ¶3.sec 2, pp. 6-7.

9 Eusebius, quoted in Athanasius, *In Defence of the Nicene Definition*, Vol 8:1. Appendix ¶ 3.2, p. 60.

10 Bettenson and Maunder, eds., *Documents of the Christian Church*, pp. 45, 43.

11 Bible translations by the present author, unless otherwise noted.

Father, and of Son being truly Son, and of the Holy Ghost being truly Holy Ghost.” And then The Dedication Creed explains, “The names not being given without meaning or effect, but denoting accurately the peculiar subsistence, rank, and glory of each that is named, so that they are three in subsistence, and in agreement one.”<sup>12</sup>

Now, this is an interesting shift of focus from the usual grammatical milestone that catches our interest when we enter Matthew 28:19: one name only specified for baptism and making disciples, emphasizing the unity of the monotheistic God we worship. Instead, The Dedication Creed races by it and centers on the three names, claiming these titles stress a difference in essence,<sup>13</sup> rank, and glory. But this creed’s interpretation misses the grammatical points being made: As the great grammarian A.T. Robertson notes, “In Mt. 28:19, ὄνομα [name] has the idea of ‘the authority of.’”<sup>14</sup> The single name encompassing all three Persons stresses the unity and equality of the single almighty God. At the same time the significance of the repeated article before each Person’s name distinguishes each from the other, though Prof. Robertson warns, “It is not contended that these groups are all absolutely distinct...but they are treated as separate.”<sup>15</sup> So this construction is used, he notes, “when to be distinguished. Then the article is repeated.”<sup>16</sup> Therefore, here in The Great Commission we see the unity and distinctness of the Persons of the Trinity, the Three in One, the Great Triune God—not three completely autonomous gods in agreement, but one monotheistic God in three related eternal Persons (or with three Faces, or eternal Personalities [*prosōpon*]). So, such Semi-Arian hierarchical ordering of the Trinity as we see in The Dedication Creed is the destiny to which Athanasius sees Eusebius’s language is pointing.

Is this a misunderstanding by Athanasius of what Eusebius actually meant?

In his letter, Eusebius assures the Caesareans that their own creed was the basis of the Nicaea’s Council’s creed, “which the Fathers put forth with some additions to our words.”<sup>17</sup> Further, when Caesarea’s creed was read publically before Nicaea’s creed (A.D. 325) was read, Eusebius explains:

Our most pious Emperor [Constantine], before any one else, testified that it comprised most orthodox statements. He confessed moreover that such were his own sentiments, and he advised all present to agree to it, and to subscribe [to]<sup>18</sup> its articles and to assent to them, with the assertion of the single word, One in substance [*homoousios*], which moreover he interpreted as not in the sense of the affections of bodies, nor as if the Son subsisted from the Father, in the way of division, or any severance; for that the immaterial, and intellectual, and incorporeal nature could not be the subject of any corporeal affection, but that it became us to conceive of such things in a divine and ineffable manner. And such were the theological remarks of our most wise and most religious Emperor.<sup>19</sup>

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12 The Dedication Creed [to Constantine’s Golden Church], is cited by Athanasius in *De Synodis*, 8.1.2. ¶23.10, p. 107.

13 See W. Bauer, W.F. Arndt, F.W. Gingrich, and F.W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature* (hereafter BDAG), 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2000), p. 1040, col. 2: “the essential or basic structure/nature of an entity, *substantial nature, essence, actual being, reality*” (*hupostasis*).

14 A.T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1934), p.649.

15 A.T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, p. 787.

16 A.T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, p. 786.

17 “Letter of Eusebius of Caesarea to the People of His Own Diocese,” quoted in Athanasius, *In Defence of the Nicene Definition*, Vol 8.1. Appendix ¶ 1.1, p. 59.

18 These magnificent translations of Athanasius’s words were published in 1842 and 1844 so I have not attempted to add punctuation or clarifying helper words unless I thought the original would confuse or distract readers and these emendations I have put in brackets.

19 Eusebius’s letter, quoted in Athanasius, *In Defence of the Nicene Definition*, Vol. 8.1. Appendix. ¶ 4.3, p. 61.

Here Athanasius had good reason for his concern. Eusebius seems to me to be echoing, or at least getting rather close to echoing, Origen in chapter 4 of *On First Principles*, when Origen states,

In regard to the Father, though he is whole and indivisible yet he becomes the Father of the Son, but not by an act of separation as some suppose. For if the Son is something separated from the Father and an offspring generated from him, of the same kind as the offspring of animals, then both he who generated and he who was generated are of necessity bodies. Now this Son was begotten of the Father's will, for he is the "image of the invisible God" and the "effulgence of his glory and the impress of his substance," "the firstborn of all creation," a thing created, wisdom. For wisdom itself says, "God created me in the beginning of his way for his works."<sup>20</sup>

This statement alone would be enough to make Origen the Father of Arian thinking, if Origen had not added directly after, "And I would dare to add that as he is a likeness of the Father there is no time when he did not exist. For when did God, who according to John is said to be 'light' (for 'God is light')[,] have no 'effulgence of his own glory[?]'... Let the man who dares to say, 'There was a time when the Son was not,' understand that this is what he will be saying, 'Once wisdom did not exist, and word did not exist, and life did not exist.'<sup>21</sup>

So, Origen's view, while containing a very low Christology, for the Son is "created," at least recognizes the Son is eternal, as opposed to Arius's view, which did indeed say the Son was neither eternal nor coequal with the Father, being "as a Son to Himself by adoption. He has nothing proper to God in proper subsistence. For He is not equal, no, nor one in substance with Him. Wise is God, for He is the teacher of Wisdom"<sup>22</sup> (Thus, Arius's reading of Proverbs 8:22, a created Son, unequal in substance or in understanding).

After his explanation, Eusebius spells out the Creed of Nicaea to the Caesarean Church. Having done that, Eusebius now sets himself to analyze the import of Nicaea's additions and omissions from Caesarea's creed, particularly its addition of "substance" shared between Father and Son and its omission and tweaking of the language of an eternal generation of the Son, the Son having been begotten of the Father "before the ages," not simply already pre-existing, and, by the Trinity's salvific plan, being begotten of the Father in the incarnation on earth.

Eusebius's own discussion of "substance" is very telling. He states: "questions and explanations took place, and the meaning of the words underwent the scrutiny of reason. And they professed, that the phrase 'of the substance' was indicative of the Son's being indeed from the Father, yet without being as if a part of him. And with this understanding we thought it good to assent to the sense of such religious doctrine, teaching, as it did, that the Son was from the Father, not however a part of His substance."<sup>23</sup>

This is some tricky wordplay: Eusebius is pointing out that the Father could not lose any substance if an eternal birth took place, since God is an absolute, so, he surmises, the Son is not part of the Father's substance, but is still of a substance that comes from the Father, so he is of a substance originating with the Father, and, perhaps, in that way the Father's substance—though not the Father's own substance. This is sophistry, managing to accept Nicaea's conclusions, while, as we would say today, putting a spin on them which threatens to spin them out of sight.

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20 Origen, *On First Principles*. Trans. G.W. Butterworth (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 4.1ff, pp. 313, col. 1-314 col. 1.

21 Origen, *On First Principles*, pp. 314, col. 1-315, col. 1.

22 Arius's *Thalia*, quoted in Athanasius, *De Synodis*, 8.1.Chap. 2. ¶15.sec. 2, p. 95.

23 Eusebius's letter, quoted in Athanasius, *In Defence of the Nicene Definition*, Vol. 8.1. Appendix. ¶ 5.5, pp. 61-62.

Next, Eusebius addresses Nicaea's Council's alteration of some of Caesarea's suggested divine birth language, noting:

In the same way we also admitted "begotten not made;" since the Council alleged that "made" was an appellative common to the other creatures which came to be through the Son, to whom the Son had no likeness. Wherefore, said they, He was not a work resembling the things which through Him came to be, but was of a substance which is too high for the level of any work, and which the Divine oracles teach to have been generated from the Father, the mode of generation being inscrutable and incalculable to every generated nature.<sup>24</sup>

Now, this is a strange wording, and, again, could seem to be suggesting that God the Father has produced some sort of interim "substance" for the Son that is above that of creatures.

In this context of what appears to be Eusebius's reinterpretation of Nicaea's Creed, he assures the Caesareans: "How reasonably we resisted even to the last minute as long as we were offended at statements which differed from our own, but received without contention what no longer pained us, as soon as, on a candid examination of the sense of the words, they appeared to us to coincide with what we ourselves have professed in the faith which we have already published."<sup>25</sup> But is what Nicaea's Council presented in its creed exactly what the Caesareans published in their creed? Or, did Eusebius adjust Nicaea's doctrines to the Caesareans' questionable theology, making them sound to an observer, as was Athanasius, just like the tenets of the creed Caesarea first proposed to the Council of Nicaea.

Eusebius's concerns expressed about the Son not coming about by division of the Father's substance, nor by abscission (which means slicing a piece of the Father off to produce the Son), nor by any change of the Father's substance and power seems to suggest he pictures the orthodox imagining God the Father swelling up in pregnancy sometime in eternity past and birthing the Son. Since God is an absolute and, therefore, can have no more or less "substance," not to mention the language used is of a Father and Son, not a Mother and Son, any of these depictions described above would certainly be absurd, hence Eusebius's attempt to reinterpret a generation in eternity, though, as we saw, Arius himself had no problem latching on to the birthing language and trying to make it work for his ultra-low Christology, when it suited his needs. Small wonder, then, this confusing and easily manipulated doctrine of an eternal birth was passed over for inclusion in its creed by the Council of Nicaea. It was already being manipulated by the heterodox and heretical.

However, if we stop and think about it, trying to account for the existence of the Son by positing how the Son can come to share the Father's substance seems in itself wrongheaded. If we are not tri-theistic, worshiping three gods in agreement in a triumvirate Godhead, but we are mono-theistic and worship one God with one substance in three *posopōn* (coequal and coeternal Faces, Personalities, Persons), then positing how a Son could derive substance from a Father would be a right incarnational question, but a wrong eternal question. The fact that God is eternal as a Trinity would seem to me to preclude that question. Why would a birth be necessary or even possible in eternity? Those eternal would have no beginnings. Father, Son, and Spirit would always share the same substance in eternity without ontological change and always maintain the same distinct immutable personalities. That is what it would mean to be eternal. But, supposing such a birth could take place, where exactly was the so-called "eternal" Son before he was born? Was the Son, existing as part of the Father's substance, undifferentiated within the Father until given birth and, perhaps, receiving a more distinct personhood? This appears to be an issue with which the early Christian apologist Athenagoras was grappling when he gave a defense of the Christian faith to the Emperors Marcus Aurelius Antoninus and Lucius Aurelius Commodus (circa A.D. 176-177):

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<sup>24</sup> Eusebius, quoted in Athanasius, *In Defence of the Nicene Definition*, Vol. 8:1, Appendix. ¶6.6, pp. 62-63.

<sup>25</sup> Eusebius cited by Athanasius in *In Defence of the Nicene Definition*, Vol. 8:1, Appendix. ¶11.10, p. 65.

He is the first offspring of the Father. I do not mean that he was created, for, since God is eternal mind, he had his Word within himself from the beginning, being eternally wise. Rather did the Son come forth from God to give form and actuality to all material things, which essentially have a sort of formless nature and inert quality, the heavier particles being mixed up with the lighter. The prophetic Spirit agrees with this opinion when he says, “The Lord created me as the first of his ways, for his works.”<sup>26</sup>

This is a strange interpretation, suggesting the Son being within the Father’s substance until the Father emits the Son from inside to outside the Father to take on the task of creation. Does Athenagoras suggest an alternative to the Son being undifferentiated within the substance of the Father and only taking on personhood, when emitted? He does by positing the “eternally wise” Word as God’s thought in God’s mind, God being “eternal mind” and the “Word” the expression of God’s mind when the Father speaks creation into being (as we see in Genesis 1), being always differentiated as a thought, or the thought, of the Father. Is this a sufficient understanding of the eternal nature of a Person of the Triune Godhead? Kevin Giles wisely points out the inadequacy of this type of interpretation:

Justin Martyr, Irenaeus and Tertullian agreed that God is one, but they argued he has eternally within himself his Word (*Logos*) and his Spirit, whom he brings forth in time for the works of creation and redemption. This explanation of divine self-differentiation was rejected because the Son and the Spirit were depicted as “second” and “third” God, not the one God for all eternity, and because identifying the Son almost solely as the *Logos* was not reflective of what the whole of scripture said of him.<sup>27</sup>

My reaction is that, since birth is anthropomorphic to begin with and, unlike Zeus or other pagan gods, the one true living God had no beginning, all the language about “begetting” really seems to do with the incarnation on earth, not in a Godhead already eternal in three coeternal and coequal Persons.

The answer often given is that the Son did not have an eternal birthing moment before the incarnation, but, instead, is being eternally begotten in an eternal process, one that has never begun, has always been going on, and will continue to go on forever, never ending. Dr. Kevin Giles, an honored and well-noted international scholar who is a foremost champion of this doctrine today, in his carefully reasoned and thorough defense, *The Eternal Generation of the Son*, explains that the point of this doctrine is to answer a “specific question”: “If God is one and yet three persons, *how* is he self-differentiated?” His answer? “The doctrines of the eternal generation, or begetting, of the Son and the eternal procession of the Spirit are human attempts to answer this question in the light of Scripture.”<sup>28</sup>

This is a helpful answer in that it clarifies that the creeds are exactly that: human attempts to explain various aspects about the nature of God. The Creed of Nicaea was a gift to the church to guide us to avoid heterodox views of God’s nature, correct them when we encounter them, and protect the people in our charge from coming under their influence. If the architect of this creed was the Overseer of Alexandria, Alexander, mentor of Athanasius, who became its greatest defender, then the Athanasian Creed, summarizing Athanasius’s and, perhaps, Alexander’s beliefs, is, in a sense, another gift, as is Nicaea’s Creed, as it not only spells out more clearly the eternal nature of the 3-in-1 relationship in the Trinity, but it contains a dual emphasis that leaves room

26 Athenagoras, “A Plea Regarding Christians by Athenagoras, the Athenian a Philosopher and a Christian.” Trans. Cyril C. Richardson, et. al, in *Early Christian Fathers*, The Library of Christian Classics (LCC), vol. 1 (New York: Macmillan, 1970), p. 309.

27 Kevin Giles, *The Eternal Generation of the Son* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2012), p. 72.

28 Kevin Giles, *The Eternal Generation of the Son*, pp. 16-17. This is a carefully worked out defense. I find particularly engaging his discussion of Athanasius’s views in chapter 3. As with all his work, the book has merit, whether or not one agrees with his orienting argument of reading the Scriptures primarily through the creeds’ interpretations.

for two over-riding concerns to share priority. Clearly, the disciples of Athanasius who constructed the Athanasian Creed understood that the eternal Triune nature of God was a given. Since the Athanasian Creed does include a reference to the eternal generation of the Son as well as to the incarnation, “begotten before the worlds” and “born in the world,” perhaps it is the best meeting ground for those who emphasize the pre-existence of the Son by using the imagery of an eternal birth and those who require an emphasis on the coeternal, coequal nature of the Triune God, while forgoing the illustrative birth language. The Athanasian Creed is mainly a declaration of the equality of all three Persons of the Godhead, each eternally differentiated, yet sharing the same “substance,” “equal glory,” “coeternal majesty,” each being “uncreated,” “incomprehensible,” “eternal,” “almighty,” yet not being “three Gods, but one God,” and “not three Lords, but one Lord.” The Athanasian Creed culminates in a magnificent affirmation of the equality of the one-in-three Triune God: “And in this Trinity none is before or after other; none is greater or less than another. But the whole three Persons are coeternal together, and coequal: so that in all things, as is aforesaid, the Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshiped.”<sup>29</sup> No statement outside of Scripture itself seems to me more unifying for those engaged in this discussion, including those who see, as I do, Nicaea’s initial creed to be sufficient, being satisfied, as I am, with the Athanasian Creed’s reaffirmation of the Triune nature of God as eternal, each Person of the Godhead equal in attributes, none before or after, God being completely other than us, and, thus, as the creed assures us, incomprehensible. So, I am content to accept the bulk of the Athanasian Creed as a given.

As for the creed including a reference to the eternal generation of the Son, which was a regular part of the orthodox defense of Christ’s pre-existence in Athanasius’s time on through Cyril’s and the Jerusalem-Constantinopolitan-Nicene Creed’s time right up to today, I respect those brothers and sisters who desire this further differentiating doctrinal vehicle to undergird the orthodox understanding of how the Godhead is a Trinity, as the Athanasian Creed adds, even though I do not find it personally helpful. I will now explain some of my reasons why I hesitate to adopt this theory.

The later creeds like the Nicene Creed (accepted at a council at Constantinople in A.D. 381) and Chalcedon’s Definition (A.D. 451) are certainly further “human attempts” to explain how God can be three in one. Of course, neither they, nor any creed, is canonical Scripture. The addition of the eternal birth language that the original Creed of Nicaea chose to omit may be helpful to some, but it is not necessarily helpful to us all in clarifying the relationships within the Triune God. I find this recasting of the Father, from whom the other two Persons emerge eternally, very confusing and raising all sorts of what seem to me to be unnecessary questions. For one thing, it still makes the Father sound to me like a Monad differentiating and emanating secondary gods. This interpretation is certainly not an orthodox option, as all agree.

Also, distinguishing the Father as unbegotten God and the Son as begotten God runs the risk of sounding like one is positing two Gods. Athanasius addressed this dilemma by appealing to the universally honored Ignatius, “We are persuaded that the blessed Ignatius was orthodox in writing that Christ was generate on account of the flesh, (for he was made flesh,) yet ingenerate, because He is not in the number of things made and generated, but Son from Father.”<sup>30</sup> This unifying

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29 The Athanasian Creed is available everywhere. This version is from *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Lutheran Church*, <http://bookofconcord.org/creeds.php>. It is also available in Phillip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (Harper Brothers, 1877), J.N.D. Kelly, *The Athanasian Creed* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), etc. It can even be found for quick reference on Wikipedia: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athanasian\\_Creed](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athanasian_Creed). The Athanasian Creed also includes a statement about the Holy Spirit being “of the Father and of the Son: neither made, nor created, nor begotten but proceeding.” This idea of the Holy Spirit proceeding both from the Father and the Son, often called the Filioque clause became a point of contention between the western and eastern churches.

30 Athanasius, *De Synodis*, 8.1.3.¶47.18, p. 147. He goes on to point out that “the parties who have said that the Ingenerate is One, meaning the Father, did not mean to lay down that the Word was generated and made, but that the Father has no cause” and he illustrates this by calling the Father “Father of Wisdom,” alluding to Prov. 8:22, in an attempt to challenge those who read this passage as depicting Christ as Wisdom, a creation, namely “Samosatene, [who] wrote, ‘He is not one in substance,’” as well as those of “the Arian heresy.”

of the aseity (that is, the self-existing [*auto-theos*] quality of the Father and the Son) underscores the ontological equality that identifies both as Persons of the Godhead, since God is an absolute. The Son cannot depend on the Father for existence or the Son would indeed be derivative and, therefore, secondary God. Positing two births, one in the incarnation fulfilling the Trinity's rescue plan but another in eternity, providing the emissary to do that plan, weakens Ignatius's point since the Son appears not to be self-existent, but dependent on the Father for existence.<sup>31</sup>

Further, an eternal birth that never ends makes me wonder: how did the Son, continually in the process of being birthed, take time off to come to earth and die for our sins? When my child was being born, it was a full time job for the baby. Birth is an all-encompassing experience for the one being birthed. It demands the child's full energy and attention. Granted such a reading is anthropomorphic, but so is birth language—it has to do with creatures being created.

Origen, of course, had an answer to the Son's acquisition of the divine dimension, but no one orthodox is going to like it very much. Origen posits:

Everything besides the very God, which is made God by participation in his divinity, would more properly not be said to be "*the* God," but "God." To be sure, his "firstborn of every creature," inasmuch as he was the first to be with God and has drawn divinity into himself, is more honored than the other gods beside him...By being "with *the* God" he always continues to be "God." But he would not have this if he were not with God, and he would not remain God if he did not continue in unceasing contemplation of the depth of the Father.<sup>32</sup>

The Son, in Origen's view, would indeed be a secondary, derivative "God," or a "God" with derivative divinity.

Eusebius himself was recorded as declaring, "The Son Himself is God, but not Very God,"<sup>33</sup> and in a letter to Euphrasion, exclaiming, "If they co-exist, how shall the Father be Father and the Son Son? or how the One first, the Other second? and the One ingenerate and the other generate?"<sup>34</sup> As an historian who quotes from Ignatius in his church history,<sup>35</sup> would Eusebius not have been aware of Ignatius's point on Christ being both generate and ingenerate? Such denials are why I hear in Eusebius's Christological position an echoing of Origen's thought. For Origen, and those who follow in his wake, the subsequent incarnation appears to be a weak union of whatever it is that is divine in Jesus from contemplating the Father. But the defenders of Nicaea would not hold such a feeble view as Origen's of the nature of the Person of the Trinity who became the God-human, God-Among-Us, fully human as well as fully divine.

31 John Calvin, convinced that the imminent "Jehovah" in the Old Testament was in reality the appearance of Christ, saw Exodus 34:6 revealing the aseity (*auto-theos*, self-existence) of the divine nature of Christ, as he explained in the *Institutes*, "Here let us observe that his eternity and his self-existence are announced by that wonderful name repeated twice," John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Trans. Ford Lewis Battles, vol. 20, LCC (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1960), Bk 1. Chap 10, sec. 2, p. 97. When he published his catechism, this insistence made Calvin the center of controversy, as he confided in a letter to his friend Simon Grynée, "Christ was there affirmed to be that Jehovah, who of Himself alone was always self-existent, which charge I was quite ready to meet" (Jules Bonnet, ed., *Letters of John Calvin*, vol. 1. Trans. David Constable (Edinburgh: Thomas Constable, 1855), p. 31. For two views on Calvin and his attitude toward the eternal generation doctrine, see Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1968), especially pp. 466-467, and Brannon Ellis, *Calvin, Classical Trinitarianism, and the Aseity of the Son* (Oxford: Oxford, 2012).

32 Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John, Books 1-10*, trans. Ronald E. Heine (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1989), p. 99.

33 Athanasius, *De Synodis*. Vol. 8.1, Chap 2, p. 99, note p, which adds: "This is quoted, among other passages from Eusebius, in the 7<sup>th</sup> General Council, Act. 6. p. 409."

34 Athanasius, *De Synodis*, Vol. 8.1, Chap 2, p. 98, note n. In my estimation, Eusebius was also missing the fact that God is an eternal absolute. Absolutes do not have degrees of absoluteness, just as unique does not have degrees of uniqueness. Christ is either equal with God or not equal with God, either One with the Unique Absolute or not.

35 Eusebius, *The Church History*. Trans. Paul L. Maier (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1999), book 3, sec. 36, pp. 123-124.

Ultimately, although this language of an eternal begetting of the Son was omitted from Nicaea's Creed, proponents still insisted on teaching it. Eventually, it found its way into a formulation that was discovered in a work of doctrine by a staunch defender of Nicaea's Creed and opponent of Origenist thinking, Epiphanius's *Ancoratus*, 118, composed around A.D. 374, some forty-nine years after Nicaea's Creed was signed. This formulation, as Henry Bettenson and Chris Maunder note, was then "extracted by scholars, almost word for word, from the Catechetical Lectures of S. Cyril of Jerusalem; read and approved at Chalcedon, 451," being presented as "the creed of '(the 318 fathers who met at Nicaea and that of) the 150 who met at a later time' (i.e., at Constantinople, 381). Hence, often called the Constantinopolitan or Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan creed, and thought by many to be a revision of the creed of Jerusalem held by Cyril."<sup>36</sup> Today, we know the formulation as the Nicene Creed, but the Nicene Creed (A.D. 381), with its inclusion of the eternal generation of the Son, is not the Creed of Nicaea (A.D. 325). It is a revision of it. It was presented to the Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451) to replace, or supplement, "the creed of '(the 318 fathers who met at Nicaea...),"<sup>37</sup> being Nicaea's Council's creed after various alterations, including the addition of a doctrine Nicaea's council did not choose to include.

This is quite a lot of multisided use for a doctrine that is biblically built on—well, what is it biblically built on exactly? Surely not the default verse to which so many turn for proof: Proverbs 8:22, with the Hebrew Bible's use of the word *qānāh*<sup>38</sup> and the Septuagint's *ktizō* to describe the advent of the quality Wisdom. The Gesenius, Brown, Driver, Briggs lexicon (BDB) provides a range of meanings for *qānāh*, including "get, acquire," "gain," "possess," among others, but it lists "of God as originating, creating" as its choice for the correct rendering of Proverbs 8:22<sup>39</sup>: "The Lord created me." This translation as the preferred meaning is also reflected in The Jewish Publication Society of America's rendering of Proverbs 8:22 in *The Holy Scriptures According to the Masoretic Text*: "The Lord made me as the beginning of His way."<sup>40</sup> Kevin Giles, citing Bruce Waltke, however, disagrees, "In the Hebrew, the word in contention is *qānānî*, which is best translated as 'brought me forth.' It does not mean 'create.'"<sup>41</sup> Such a translation would, of course, automatically raise several related questions: What, then, does being "brought forth" mean? Where was the Son before "God brought me forth" and from whence was he brought forth and to whither was he brought? If the Persons of the Godhead are already omnipresent (including the pre-incarnate Person identified in John 1:1 as "the Word"), what would it mean for an omnipresent Person of the Godhead to be "brought forth"? The language might be figurative, of course, as Kevin Giles notes, "Bruce Waltke says on this word, 'The metaphor "brought me forth" signifies that Solomon's inspired wisdom comes from God's essential being; it is a revelation that has an organic connection with God's very nature and being, unlike the rest of creation that comes into existence outside of him and independent from his being.'"<sup>42</sup> Perhaps, "brought me forth" might mean the Person of the Trinity known as the Christ, the Word, the Son, etc. became more prominent in the creation, being the Word spoken at creation that created all. But the Son is not clearly revealed until the incarnation, when, as Jesus Christ, this Person of the Trinity is literally brought forth into our world as a baby. To determine which meaning of *qānānî*, "brought me forth" or "created," is more likely, a word study of the rest of this word's uses in the Hebrew Bible would be the best way forward. Consistently, according to John Kohlenberger and James Swanson's *The Hebrew English Concordance to the Old Testament*, referencing the New International Version (NIV), in

36 Henry Bettenson and Chris Maunder, eds., *Documents of the Christian Church*, p. 27.

37 Ibid.

38 *Biblia Hebraica: Stuttgartensia*, eds. K. Elliger, W. Rudolph, et. al (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1967/77), p. 1285.

39 See BDB (Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, Charles A. Briggs (New York: Oxford, 1968), 888, col.2-889, col. 1.

40 The Jewish Publication Society of America, *The Holy Scriptures According to the Masoretic Text* (Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1955), p. 994.

41 Kevin Giles, *The Eternal Generation of the Son*, pp. 67-68.

42 Kevin Giles, *The Eternal Generation of the Son*, p. 68.

every other instance where the term is translated “brought forth” in the Old Testament it is used interchangeably with “created,” meaning creation of a human being or the earth. Here are the six instances: a birth is, indeed, the first meaning in Genesis 4:1, when Eve uses the term at the birth of Cain, “I have **brought forth** a man.” This is the creation of a child. After that, the term is used to identify God as “Creator of heaven and earth” in Genesis 14:9, 14:22, Deuteronomy 32:6. In Psalm 139:13, David employs it to describe God creating him, “You **created** my inmost being, you knit me together in my mother’s womb,” and the final entry is our passage under scrutiny, Proverbs 8:22.<sup>43</sup> In the Septuagint, *ktizō* is used: “The Lord made me the beginning of his ways for his works.”<sup>44</sup> According to BDAG, the term means “to bring someth.[ing] into existence, create.”<sup>45</sup> LSJ emphasizes it as a term of bringing about beginnings, as in “*build houses and cities*,” “of a city, *found or build*,” “*plant a grove*,” “*set up an altar*,” “*produce, create, bring into being*,” “*make*.”<sup>46</sup>

Athanasius himself reads Proverbs 8:22 as describing the incarnation on earth:

He took on Himself a body from the Virgin Mary; that by offering this unto the Father a sacrifice for all, He might deliver us all, who by fear of death were all our life through subject to bondage. And as to the character, it is indeed the Saviour’s, but is said of Him when He took a body and said, *The Lord created Me a beginning of His ways unto His works*. For as it properly belongs to God’s Son to be everlasting, and in the Father’s bosom, so on His becoming man, the words befitted Him, *The Lord created Me*. For then it is said of Him, and He hungered, and He thirsted, and He asked where Lazarus lay, and He suffered, and He rose again. And as, when we hear of Him as Lord and God and true Light, we understand Him as being from the Father, so on hearing, *The Lord created*, and *Servant*, and *He suffered*, we shall justly ascribe this, not to the Godhead, for it is irrelevant, but we must interpret it by that flesh which he bore for our sakes; for to it these things are proper, and this flesh was none other’s than the Word’s.<sup>47</sup>

43 These NIV translations, under the entry “*qānā*” (7865), are listed in John R. Kohlenberger III and James A. Swanson, *The Hebrew English Concordance to the Old Testament with the New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), p. 1411, col. 2. All the other instances of the term (the primary usage) are for buying land, e.g. “the field Abraham had **bought** from the Hittites” (Gen. 25:10). Seventy-eight of these are listed, see the same page, 1411, col. 1-2. The bold print is in the book. Also worth noting is the second part of the verse, where wisdom is called “Front (*qēdēm*, BDB, p. 869, col. 2) of his things made (*mip’āl*, BDB, p. 821, col. 2, specifying, “Pr 8<sup>22</sup>”) [in] past time (*’āz*, BDB, p.23, col. 1).

44 *The Septuagint Version of the Old Testament* (London: Samuel Bagster, n.d.), p. 795, col. 2.

45 W. Bauer, W.F. Arndt, F.W. Gingrich, and F.W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature* (BDAG), 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2000), p. 572, col. 2.

46 Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, comp., *A Greek-English Lexicon* (LSJ), 9<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford, 1940), pp. 1002, col. 2-1003, col. 1.

47 Athanasius, *In Defence of the Nicene Definition*, Vol 8.1. Chap 2.¶14.12, p. 22. See also chapters 16-22 of *Discourse 2* for Athanasius’s extended discussion of why Prov. 8:22 is not calling the “Lord Creature,” with such points as, “For the Lord, knowing His own substance to be the Only-begotten Wisdom and Offspring of the Father, and other than things generate and natural creatures, says in love to man, *The Lord hath created Me a beginning of His ways*, as if to say, ‘My Father hath prepared for Me a body, and has created Me for men in behalf of their salvation.’ For, as when John says, *The Word was made flesh*, we do not conceive the whole Word Himself to be flesh, but to have put on flesh and become man” (Athanasius, *Discourse 2*, Trans. Members of the English Church (John Henry Newman), *Select Treatises of S. Athanasius, Archbishop of Alexandria, in Controversy with the Arians* in A Library of Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church, Anterior to the Division of the East and West (Oxford: Parker, Rivington, London, 1844), Vol. 8.#2. Chap 19. ¶47.sec. 6, p. 347). Kevin Giles in Chapter 3 of *The Eternal Generation of the Son* discusses his understanding of the “Biblical Warrant” for eternal generation. In John 3:16, he assumes that “only begotten” is an eternal rather than an incarnational identity for the Son. Following his translation of Prov. 8:22 “as brought forth,” he provides a defense of *monogenēs* as “only begotten” Son rather than “only Son” in response to Dale Moody and those who affirm this argument, but, again, why the term would apply primarily to the eternal rather than the incarnational is not clear. Athanasius’s focus, spelled out in his *Discourse 2* against the Arians, is that the Person of the Trinity called “The Word” in John 1:1 pre-exists and is getting invested “before the world” with all the qualities “prepared for us in Christ the hope of life and salvation” in the great divine plan to rescue humanity. This includes becoming the possessor of God’s Wisdom (Athanasius, *Discourse 2*, Vol. 8.#2, Chap 22. ¶76.7, p. 390). The focus of this preparation is the incarnation. Athanasius reasons, “Being then the Word, He has not, as far as Word, any such as Himself, who may be compacted with Him; for He is Only-begotten; but having become man, He has the like

This is certainly a better application to Christ of the created quality Wisdom being applied to the incarnation, rather than trying to fit it into an eternal birth, but even here it is problematic. For one thing, Wisdom is feminine. Proverbs 8:22 is not a verse in isolation. It is in a context. It appears in Proverbs in an introduction stressing the value of this virtue. Wisdom is personified as a wise woman calling out in the streets and public squares (1:20-21), raising the consciousness of all who will take heed to avoid sin and follow the righteous laws of the Lord. Chapter 8 emphasizes this imagery, verses 1-3 reiterating her calling out over the countryside where roads meet and at the city gates, summoning everyone to be guided by her to live righteous lives, productive and respected, insuring that leaders will be just (8:15), and assuring her hearers the righteous ruler will be rewarded (vv. 20-21). In this context, she explains her advent as a creation of God. While the eternal generation of the Son is a doctrine promoted with the best intentions, to show the eternal equality of substance between the Father and the Son, it cannot rest securely on a verse that clearly presents a “daughter” not a son, who is the personification of a quality that is created.

Bruce Metzger, the renowned textual critic in his 1953 article, “The Jehovah’s Witnesses and Jesus Christ: A Biblical and Theological Appraisal,” provided a middle ground that might be an irenic way to bring this section to a close:

The passage in the Old Testament to which Jehovah’s Witnesses (and Arians of every age) appeal most frequently is Proverbs 8:22ff. The translation usually given is the following, or something similar to it: “Jehovah made me [that is, Wisdom, interpreted as the Son] in the beginning of his way, before his works of old”...The true translation of this passage, however, according to a learned study by the eminent Semitic scholar, F.C. Burney, must be, “The Lord begat me as the beginning of his way...” The context favors this rendering, for the growth of the embryo is described in the following verse...In any case, however, irrespective of the meaning of the Hebrew verb in Prov. 8:22, it is clearly an instance of strabismic exegesis, if one may coin the phrase, to abandon the consistent New Testament representation of Jesus Christ as uncreated and to seize upon a disputed interpretation of a verse in the Old Testament, as the only satisfactory description of him.<sup>48</sup>

In short, even if the verse may mean “begat,” it does not apply to Jesus Christ.

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of Him, those namely the likeness of whose flesh He has put on. Therefore according to His manhood He is founded, that we, as precious stones, may admit of building upon Him, and may become a temple of the Holy Ghost who dwelleth in us” (Athanasius, *Discourse 2*, 8.2. Chap 22. ¶74, sec. 3, p. 387). As Athanasius explains, “Therefore the Lord also, did not when founded take a beginning of existence; for He was the Word before that; but when He put on our body, which he severed and took from Mary, then He says *He hath founded Me*; as much as to say, “Me, being the Word, He hath enveloped in a body of earth” (Athanasius, *Discourse 2*, 8.2. Chap 22. ¶74, sec. 4, p. 387). Athanasius clarifies further, “For he says not, “Before the world He founded Me, as Word or Son,” but simply, He founded Me, to shew again, as I have said, that not for His own sake but for those who are built upon Him does He here also speak, after the way of proverbs. For this knowing, the Apostle also writes, *Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ; but let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon*” (Athanasius, *Discourse 2*, 8.2. Chap 22. ¶74, sec. 3, pp. 386-387). So Athanasius sees the focus as the incarnation.

We should also note that Athanasius uses interchangeably the terms Christ, Word, Son, as well as titles in such statements as, “The Only-begotten and very Wisdom of God is Creator and Framer of all things” (8.2. Chap 22. ¶77, sec. 9, p. 391) for the pre-incarnate Person of the Trinity who would rescue us. The focus is ever the pre-existence of Christ. So, while Prov. 8:22 might be read as describing an eternal generation of the Son as “Wisdom” (a point that needs great qualification to keep the coming Christ from appearing to have been created in eternity, since creation is the preferred rendering of the passage, as testified in the lexicons), others might pool all this information together as meaning that, when a particular quality such as “Wisdom” was necessary in the divine creative plan, Christ assumed it, or, being God and complete, more likely exercised it, having already contained it. Clearly, the discussion is far more sophisticated and the place of Christ far higher in the Scriptures and, perhaps as well, in the perspective of the great champion of primal Nicaean teaching Athanasius than many would suppose.

48 Bruce M. Metzger, “The Jehovah’s Witnesses and Jesus Christ: A Biblical and Theological Appraisal,” *Theology Today*, April, 1953, p. 80. He adds, “The proper methodology, of course, is to begin with the New Testament, and then to search in the Old Testament for foregleams, types, and prophecies which found their fulfillment in him.”

So, as we have seen thus far, the vagueness of eternal birth language makes it dependent on whomever uses it, the Orthodox seeking to underscore the pre-existence of the Word in John 1:1, who incarnated in John 1:14 as Jesus Christ, or the heterodox to undermine the ontological equality of the Persons of the Trinity, thereby blunting the force of the Nicæan Creed. This latter thinking was owed in part to Origen (and his followers) and among the casualties were such scriptures as Proverbs 8:22, which became a battleground for a war on Christology, I believe, it was never meant to bear, specifying as it does that the wisdom being discussed was a creation and feminine and only a personified quality, and not a literal explanation of the status of Jesus Christ before the incarnation. And all this controversy seething around this doctrine comprised its legacy as it passed down the generations to become the center of interest and renewed confusion today.

### The Eternal Generation Doctrine Still Fitting Itself into Today

In 2012, when Kevin Giles issued his book *The Eternal Generation of the Son*, theologian Robert Letham contributed a foreword. In it, he called the book an “impressive exposition” and “an important contribution to discussion.” He also deplored “a casual attitude” within “large swaths of contemporary evangelicalism,” due to what he termed “a biblicism that requires express statements of Scripture to establish any particular matter” and that “misses the point” that “the doctrine [eternal generation] depended on ‘the sense of Scripture,’ on the interplay of the elements of biblical truth, not on a simple list of ‘Bible verses.’”<sup>49</sup> In his introduction, Dr. Giles picked up this

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<sup>49</sup> Robert Letham, “Foreword,” in Kevin Giles, *The Eternal Generation of the Son* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012), pp. 7-8. First, as a Presbyterian minister who has seen my mainline denomination fall deeper and deeper into a similar hermeneutic, claiming the love of Christ is an overarching guide that sets aside what its theologically liberal wing considers obsolete concerns in the Scripture, while locating or devising creeds and confessions to back up each new doctrinal heterodoxical addition, I prefer grappling with the list of “Bible verses” and holding doctrines without such support in continual tension rather than forcing their acceptance on everyone, even though I respect those who wish to come to orthodox rather than heretical conclusions from this speculative practice. Second, as a theologian with a focus on Christology and the dangers that come with heterodoxy leading to heresy and often cultic abandonment of Christian orthodoxy (see, for example, my book *Dread Jesus* [Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1999] on the Rastafarian departure and reconsideration of historic Christology and also my wife’s book, to which I contributed a chapter on the neo-pagan dimensions of the Men’s Movement, Aida Besançon Spencer, et. al, *The Goddess Revival: A Biblical Response to Goddess Spirituality* [Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1995] on the dangers of the Goddess Movement), I take to heart and apply to this topic of trying to establish how the Persons in the Trinity are differentiated John Calvin’s warning about delving too much into a parallel philosophical morass: the “discussion of predestination.” He calls an over-preoccupation of how that works “very confusing” and “even dangerous.” “No restraints can hold it back from wandering in forbidden bypaths and thrusting upward to the heights. If allowed, it will leave no secret to God that it will not search out and unravel.” To Calvin this is “audacity” and “impudence,” “penetrating the sacred precincts of divine wisdom. If anyone with carefree assurance breaks into this place, he will not succeed in satisfying his curiosity and he will enter a labyrinth from which he can find no exit. For it is not right for man unrestrainedly to search out things that the Lord has willed to be hid in himself, and to unfold from eternity itself the sublimest wisdom, which he would have us revere but not understand that through this also he should fill us with wonder. He has set forth by his Word the secrets of his will that he has decided to reveal to us. These he decided to reveal in so far as he foresaw that they would concern us and benefit us,” John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Trans. Ford Lewis Battles, ed. John T. McNeill (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1960), Book 3, Chap 21, sec 1, pp. 922-923. I have also noticed current proponents of eternal generation have prefaced their studies with attacks on reading the Scriptures first, preferring to filter the Bible through the creeds. I can see why they do so, since readers can come up with bizarre theories and the creeds are helpful in correcting these. But only some of the creeds are helpful. Many of the creeds from The Dedication Creed on to the Sirmium creeds are heretical or, at least heterodox, as are some contemporary creeds. At the same time, since even the best attempts to find scriptures to interpret as support to defend the eternal generation doctrine seem to me to be rather flimsy at best and smoke and mirrors at worst, and given some of the strange interpretations the eternal generation doctrine has yielded from Athenagoras to Origen to Arius and Eusebius, as we’ve noted, on to the more hierarchical theologians today, I think we need to remind ourselves of what Kevin Giles has stated, the creeds are human productions, while the Scriptures, though authored by humans, are divinely inspired. So I believe the best procedure is for us to stay focused on what is actually canonical and use caution in handling any speculative theologies in our attempts to undergird our understanding of God, who is presented as One Triune God from Genesis 1’s creation account where the Spirit “gestates” the chemicals, the building blocks of creation, the Father speaks, and the creative Word creates, on through the baptism of Jesus and the presentation of all three Persons in Matthew 3, Mark 1, Luke 3, on through the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19, among references everywhere throughout the entire sweep of Scripture, right to the end of Revelation and the closing of the canon.

theme and listed what he called “some of the best-known names in the evangelical world [who] advocate the abandonment of the doctrine of the eternal begetting, or generation, of the Son.” In it, he included one of the editors of 2015’s *One God in Three Persons* and as well the prominent author of the book’s first chapter, a passionately sincere and amazingly effective leader whose unflagging energy and dedication as the foremost advocate and champion of one-way submission in the Trinity has spread his interpretations and opinions all over the world: Dr. Wayne Grudem.<sup>50</sup> Dr. Giles’s list may have been valid in 2012, but by 2015 Prof. Grudem had apparently made an about-face and become a proponent of the doctrine of the Son’s eternal generation, claiming, “Throughout the entire history of the Christian church, to my knowledge, no significant and doctrinally orthodox church leader or teacher ever denied that God the Son was eternally God the Son, until several modern evangelical feminists attempted to obliterate all differences between the persons of the Trinity.”<sup>51</sup>

What is his proof for this astonishing statement? An even more astonishing claim, as he writes:

In fact, no teacher who did not accept the Nicene Creed (AD 325) or the Chalcedonian Creed (AD 451) would have been allowed to continue in a teaching position in any orthodox church. The Nicene Creed confesses belief “in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, *begotten of the Father before all worlds*, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, begotten, not made.” If he was eternally “begotten of the Father,” then he was eternally the Son of God. And he was eternally “the only-begotten Son of God.”<sup>52</sup>

Obviously, the problem with this pronouncement is that the Council of Nicaea in compiling the original Creed of Nicaea (A.D. 325), as we noted earlier, consciously excluded Caesarea’s recommendation from its own creed: “*begotten of the Father before all worlds*.” Further, as we also noted earlier, the Nicene Creed, despite its name, is not the Creed of Nicaea of A.D. 325. It is more accurately the Jerusalemic-Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan Creed of A.D. 381, some fifty-six years later, renamed and presented to Chalcedon’s council (A.D. 451) to replace the actual Creed of Nicaea from a hundred and twenty-six years earlier.<sup>53</sup> And one of the alterations was to include this popular eternal generation doctrine that had not survived the earlier cut. So the proof proffered on page 28 of *One God in Three Persons* that “the Nicene Creed [A.D. 325]” “confesses” “one Lord Jesus Christ” “*begotten of the Father before all worlds*” [italics by that author] is simply inaccurate. It is not in the creed from A.D. 325 and, therefore, the sweeping conclusion that depends on its inclusion topples with it.<sup>54</sup> Thus, those who over the centuries have questioned the

50 Kevin Giles, *The Eternal Generation of the Son*, p. 30.

51 Wayne Grudem, “Doctrinal Deviations in Evangelical-Feminist Arguments,” in Bruce Ware and John Starke, eds., *One God in Three Persons* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), p. 28. Brother Wayne Grudem’s passion and verve are reflected in his writing style, which can border on bombast, but is always done with sincere conviction, as all can recognize, whether one agrees or not with his sometimes audacious positions on everything from complete one-way subordinationism in the Trinity to his attacks on evangelical egalitarians to his publically announced doubts on the reality of global warming, etc.

52 Wayne Grudem, “Doctrinal Deviations in Evangelical-Feminist Arguments, *One God in Three Persons*,” p. 28. All italics, including these, are in the original quotations being cited. I have not added bold print or italics to any quotation.

53 The Presbyterian Church USA, *Book of Confessions* describes this well: “To counter a widening rift within the church, Constantine convened a council in Nicaea in A.D. 325. A creed reflecting the position of Alexander and Athanasius was written and signed by a majority of the bishops. Nevertheless, the two parties continued to battle each other. In 381, a second council met in Constantinople. It adopted a revised and expanded form of the A.D. 325 creed, now known as the Nicene Creed,” *The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.): Part 1 Book of Confessions* (Louisville, KY: Office of the General Assembly Presbyterian Church U.S.A., 1999), p. 2.

54 In response to criticism, on June 9, 2016, the year after *One God in Three Persons* was published, Wayne Grudem, on the CBMW Public Square blog, did note: “Nicene Creed, 325 AD, revised 381 AD, in the Received Text of the Protestant Churches,” <https://cbmw.org/public-square/whose-position-on-the-trinity-is-really-new/About-CBMW>, p. 2. Also interesting to note is that on page 89 of Kevin Giles’s *The Eternal Generation of the Son* we read, “In the Creed of Nicaea (325) and the Nicene Creed of Constantinople (381), the Holy Spirit is said ‘to proceed from the Father.’” But that wording is in the latter not the former, which says simply, “And in the Holy Spirit” (see “The Creed of Nicaea in Henry Bettenson and Chris

wisdom of adding the doctrine of the eternal generation to the original creed are not at all out of sync with the intention of the original Creed of Nicaea, as is being claimed.

Further, a side issue that arises is, if Dr. Giles's list was correct and Prof. Grudem opposed the eternal generation idea in the past, according to his own recent pronouncement, would his former denial of this doctrine invalidate everything he wrote and said himself before his present acceptance of this doctrine?

Setting such a consideration aside to bracket and mull over later, one might wonder: had Wayne Grudem's concern become similar to that of Kevin Giles, recognizing a need for an extra insistence on Christ's pre-existence by adding to the primal Creed of Nicaea an eternal birth to precede the temporal birth, as was included in the Athanasian Creed, where we saw all three Persons in the Trinity presented as coeternal and coequal? In regard to the Father and Son being of the same substance, yes, but in regard to the equality of attributes shared between Father and Son and Spirit, no. Athanasius (as Kevin Giles) insists in his *De Synodis*'s demonstration on the Son's "equality with the Father by titles expressive of unity," including "Almighty," "Everlasting," "being honoured as the Father," etc.,<sup>55</sup> "And what is said of the Father, is said in Scripture of the Son also, all but His being called Father."<sup>56</sup> For Athanasius, the equality of attributes signifies the equality of substance. Why do we see a difference of concerns? Wayne Grudem begins his chapter in *One God in Three Persons* by complaining, "Several evangelical-feminist authors have denied that the Son is eternally subject to the authority of the Father within the Trinity,"<sup>57</sup> and soon he is charging, "All of these egalitarian arguments labor so strenuously to falsify the eternal submission of the Son to the Father that they stray into the serious doctrinal deviation of denying that the Son of God was eternally God the Son."<sup>58</sup>

Is he suggesting here explicitly that questioning the eternal one-way subjection of the Son theory, rephrased in the second quotation as "submission," and, perhaps, implicitly, the eternal generation of the Son doctrine is tantamount to denying the pre-existence of the Person of the Trinity who incarnated as Jesus Christ, the Son of God? If so, why would applying the title "Son of God" to the incarnation of a Person of the Godhead automatically deny that Person's eternal pre-existence? No logical necessity exists for such a conclusion. Rather, his basic concern here appears to be less focused on preserving the doctrine of the pre-existence of the Son and more devoted to transferring the idea of the eternal subjection, or submission, of the Son in an eternal one-way authority structure in the Trinity into the vehicle of the eternal generation of the Son, thereby attempting to make his idea of the eternal submission/subordination of the Son to the Father an intrinsic property of the Son's eternal generation. Such a move in 2015 was impressively strategic, as it attempted to strengthen a non-creedal theory (eternal submission/subordination) by wedding it to what had become a creedal one (eternal generation). This move was also rather prescient, since it anticipated his theory of the eternal subordination of the Son shortly coming under attack in Evangelical Complementarian as well as Evangelical Egalitarian circles.<sup>59</sup> But promoting one-way hierarchy in the Trinity (positing the Father having eternal precedence of authority over the Son) was never the point of the eternal generation doctrine in the early church for Athanasius or the orthodox. For these saints, the eternal generation theory was invented simply to shore up proof for the eternal existence and the shared substance (*homoousios*) of the Persons of the Trinity, not an eternal subordination, or one-way submission, hierarchical structure in tandem descending from Father to Son to Spirit.

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Maunder, eds., *Documents of the Christian Church*, p. 26).

55 One can see these attributes and the entire list of equal attributes in Athanasius, *De Synodis*, Vol 8.1, Chap 3, ¶49.20, pp. 148-150. This roundup of scriptural proof is at the center of his argument that Father and Son are "one in substance" (¶48.19), a fact proved by "equality with the Father by titles expressive of unity" (¶49.20).

56 Athanasius, "De Synodis," Vol 8.1, Chap 3, ¶49.20, pp. 148-149.

57 Wayne Grudem, "Doctrinal Deviations in Evangelical-Feminist Arguments," *One God in Three Persons*, p. 17.

58 Wayne Grudem, "Doctrinal Deviations in Evangelical-Feminist Arguments," *One God in Three Persons*, p. 32.

59 See Kevin Giles's personal response to this development in his *The Rise and Fall of the Complementarian Doctrine of the Trinity* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2017).

Applying our brother Wayne Grudem's view, are we to understand that everyone not agreeing to his idea of the eternal generation and eternal one-way submission of the Son being synonymous are condemned to being guilty of what he calls "doctrinal deviation," and, until we agree with him, we should stop attending the Evangelical Theological Society and teaching in our respective schools, since he complains, "It is something of a surprise to me that writers who deny that the Son has eternally been the Son of God are still accepted as legitimate representatives for orthodox, evangelical Christianity."<sup>60</sup> Does our brother really expect every evangelical to fall into lockstep with his own new allegiance to the eternal generation of the Son, which he earlier rejected and now adopts?

Also, if he were to be consistent, he would have to rule out of his definition of orthodox evangelicalism not only the framers of the actual Creed of Nicaea themselves (who did not include it in the original formula, whether they held it personally or not), along with possible friends of his camp, since he would have to banish all the other prominent names Kevin Giles lists in his roster of those who published their hesitations on embracing the theory of the eternal generation of the Son, including Charles Hodge, A.A. Hodge, B.B. Warfield, Walter R. Martin, Loraine Boettner, J. Oliver Buswell, John S. Feinberg, J.P. Moreland, Gerry Breshears, as well as Millard Erickson, William Lane Craig, and others.<sup>61</sup> Do the editors and authors of this book really want to do such a thing? I, for one, certainly hope not.

So what is really going on here?

It appears to me that the point of this particular new embracing of the eternal generation of the Son is to prop it up as a support for a doctrine increasingly under conservative fire but central to the theology of the authors of *One God in Three Persons*: the eternal submission (formerly, for some of them, the eternal functional subordination) of the Son to the Father. This controversial doctrine of the Son's eternal submission is being re-freighted into the Son's eternal generation, by stressing the term "eternal Son" as proof of an eternally subordinate status in the Trinity of the Person of the Godhead who incarnated as Jesus Christ. Adherence to such an eternal one-way command/obedience doctrine appears constantly throughout the book's chapters and is, in fact, the goal of the book, as its editors state clearly in the preface of *One God in Three Persons*. "The concern of this volume," they tell us, is to address "a debate among evangelicals concerning how the persons of our Trinitarian God relate to one another." They explain, "Much of the debate before us answers the question, Does the human obedience of Christ to the Father have a basis in the eternal Son of God, or is it restricted to his humanity and incarnate state?" And they affirm, "The essays in this volume argue" that "the human obedience of Christ has a basis in the eternal Son of God."<sup>62</sup> So, for various authors of this book, the eternal submission of the Son to the Father in the Trinity appears to be related, or intrinsically tied, to the eternal generation of the Son.<sup>63</sup>

Robert Letham, however, who contributes, perhaps, the most balanced chapter in *One God in Three Persons* in my view, is adamant about opposing the idea that the Son's "eternal generation" "supports the eternal subordination of the Son." Citing the argument that "without the Son being eternally subordinate to the Father, the doctrine of eternal generation is superfluous, merely pointing to undefined distinctions," Prof. Letham protests, "However, the language of subordination entails that the one subordinated has no choice but is subjected by his superior. The subject of active forms of the verb 'to subordinate' subordinates another. This could hardly be the case in the Trinity. It was typical of the Arian heresy."<sup>64</sup>

60 Wayne Grudem, "Doctrinal Deviations in Evangelical-Feminist Arguments," *One God in Three Persons*, p. 32.

61 See Kevin Giles, *The Eternal Generation of the Son*, p. 30 for his entire list.

62 Bruce A. Ware and John Starke, *One God in Three Persons*, p. 11.

63 While I find all the chapters in this book interesting and articulate, one can sample other particularly clear connections between eternal generation and eternal submission/subordination in the chapters by Kyle Claunch (see pp. 89-92) and John Starke (pp. 161-171, and especially in the helpful summary which is his conclusion on pp. 171-172).

64 Robert Letham, "Eternal Generation in the Church Fathers" in *One God in Three Persons*, p. 122.

That Robert Letham appears to think the eternal generation doctrine is in danger of being misused is an interesting revelation, lending support to the conclusion that those fellow authors who have changed their minds on the validity of the eternal generation doctrine and now embrace it may have done so because it has suddenly appeared handy, like the broken sword in Edward Rowland Sill's famous poem, "Opportunity," which the embattled prince snatches up and "with battle shout lifted afresh he hewed his enemy down,"<sup>65</sup> in this case the evangelical egalitarians being the "enemy" to be "hewed...down."

Prof. Letham, too, opts for a willing "submission" as a better understanding of relations in the Trinity, but he must go to the incarnation to illustrate his theory, inferring, "It is reasonable to conclude that Christ's life of service is revelatory of who the Son eternally is, and so of the way the three relate to one another in the unity of the indivisible Godhead. This is what God is like."<sup>66</sup> This statement, of course, is speculation not revelation, since such an explanation does not necessarily prove his inference, or the book's totem-pole approach to relations in the Trinity as a one-way chain of command from Father to Son to Spirit. In defense of an alternative understanding of relationships in the Trinity, one can note in the great pastoral prayer of Jesus, the Son does indeed call on the Father with imperatives, for example, in John 17:1, "Glorify your son in order that the son may glorify you," or verse 11, "Protect them," or verse 17, "Sanctify them in the truth,"<sup>67</sup> suggesting more likely a mutual submission in the divine relationships, as Orthodox Presbyterian Church theologian Loraine Boettner describes in his book *The Person of Christ*:

In theological language the terms "Father" and "Son" carry with them not our occidental ideas of, on the one hand, source of being and superiority, and on the other, subordination and dependence, but rather the Semitic and oriental ideals of *likeness* and *sameness of nature* and equality of being. It is, of course, the Semitic consciousness that underlies the phraseology of Scripture, and wherever the Scriptures call Christ the "Son of God" they assert His true and proper Deity. It signifies a unique relationship that cannot be predicated of nor shared with any creature. As any merely human son is like his father in his essential nature, that is, possessed of humanity, so Christ, the Son of God, was like His Father in His essential nature, that is, possessed of Deity. The Father and the Son, together with the Holy Spirit, are co-eternal and co-equal in power and glory, and partake of the same nature or substance. They have always existed as distinct Persons. The Father is, and always has been, as much dependent on the Son as the Son is on the Father; for self-existence and independence are properties not of the Persons within the Godhead but of the Triune God. Consequently, the terms "Father" and "Son" are not at all adequate to express the full relationship which exists between the first and second Persons of the Godhead. But they are the best we have. Moreover, they are the terms used in Scripture, and besides expressing the ideas of sameness of nature they are found to be reciprocal, expressing the ideas of love, affection, trust, honor, unity and harmony,—ideas of endearment and preciousness."<sup>68</sup>

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65 Edward Rowland Sill, "Opportunity" in *The Little Book of American Poets: 1787-1900*, ed. Jessie B. Rittenhouse (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1915), <http://www.poetry-archive.com/s/opportunity.html>.

66 Robert Letham, "Eternal Generation in the Church Fathers," in *One God in Three Persons*, p. 123. Prof. Letham, appears to me to take the idea of eternal one-way submission as more a hypothesis than a dogma, as he cautions, "... there is an order—from the Father through the Son by the Holy Spirit—but not one of superior and inferior. Rather, it is an order of equals, in the identity of the indivisible Trinity, including both initiation and submission in loving exocentric union," p. 123. In light of the overall apologetic nature of this book, I think the editors should be commended as very courageous for not editing Prof. Letham's more moderating statements out.

67 "Glorify" is *doxason*, "protect" is *tērēson*, and "sanctify" is *hagiason*, all aorist active imperatives. Those who would like to read my more complete exposition of Jesus's great prayer, please see William David Spencer and Aida Besançon Spencer, *The Prayer Life of Jesus: Shout of Agony, Revelation of Love, a Commentary* (New York: University Press of America, 1990), pp. 159-227.

68 Loraine Boettner, *The Person of Christ* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1943, 2009), pp. 30-31.

## Final Thoughts

So, what are we to make of all this? Is the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son orthodox or heretical? The answer depends on whose hands it is in. Having no Bible verses that directly support it, this vulnerable doctrine is dependent on the interpreter and, thus, to be included in what the interpreter feels is the sense or the sweep or the full counsel of Scripture.

In the hands of an Athanasius, it is used to support orthodoxy and, particularly, the shared substance of Father, Son, and Spirit. In the hands of an Origen or an Arius, it is used to demote the Son to a lesser status of deity and, at best, depict a kind of tri-theistic Godhead, as viewed from afar by humbled humanity. In the hands of Kevin Giles, it supports equality in the Godhead. In the hands of many of the authors of *One God in Three Persons*, it signifies an inequality of authority in a one-way hierarchical command/obedience structure in the Godhead from Father to Son to Spirit.

Clearly, it is a most convenient and flexible doctrine, a lot like a set of pipe-cleaners given as play toys to children who bend them into any shape to form letters into a message. The message I read is: We all need to handle this popular but ancillary and not really clearly scripturally canonical but very highly flexible doctrine with great care and caution. So, if we choose to use it, we should make certain the message we are giving with it truly is scriptural and not some heterodoxical theory that undercuts the one eternally triune God of the universe. Otherwise, we would do better just to leave it alone—and certainly not demand every believer to adopt it as a validating badge of an orthodox faith.

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# Dread Jesus

## WILLIAM DAVID SPENCER

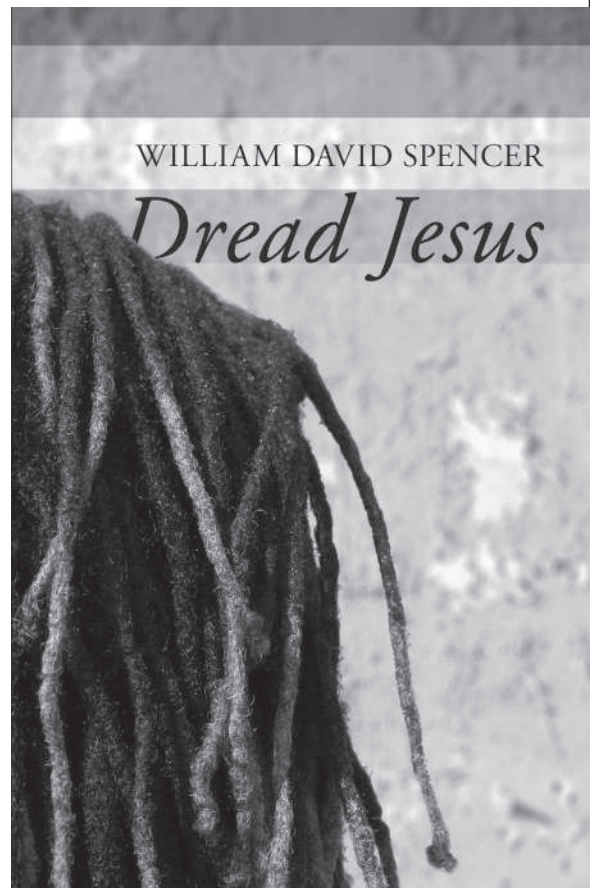
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# Eternal Equality of Authority in the Trinity<sup>1</sup>

DAESUNG KIM

In recent years, those involved with the heated debates over gender relations and the role of women in the Church have been employing the doctrine of the Trinity to support their view in different ways. Some have appealed to the Trinity to prove their idea of mutual submission between men and women, whereas others argue that women should submit to men based on their different interpretation of the doctrine of the Trinity. The major issue is whether there is an eternal hierarchy of authority among the three Persons of the Trinity. Conservative evangelicals on both sides of the subordination debate agree with the idea of the ontological equality of the Trinity. However, opinions are divided in terms of authority even among these conservatives. Some believe that the second and third Persons of the Trinity are eternally and functionally subordinated to the supreme authority of the first Person of the Trinity, while others believe the three Persons of the Trinity are eternally equal in authority. The fact that the theory of the eternal functional subordination of the Son to the Father (hereafter EFS) appears to be gaining ground in evangelical circles certainly alarms us because this idea calls into question the Son's ontological equality with the Father.

The purpose of this article is not to engage in the gender debate. Rather, it is written with a belief that all sound biblical evidence and the best theological reasoning reject EFS. This article will argue that EFS needs to be re-examined based on biblical and theological data. This will be accomplished first by demonstrating that the biblical evidence teaches that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are eternally equal in glory, honor, power, authority, and rank. Yet, the Son was temporarily, voluntarily, and functionally submitted to the Father to redeem fallen humanity. This article will then defend against the major arguments posited by EFS: 1) there is a fixed and invariable order within the Trinity: Father–Son–Holy Spirit, 2) the Father's sending of the Son was an act of authority and subordination.

## The Biblical Evidence against the Eternal Functional Subordination of the Son to the Father

The Bible testifies that a functional submission of the second Person of the Trinity to the first Person of the Trinity took place only during the time of the second Person's incarnation. In other words, the Person of the Trinity who incarnated on earth as Jesus Christ is always equal in authority with the Father in eternity past and eternity future according to the Scripture. In the following paragraphs, we will examine the authority of the second Person of the Trinity pre-incarnation, at the time of His incarnation, and post-resurrection.

### I. Pre-incarnation Authority

Genesis 1:1 testifies that God is the Creator: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."<sup>2</sup> Here, the Bible actually begins with foreshadowing the doctrine of the Trinity: God's name *elohim* is plural, and yet it is used with the singular verb *bara*. In Genesis 1:26, that God is indeed a triune being becomes more evident because plural pronouns used of God infer a plurality of Persons in the Godhead: "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness'" (Gen. 1:26a). Similarly, in the New Testament, the Gospel of John 1:1–3 testifies that Jesus is the eternal Word, one of the Persons of the Trinity, who created the world with the other two Persons of the Trinity: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made." In 1 Corinthians 8:6, Paul clearly indicates that both the Father and Jesus are the "sole Creator" who is the reason for our existence: "For us there is but one God, the

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<sup>1</sup> This article was first presented at the Other Voices in Interpretation study group of the Evangelical Theological Society in its November 2017 annual meeting in Providence, Rhode Island.

<sup>2</sup> New International Version is cited throughout.

Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.”<sup>3</sup> None of these Scriptures indicates that the Father commanded Jesus to create. Rather, all of them clearly tell us that Jesus shares the very work of God in creation because each Person of the Trinity is co-eternal and shares equally in honor, power, and authority.

Likewise, there are several passages that identify the triune God as electing persons for salvation.<sup>4</sup> 1 Peter 1:2 declares that our election has been secured by the work of all three Persons of the Trinity: “Who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood.” It is crucial to notice that Matthew 11:27 and John 5:21 specifically indicate that Jesus exercises determination:

All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him (Matt. 11:27).

For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it (John 5:21).

The above passages provide the essential evidence that Jesus possesses equal authority and power to the Father because the Persons in the Godhead are described as performing the exact same divine work. The Holy Spirit also exercises determination that the Spirit gives gifts to those whom He chooses: “All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines” (1 Cor. 12:11).

Finally, the book of Revelation has one of the clearest affirmations of the eternity and the supreme authority of Jesus. This is known as the Alpha-Omega Proof. The argument can be stated in the following manner: “Alpha and Omega” is a title for Almighty God (Rev. 1:8). Almighty God, the Alpha and Omega, is also declared to be the “First and the Last” (Rev. 21:5–7). The Alpha and Omega, First and the Last, who is Almighty God, declares “I am coming quickly” (Rev. 22:12–13). The author of Revelation affirms the identity of the Alpha and Omega in the very end of his book by recording, “‘Yes, I am coming quickly.’ Amen, come Lord Jesus” (Rev. 22:20). The book of Revelation basically testifies that Jesus is the eternal “Almighty” God, evidently rejecting the idea that the Father is the cause of the Son and exacting eternal authority over Him.

## II. Incarnation Authority

We see the three Persons of the Trinity are co-eternal and share equally in honor, power and authority; however, Jesus voluntarily accepted temporary submission to the Father for the work of salvation. In fact, the submission within the Trinity was mutual, voluntary, and loving. So we should not understand this submission in the sense that the Son and the Holy Spirit are second and third class Persons of the Trinity who needed to be sent to do tasks according to the Father’s will to justify their existence. There are several biblical evidences that support this view.

First of all, Jesus’ claims to equality with the Father make it clear that His submission as incarnate Son is voluntarily assumed for the purpose of carrying out a special mission in the economy of salvation history.<sup>5</sup>

*I and the Father are one* (John 10:30).

In his defense Jesus said to them, “My Father is always at his work to this very day,

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<sup>3</sup> See also Ps. 102:25; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:10.

<sup>4</sup> See also John 13:18; Acts 1:24; 9:15; Rom. 8:29.

<sup>5</sup> Royce Gruenler, *The Trinity in the Gospel of John: A Thematic Commentary on the Fourth Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986), xiv.

and I too am working.” For this reason they tried all the more to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, *making himself equal with God* (John 5:17–18). (Italics mine)

Second, Philippians 2:6–8 indicates that the Son had equality with God, but He gave it up by coming to this world:

Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!

Prior to the incarnation, Jesus never had experienced any kind of subordination, because He was equal with the two other Persons of the Trinity. However, Jesus humbled himself and voluntarily placed Himself under the authority of the Father in order to save the ones whom He loves. Hebrews 5:7–8 testifies that obedience was something new that He learned during the days of His life on earth:

*During the days of Jesus’ life on earth*, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, *he learned obedience* from what he suffered. (Italics mine.)

These two passages clearly show that, before the incarnation, Christ had never subjected Himself to another’s will. It was a whole new experience for Him that He learned for the purpose of ministry.<sup>6</sup> Thus, it is correct to say that His experience of obedience was limited to His redemptive ministry as suffering servant.<sup>7</sup>

At the time of the incarnation, Jesus was still fully divine and had the *essential equality* of other Persons of the Trinity. When Jesus said, “The Father is greater than I” (John 14:28) or “No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father” (John 5:30), we need to understand these statements as referring to His *economic functional submission* in “the days of his flesh.”<sup>8</sup> Jesus still had all the complete attributes of God, such as omnipotence, omnipresence, or omniscience, yet His incarnate human body made him limit His power. However, the incarnation should not be understood as the reduction of His divine attributes, but rather as Christ letting Himself into the limitation without losing any of His divine capacities. It is like a college athlete running in a three-legged race with one of his legs tied to a six year old child. Even though the athlete’s physical capacity is not reduced, the condition under which the exercise is performed is restricted and thus limits the actual performance. Therefore, the fact that the Son took on a human nature and made Himself obedient to the Father in no way denies the deity of the Son, nor does it diminish His essential equality with the Father. This is how we should understand the functional subordination of Jesus during the time of His earthly ministry.

### III. Post-resurrection Authority

After Jesus successfully accomplished His redemptive mission, He returned to an equal place of authority with the Father. Since Jesus in His divine nature had ontological equality with the Father even during the time of His earthly ministry, He only restored His functional authority and power by taking off His human flesh.

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6 Apart from the purpose of redemptive ministry, He learned obedience in order to teach it to us: “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ” (Eph. 5:21).

7 Millard J. Erickson, *Who’s Tampering with the Trinity? An Assessment of the Subordination Debate* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2009), 70.

8 James Oliver Buswell Jr., *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), 1:106.

As Jesus announced in Mark 14:62, He is now sitting at the right hand of the Father. There are a number of passages that speak of Jesus' sitting (or standing) on God's throne:<sup>9</sup>

But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and *Jesus standing at the right hand of God*. "Look," he said, "I see heaven open *and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God*" (Acts 7:55–56).

Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—*is at the right hand of God* and is also interceding for us (Rom. 8:34).

Who has gone into heaven and is *at God's right hand*—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him (1 Pet. 3:22). (Italics mine.)

Even those who argue for EFS cannot deny that God's throne is the place for authority. Many passages declare that Jesus, after the ascension, is sitting/standing on the throne. These exist because the Bible wants us to see that Jesus resumes His exalted place and that He is equal in authority to the Father.

Some people who disagree with this view emphasize that Jesus is not sitting at the throne by Himself, but He is at the "right hand" of God. They believe that the references to the Son sitting at the right hand of the Father indicate His inferior authority compared to the greater authority of the Father. That is actually not true, for the following reasons. First, the phrase "Jesus' sitting at God's right hand" should not be understood literally, but in a metaphorical sense, because God is an infinite and transcendent Spirit (John 4:24). Second, "God's throne" is sometimes used to refer to heaven itself. Passages that use the image of the throne in that way include those that declare that the heaven is His throne (Isa. 66:1), and Jesus' warning against those who swear by heaven because it is God's throne (Matt. 5:34).<sup>10</sup> Third, many Scripture passages say that Jesus is not only sitting at the right hand of God, but He is also sitting at the *center of God's throne*. (See Rev. 3:21; 7:17; 12:5; 22:3.) As Gilbert Bilezikian notes, "God is not on the throne with the Son apart from him or below the throne in a position of subordination. According to the Scripture, both God the Father and God the Son occupy the same throne for eternity. They are 'equal in power and glory'."<sup>11</sup> Therefore, "Jesus sitting on the right hand of God" should be understood as "Jesus sharing God's very position of divine rule over all creation."<sup>12</sup>

On the throne of God, Jesus is receiving universal worship with the Father, which indicates that His position is not merely honorary, but it is indeed a position of ultimate glory and honor. People sing spiritual songs for His honor (Phil. 2:9–11 and Eph. 5:19), and all God's angels worship him (Heb. 1:6). Revelation 4 and 5 are the key Scripture passages that evidently indicate that Jesus receives the same kind of worship that the Father receives. First, God is worshiped (4:9–11), then the Lamb which is the Son (5:8–12), and finally they are worshiped together by "every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them" (5:13–14).<sup>13</sup> If Jesus had lesser authority than the Father (as EFS suggests), why would Jesus and the Father receive equal worship from all their creations? All these biblical texts strongly favor the equivalence view that all Persons of the Trinity are eternally equal in authority.

### Defense against the Eternal Functional Subordination of the Son to the Father

One concept that plays a large part in EFS is the idea of order (*taxis*). It is argued that there is

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9 See also 1 Cor. 15:25; 2 Cor. 5:10; Eph. 1:20; 2:6; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12–13; 12:2; Rev. 3:21; 7:17; 21:1, 3.

10 Robert M. Bowman Jr. and J. Ed Komoszewski, *Putting Jesus in His Place: The Case for the Deity of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007), 255.

11 Gilbert Bilezikian, "Hermeneutical Bungee-Jumping: Subordination in the Godhead," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 40, no. 1 (March 1997): 63.

12 Bowman and Komoszewski, *Putting Jesus in His Place*, 255.

13 *Ibid.*, 260.

a fixed and invariable order within the Trinity: Father–Son–Holy Spirit. Bruce Ware, who supports EFS, argues that “the order is not random or arbitrary; it is not the Spirit first, the Son second, and Father third, nor is it any way other than the one way that the early church, reflecting Scripture itself (Matt. 28:19), insisted on: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”<sup>14</sup> However, this order does not indicate hierarchy or authority-submission structure because this “common order” is merely a logical or sequential order. Calvin agreed that the common ordering that considers the Father to be first, the Son second, and then the Spirit, is not without meaning; however, he saw its meaning not as an order of authority, but a logical or psychological order.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, we must notice that the Bible does not always use this common order of Father–Son–Holy Spirit. In Paul’s benediction in 2 Corinthians 13:14, the order is Jesus, Father, and Holy Spirit. In 1 Peter 1:2, the order is Father, Holy Spirit, and Jesus. In Jude 1:20–21, the order is Holy Spirit, Father, and Jesus. Interestingly, in 1 Corinthians 12:4–6, the order is completely reversed: Holy Spirit, Son, and Father.<sup>16</sup> This basically tells us that the “common” order of Father–Son–Spirit is not so “common” and does not necessarily imply any sort of priority of one person of the Trinity over the others.<sup>17</sup>

One of the EFS major arguments is that the Father’s sending of the Son was an act of authority and subordination (John 3:16–17; Gal. 4:4).<sup>18</sup> This is actually the strongest argument of EFS since no other passage comes to mind that indicates the Father being sent by the other two Persons of the Trinity. However, one thing that we must notice is that the Bible always speaks of mutual sharing of glory and honor within the Trinity. The Father always honors the Son and works through the Spirit, the Son always listens to the Father and promotes the Spirit, and the Spirit always reveals the Son and exalts the Father. I think this indicates that the triune God is always working together in *one divine will*. Even though what we see in the incarnation appears to be one-way submission to the Father, there must be some kind of perfect mutual decision within the Trinity, because the Bible never speaks of the Father rejecting or hesitating to answer what Jesus asked.

One of the classic counter-arguments on this point is based on the story of Lazarus. Just before he raised Lazarus from the dead, Jesus said: “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me” (John 11:41–42). This makes it clear that Jesus knew that the Father would listen to Him and do what He asked. How did Jesus know that the Father would listen to Him? Before answering this question, we must notice that Jesus did not say, “Thank you, Father, that you heard me *this time*,” but He rather said, “Thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you *always* hear me.” Why are there no conflicting views or clashes of opinions among the Persons of the Trinity? Erickson has the best interpretation of this: “No action of any person of the Trinity is an action done in isolation from the other two persons, even though one is primary in that action...The Father’s will, which the Son obeys, is actually the will of all three members of the Trinity, administered on their behalf by the Father.”<sup>19</sup>

This idea of *one divine will* through their eternal mutually indwelling (*perichoretic*) relations is actually what Jesus often claimed. In John 10:30, Jesus said, “I and the Father are one.” In John 17:21–22, when Jesus prayed for the unity of the believers, he clearly said “that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one

14 Bruce A. Ware, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Relationships, Roles, and Relevance* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 72. See also Erickson, *Who’s Tampering with the Trinity?*, 256.

15 John Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.13.25.

16 Erickson, *Who’s Tampering with the Trinity?*, 56.

17 Gerald Bray, *The Doctrine of God* (London: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 146–47.

18 Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 249. See also Erickson’s list of many other passages (*Who’s Tampering with the Trinity*, 111) that EFS, represented by Grudem and Ware, uses to support its argument that the Father sending the Son is evidence of an authoritative relationship between the Father and the Son.

19 Erickson, *Who’s Tampering with the Trinity?*, 248.

as we are one.” As Jesus claimed, Jesus and the Father are one. Because there is only one triune God, there is only one divine will. Everything the Trinity does is done by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit working together with one will through their *perichoretic* relationship.

Accordingly, there is no monarchy of the Father, but rather one divine monarchy in the Trinity. Gregory Nazianzus, in the *Third Theological Oration—On the Son*, clearly explained that “it is a monarchy composed of an equality of honor of nature, a concord of mind, identity of movement, and a convergence of things from it to the one, which is impossible for originated nature, so that it differs in number but there is no severance in substance.”<sup>20</sup> Therefore, the three Persons of the Trinity never work individually; their work is always the work of one triune God. When God reveals himself to us, it is not just the Father, the Son, or the Spirit. The whole Person of God is the One we encounter. The Son has revealed the love of the Father to us objectively through the crucifixion. The Holy Spirit has carried that revealed Word of God subjectively by constantly reminding us of the message. The message of God comes from the Father, centers on Christ and his cross, and is confirmed by the Holy Spirit. That is why Gregory of Nazianzus claimed, “I cannot think on the one without quickly being encircled by the splendor of the three; nor can I discern the three without being straightway carried back to the one.”<sup>21</sup>

Therefore, the EFS is problematic to view the Father as the supreme Person of the Trinity, and the Son and the Spirit as submitting to His authority. Because there is only one divine will among the Persons of the Trinity through their unique *perichoretic* relationship, there can be no unilateral authority of eternal command and obedience, for that would require one Person’s will to be subordinate to a will other than his own. Augustine rejects this view when he explains the Son being sent by the Father:

Because the will of the Father and the Son is one, and their working indivisible... Since the Father sent Him by a word, His being sent was the work of both the Father and His word; therefore the same Son was sent by the Father and the Son, because the Son Himself is the Word of the Father that wisdom must needs appear in the flesh.<sup>22</sup>

Furthermore, EFS may cause a serious problem if we see the Father sending the Son as an act of authority and subordination. If Jesus always has to act in subordination to the Father’s authority, was his coming really a free act among the Persons of the Trinity? If Jesus is not free, is the triune God free? If the Father is the only one who is free within the Trinity, how can there be a Trinity? This also raises the question of divine child abuse. If Jesus did not come voluntarily, but was compelled to do so by the Father, his death and suffering on the cross could be considered to be divine child abuse by the Father.

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20 Gregory of Nazianzus, *The Theological Oration*, III, 2.

21 Gregory of Nazianzus, *On Holy Baptism*; quoted by Calvin, *Institutes*, I.13.17.

22 Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 2.5.9.

# Comparative Study of the Concept of Christ's Once and for All Sacrifice in Hebrews 10:1-4 and 14 in Contrast with Repeated Sacrifices in the Ancient Jewish Documents<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

When I was reading the Hebrew Bible and the ancient Jewish documents, many questions arose especially about the sacrificial system that the Jewish people were required to perform. Why should they have to conduct them regularly and repeatedly? Were they performing sacrifices regularly even during the Second Temple period? If the Jewish people and Christians share the same Old Testament passages as the word of God, why do the Christians need to offer any sacrifice? We will answer these questions by looking at the references to sacrifices in the book of Hebrews especially focusing on 10:1-4 and 14. Also, the answer will be sought through analyzing features of regular sacrifices in Jewish documents in comparison with the “once and for all” sacrifice detailed in the New Testament book of Hebrews.

Many controversial issues regarding the book of Hebrews are cited by scholars. Among them is the problem of the reference of *kath' hēmeran* (“every day”) in 7:27 and 10:11. This issue is important for this study, because it highlights the repeatability of the old sacrificial system. It is hard to explain the existence of the daily sacrifice which was expressed with a phrase *kath' hēmeran* because the Jewish people were not performing daily sacrifices at that time when Hebrews was written and the priests, not the high priests, normally took part in the daily sacrifice (Lev 6:22). Moreover, the daily offering was not the sin offering but the regular burnt offering with the meal offering (Lev 6:19-23). According to Paul Ellingworth, there have been many attempts to solve these problems.<sup>2</sup> First, some scholars understand *kath' hēmeran* as “on any particular day,” and others argue that the Levitical priests felt the need of the daily sacrifice though they did not do it. However, these appear to be merely forced interpretations. Second, Johanan Biesenthal considers *kath' hēmeran* as a mistake in translation from the Hebrew phrase *ywm ywm'* (“on any day”),<sup>3</sup> but his is now treated as an unconvincing hypothesis. Third, several scholars such as Riggenbach and Westcott argue that *kath' hēmeran* does not apply to the human high priests, but only to Christ, while Schmitz and Bleek oppose this hypothesis since they claim it is due to too much stress on the order of the words.<sup>4</sup> Fourth, William Lane maintains that Hebrews follows the Aaronic tradition that the high priests offered daily sacrifices twice a day,<sup>5</sup> but Harold Attridge argues that the tradition does not refer to the sacrifices for the sins of the high priests themselves.<sup>6</sup>

With whomever we agree, an obvious fact is that the Jewish people had performed the sin offerings repeatedly, and they were still doing it regularly even when Hebrews was being written and read. This study reveals three things: First, there is continuity and discontinuity between the Old Testament and the New Testament. Although the sacrifices of the same frequency and concept are not being offered any more, the “once for all” sacrifice of Christ in the New Testament, especially in Hebrews, finally completed all the sin offerings that had been performed throughout

1 This article was developed from a paper for the course “Readings in the Jewish World of the New Testament,” and a thesis, both submitted to Dr. Aída Besançon Spencer in December 1, 2016, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Hamilton, MA.

2 Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1993), 395.

3 Johanan H. R. Biesenthal *ap.* Ellingworth *ad loc.*

4 Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 395.

5 William L. Lane, *Hebrews* (2 vols.; WBC; Dallas, Tex.: Word Books, 1991), 1:188-189.

6 Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hermeneia - A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible; Philadelphia, Penn.: Fortress, 1989), 223-224.

the Old Testament. Second, we learn that the old sacrificial system the Mosaic Law commanded is imperfect so that it had to be performed again and again. Because Christ offered Himself to God as a sacrifice once and for all, no more sacrifice for expiation is needed. Therefore, third, we may believe in and rely on Christ who has made the perfect sacrifice whenever we need our sins to be forgiven.

### Analysis of the Features of Perpetual Sacrifice

In the Old Testament are myriad of references to the sacrificial offerings that were regularly offered to God in several rabbinic tractates in the *Mishnah* as well as by Josephus and Philo. In particular, the second division, “Moed,” and the fifth division, “Kodashim,” of the *Mishnah* describe many features of the regular sacrifices.<sup>7</sup> Also, the Old Testament adduces two kinds of sacrifices which were perpetual: One is the daily burnt offering, and the other is the annual sin offering. God commands Moses to offer the daily atonement in Exodus 29:38-42 and Numbers 28:3-8, and keep the Day of Atonement every year with the sin offering in Exodus 30:10, Leviticus 16:34 and 23:27. These references will now be scrutinized.

#### The Daily Atonement

##### *In Ancient Jewish Documents*

In the *Mishnah*, Josephus and Philo refer to the daily atonement during the first to second centuries A.D. *Pesachim* 5:1 gives the exact time in the afternoon for the daily offering:

The daily whole offering of the afternoon generally was slaughtered at half after the eighth hour and offered up at half after the ninth hour (*m. Pesah.* 5:1 A).<sup>8</sup>

The time for the slaughtering of the victim is around 2:30 P.M., and the offering was to be at about 3:30 P.M every day. *Yoma* 1:1-2 gives instructions for the seven days before the Day of Atonement: how and what to do during the seven days:

All seven days, he [the high priest] tosses the blood, offers up the incense, trims the lamp, and offers up the head and hind leg of the daily whole offering. But on all other days, if he wanted to offer it up he offers it up (*m. Yoma* 1:2 A-B).

“On all other days” indicates every day except for the seven days before the Day of Atonement. Thus, there were always sacrifices day by day. Besides the regular burnt offering which was to be made every day, there were some more sacrifices occasionally:

Every day there were there twenty-one blasts on the shofar: three at the opening of the gates, nine at the offering of the daily whole offering of the morning, and nine at the offering of the daily whole offering of the evening. And on days on which an additional offering is made, they would add nine more (*m. Sukkah* 5:5 B-D).

There were at least two offerings a day, and there were some days that had additional offerings. All of the examples above are from the second division in the *Mishnah*. Among other illustrations, the one in *Menahot* is significant:

The continual offerings do not impair the validity of the additional offerings, and the additional offerings do not impair the validity of the continual offerings, and the additional offerings do not impair the validity of one another (*m. Menah.* 4:4 A).

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7 “Moed,” which means “set feasts,” deals with religious festivals, and “Kodashim,” which means “holy things,” deals with the temple. Stephenson Humphries-Brooks, “Mishnah,” *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (ed. Chad Brand et al.; Nashville, Tenn.: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 1138.

8 For all citations of *Mishnah*, Jacob Neusner, *The Mishnah: A New Translation* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1988), is used.

“The continual offerings” refer to the daily whole offerings, made every day and continuously. Surely, they refer to the regular burnt offerings to which Exodus 29 and Numbers 28 refer. Since the rabbis’ interpretation of the Old Testament Laws are written in the *Mishnah*,<sup>9</sup> the *Mishnah* seems to state the same things as the statements about the daily offerings in the Old Testament, sometimes with more detailed expositions.

Josephus and Philo also mention the sacrifices and their timing. In the *Jewish Antiquities*, Josephus explains:

The law requires, that out of the public expenses a lamb of the first year be killed every day, at the beginning and at the ending of the day; but on the seventh day, which is called the Sabbath, they kill two, and sacrifice them in the same manner (Josephus, *Ant.* 3.237).

But Jehoiada entrusted the care and custody of the temple to the priests and Levites, according to the appointment of King David, and enjoined them to bring their regular burnt offerings twice a day, and to offer incense according to the law ... (Josephus, *Ant.* 9.155).

And when the outer court of the temple, and the lower city, were taken, the Jews fled into the inner court of the temple, and into the upper city; but now fearing lest the Romans should hinder them from offering their daily sacrifices to God, they sent an embassy, and desired that they would only permit them to bring in beasts for sacrifices, which Herod granted, hoping they were going to yield (Josephus, *Ant.* 14.477).

Josephus seems to be well aware of the sacrificial system, and also he knows the historical incident when the Jewish regular burnt offerings were in crisis because halted by the Romans. Moreover, he wrote about the temporary pause and the failure of the daily sacrifice:

... He [Antiochus, who was called Epiphanes] also spoiled the temple, and put a stop to the constant practice of offering a daily sacrifice of expiation for three years and six months (Josephus, *J.W.* 1.32).

While he [Titus] himself had Josephus brought to him (for he had been informed that on that very day, which was the seventeenth day of Panemus, the sacrifice called “the Daily Sacrifice” had failed, and had not been offered to God for want of men to offer it, and that the people were grievously troubled at it) (Josephus, *J.W.* 6.94).

Josephus was aware of the regular burnt offering, and he realized how important it was for the Jews, seeing the Jews were in panic when Titus abolished it. Josephus’ knowledge of the daily sacrifice means that it was being conducted historically, and it was forcefully stopped at some point.

It seems that Philo understands the meaning of the daily sacrifices. He knows how to offer the sacrifice and what it means:

But you see also that the regularly occurring daily sacrifices are divided into equal portions; ... For the law commands them to offer one half of the sacrifices above mentioned early in the morning, and the other half at the time of the evening twilight, in order that God may receive his proper tribute of thanks for the blessings which are showered upon all men during the night (Philo, *Heir* 174).

And the daily sacrifice of the priests corresponds also to these facts. For it is expressly commanded to them to offer every day the tenth part of an ephah of fine wheat flour.

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<sup>9</sup> *Mishnah* is the “series of interpretations of the meaning of the Law; according to rabbinic tradition, they were given when Moses received the Law from God on Mt Sinai and were to be passed down in oral form” (Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, “Mishna” *BEB* 2:1475).

For, passing over the ninth number, the god who was only discernible by the outward senses and by opinion, they learnt to worship the tenth, who is the only living and true God (Philo, *Prelim. Studies* 103).

Philo not only cites Leviticus 6:20, but also adds some exegetical statements in *Who Is the Heir?* 174 and *On the Preliminary Studies* 103. These ancient Jewish authors show the regular burnt offerings were being made every day continuously, in agreement with the explanations in the Old Testament.

### *In the Old Testament*

Exodus 29:36 seems to refer to the regular atonement. After telling Moses what to prepare for the consecration of the priests, God commands Moses to perform the sin offering with a bull every day. Because the ordination of the priests took seven days (29:35), however, it could not be called the actual “regular offerings.”

The “regular offering” in the true sense of the words follows in the subsequent verses (29:38-42, cf. Num 28:3-8). The priests offer two lambs as the burnt offerings, one in the morning and the other in the evening, every day, or literally, “between the two evenings.” This daily offering was the basis of the whole sacrificial system in the Old Testament,<sup>10</sup> and one of the most important parts of the Jewish cult.<sup>11</sup> With the lambs, they were to give the meal offerings and the drink offerings since the consumption symbolized God’s acceptance of his people.<sup>12</sup> Because this daily offering was neither a sin nor a guilt offering, the priests poured out the blood at the base of the altar and did not eat the flesh of the victim but burned it.

There are many Scriptures which say that the regular burnt offerings were being offered (e.g., 2 Kings 16:15-16; 1 Chron 16:39-40; 2 Chron 2:4; 13:11). The halt of the regular burnt offering was treated as a great crisis by the people of Israel (Dan 8:11-13; 11:31; 12:11), because they believed that by means of the offering they could meet with God (Exod 29:42-43) and receive his blessing.<sup>13</sup> This regular burnt offering was to be done at the entrance to the tent of meeting. The phrase “meeting with God” is the key which indicates the main function of the tabernacle.<sup>14</sup> Other sacrifices could be offered after the regular burnt offering, even on the Day of Atonement (Num 29:11), because it was the foundational sacrifice which opened the way and allowed them to meet God.

### **The Annual Atonement**

#### *In Ancient Jewish Documents*

Ancient Rabbinic literatures, Josephus, and Philo refer to the Day of Atonement. In *Yoma*, which is in the second division of the *Mishnah*, the Old Testament passages which illustrate the Day of Atonement are quoted four times (*m. Yoma* 3:8; 4:2; 6:2; 8:9). One of the examples follows:

as it is written in the Torah of Moses, your servant, “For on this day shall atonement be made for you to cleanse you. From all your sins shall you be clean before the Lord” (*m. Yoma* 4:2 F).

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10 Philip J. Budd, *Numbers* (WBC 5; Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1984), 315.

11 George Buchanan Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Numbers* (ICC; New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1903), 408.

12 Douglas Stuart, *Exodus* (NAC; Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2006), 630.

13 L. Michael Morales, *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord?: A Biblical Theology of the Book of Leviticus* (NSBT 37; ed. D. A. Carson; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 143.

14 Ralph W. Klein, “Back to the Future: The Tabernacle in the Book of Exodus,” *Int* 50.3 (1996): 268.

The sentences in the quotation mark are from Leviticus 16:30. The other quotations of, and references to, the Day of Atonement in *Yoma* occur mainly with detailed explanations, especially featuring the restrictions and the warnings, about the rites on that day:

But on the eve of the Day of Atonement at dusk they did not let him eat much, for food brings on sleep (*m. Yoma* 1:4 B-C).

On the Day of Atonement it is forbidden to eat, drink, bathe, put on any sort of oil, put on a sandal, or engage in sexual relations (*m. Yoma* 8:1 A).

He who says, “I shall sin and repent, sin and repent”—they give him no chance to do repentance. ... “I will sin and the Day of Atonement will atone,”—the Day of Atonement does not atone (*m. Yoma* 8:9 C).

There is no direct mention of the timing of the sacrifice in *Yoma*, but all explanations about the Day of Atonement imply the perpetual sacrifices. Most of the statements about the Day of Atonement seem to be current references, because the tense of the verbs are in the present. For example, there are the verbs “is” in *Yoma* 8:1 A and “does” in 8:9 C. Besides, *Yoma* cites detailed instructions about the Day of Atonement, even the things that the Old Testament does not say, such as the prohibited behaviors on that day in *Yoma* 8:1 A and the misuse of the chance to repent in *Yoma* 8:9 C. Any deliberate sin with the expectation of forgiveness on the Day of Atonement would not be forgiven. However, the references to the Day of Atonement occurring at the same time as the Sabbath and the New Year in the *Menahot* allude to the repetitive character of the Day of Atonement and the sacrifices which were made on that day:

If the Day of Atonement coincides with the Sabbath, the loaves are divided in the evening. If it coincided with the eve of the Sabbath, the goat of the Day of Atonement is eaten in the evening (*m. Menah.* 11:7 R-S).

In the case of two festival days of the New Year that is, if the New Year began on Thursday and the Day of Atonement fell on the following Sabbath, it is eaten eleven days after being baked (*m. Menah.* 11:9 I).

Various cases of the Day of Atonement depending on the days of the New Year clearly indicate that it is the annual feast. Moreover, the reference to the regulation that only the high priest can enter the Holy of Holies shows that the main event on that day was the sacrifice which was held annually:

The Holy of Holies is more holy than [the sanctuary]. For only the high priest on the Day of Atonement at the time of the service enters there (*m. Kelim* 1:9 E-F).

Another Rabbinic writing, *Mekilta*, mentions the Day of Atonement as the day that brings forgiveness:

... He said to him: Master! Have you heard the four distinctions in atonement which R. Ishmael used to explain? He said to him: Yes. One scriptural passage says: “Return, O backsliding children” (Jer 3:14), from which we learn that repentance brings forgiveness. And another scriptural passage says: “For on this day shall atonement be made for you” (Lev 16:30), from which we learn that the Day of Atonement brings forgiveness. ... (*Mek. Tractate Bahodesh* 7:8).<sup>15</sup>

Though it does not refer to how often the sacrifice should be made, the term “the Day of Atonement” itself lets the readers know that it was once a year.

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<sup>15</sup> Jacob Zallel Lauterbach, *Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael* (New ed.; Philadelphia, Penn.: Jewish Publication Society, 2004).

The only mention in Josephus is clear that the sacrifice on the Day of Atonement was to be once a year:

However, the high priest did not wear these garments at other times, but a more plain habit; he only did it when he went into the most sacred part of the temple, which he did but once a year; on that day when our custom is for all of us to keep a fast to God (Josephus, *J. W.* 5.236).

The prohibition of work on the Day of Atonement is explained by Josephus:

Nor had the Romans succeeded in their endeavors, had not Pompey taken notice of the seventh days, on which the Jews abstain from all sorts of work on a religious account, and raised his bank, but restrained his soldiers from fighting on those days; for the Jews only acted defensively on sabbath days (*J. W.* 1.146).<sup>16</sup>

Philo also refers to the Day of Atonement, that it happens every year, and explains the reasons for the feast:

Indeed, it is a proof of what has been said, what happens every year on the day called the day of atonement; for on the day the people are enjoined “to take by lot two goats, one for the Lord, and one to be the scapegoat;” that is to say, two reasons, the one in accordance with God, the other consistent with creation. ... (Philo, *Planting* 61).

Philo adds more information on the Day of Atonement that the Old Testament passages do not explain. People enjoyed the expiation of their sins on that day because God ordered them to do so.

In *On the Special Laws* 2, Philo introduces ten festivals. After briefly introducing ten feasts (*Spec. Laws* 2.41), he illustrates each of them. Compared to the eight feasts in Leviticus 23, Philo added two more feasts, which are “the everyday festival” and “the new moon festival.” All of the ten festivals are annual, the ninth, the fast festival, includes the annual sacrifice (*Spec. Laws* 2.193-203). People were to fast waiting for the expiation of God on that day, which is the annual Day of Atonement. Josephus and Philo were well aware of the Day of Atonement as well as the daily atonement.

### *In the Old Testament*

Exodus 30:10 refers to the annual atonement for the first time in the Bible. God instructs how to make the altar of incense in 30:1-9, and then briefly refers to the annual atonement offering in 30:10. Once a year it must be done with blood for the atonement of sins. God commands the same annual sacrifice of Moses again in Leviticus 16:34. It should be a lasting ordinance and be made once a year for all the sins of the Israelites. God said that this everlasting statute is to be held on the tenth day of the seventh month every year (Lev 16:29). God did not directly say that this offering is to be done on the Day of Atonement in Exodus 30:10 and Leviticus 16:34. Nevertheless, these references indicate the offerings that should be offered every year on the Day of Atonement.

God says that the tenth day of the seventh month is “the Day of Atonement” in Leviticus 23:27. It is called *מִיּוֹם הַיָּכֻפֶּה*, which can be translated literally into “the day of atonements.” The plural in the Hebrew language expresses the superlative, so “the day of atonements” can be said to refer to “a day of full and complete expiation or atonement.”<sup>17</sup> The legislation of the Day of Atonement follows right after the death of Aaron’s two sons (Lev 16:1, cf. 10:1-20) and opens with Aaron’s being forbidden to enter the holy place at any time (16:2).<sup>18</sup> The reason for the timing of the reference to the Day of Atonement is to warn the high priest not to conduct the duties by their

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<sup>16</sup> There is not direct mention of the Day of Atonement. Albeit, the reference to the “sabbath days” includes the Day of Atonement since it may be called “Sabbath of Sabbaths” (Lev 16:31).

<sup>17</sup> John E. Hartley, *Leviticus* (WBC; Dallas, Tex.: Word Books, 1992), 387-388.

<sup>18</sup> Morales, *Mountain of the Lord*, 201.

own will but in accordance with the regulations which are made by God's will.<sup>19</sup> The high priest could enter into the holy place on the appointed occasions such as the Day of Atonement. It shows that God holds the initiative, making the rules on the expiation of the people, because the one who forgives their sins is God himself.

One trait of the celebration is the denial of oneself. God mentions it three times (Lev 23:27, 29, 32), and it seems to be connected with the prohibition of labor (23:28, 30, 31, 32).<sup>20</sup> When God forgives the sins of the people, they should deny themselves and should not work at all. Anyone who does not deny himself will be cut off from the people, and anyone who works will be destroyed. With these warnings, God emphasizes that the Day of Atonement is the Sabbath of rest for the people (16:31; 23:32). The fact that breaking the order not to work causes death is severer than being cut off from the people due to the offense of the command to deny oneself showing the crucial importance of the Sabbath.<sup>21</sup> All the people could do on the Day of Atonement was to offer the sacrifice and to deny themselves, refraining from work, and then it can be said that they would have kept "the Sabbath Day holy." This was what God wanted the people regularly to do once a year on the Day of Atonement.

In summary, there are two kinds of regular sacrifices in some ancient Jewish treatises, and those statements seem to correspond with the instructions given to the Israelites in the Old Testament. One is the daily atonement which is called the regular burnt offering. It is to be made twice a day, in the morning and in the evening, and represents the encounter between God and the people. The other is the annual atonement which is to be made on the Day of Atonement, which is the tenth day of the seventh month every year. It is to be followed after the regular burnt offering and accompanied by self-denial and rest. The fact that the worshipers needed to offer sacrifices regularly and repeatedly implies the imperfect feature of the sacrificial rituals.

### The Limit of the Repetitive Atonement

In addition to the constant repetition of the sacrifices in several Old Testament passages and some ancient Jewish documents, complicated and detailed instructions how to perform the rituals also hint at the deficiency of the sacrifices. For example, there are several complex indications how to offer the sacrifices in the *Mishnah*:

"Then he went out and prepared his ram and the ram of the people, and the seven unblemished lambs a year old," the words of R. Eliezer. R. Aqiba says, "They were offered with the daily whole offering made at dawn" (*m. Yoma* 7:3 D-E).

The sacrificial ritual itself was not perfect so that it could be blemished at any time by what the Law indicated. Due to the imperfections, the worshipers should do their best to follow all instructions of what God had commanded.

Indeed, it is a proof of what has been said, what happens every year on the day called the day of atonement; for on that day the people are enjoined "to take by lot two goats, one for the Lord, and one to be the scapegoat;" ... (Philo, *Planting* 61).

Both Josephus and Philo mentioned the regular offerings that the Jews executed in various aspects and the fact that those sacrifices were repeatedly offered proves its incompleteness.

Furthermore, Philo seems to have recognized that the limitation of the sacrificial ritual itself:

... but it is impossible to show gratitude to God in a genuine manner, by those means which people in general think the only ones, namely offerings and sacrifices; for the

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19 Hartley, *Leviticus*, 234.

20 Mark F. Rooker, *Leviticus* (vol. 31A; NAC; Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2000), 289.

21 Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 3B; New York: Doubleday, 2001), 2024.

whole world could not be a temple worthy to be raised to his honour, except by means of praises and hymns, and those too must be such as are sung, not by loud voices, but by the invisible and pure mind, which shall raise the shout and song to him (Philo, *Planting* 126).

Philo is contending that the repeated sacrifices cannot please God, and suggests spiritual offerings as an alternative to the ritual of the altar.<sup>22</sup> Philo's view seems to be the opposite of what other Jews expressed in the first-century Jewish world, because the other Jews were doing their best to obey the Law and give sacrificial offerings according to the Law to please God.

Jesus also granted some Jewish leaders that they looked beautiful on the outside, which might include that they were good at offering the sacrifices regularly (Matt 23:27). In contrast, Philo is casting an entirely opposite perspective on the sacrifices of other Jews who were making all efforts to carry out their duties, by saying that the more important thing is their internal attitude, not their ritual:

For if the man who made the offerings was foolish and ignorant, the sacrifices were no sacrifices, the victims were not sacred or hallowed, the prayers were ill-omened, and liable to be answered by utter destruction, for even when they appear to be received, they produce no remission of sins but only a reminding of them. But if the man who offers the sacrifice be bold and just, then the sacrifice remains firm, even if the flesh of the victim be consumed, or rather, I might say, even if no victim be offered up at all; for what can be a real and true sacrifice but the piety of a soul which loves God? The gratitude of which is blessed with immortality, and without being recorded in writing is engraved on a pillar in the mind of God, being made equally everlasting with the sun, and moon, and the universal world (Philo, *Moses* 2.107-8).

According to Ronald Williams, Philo "suggests that where the worshipper's heart is pure and just no material sacrifice is required. If the worshipper is truly devoted to God that is all that is needed, a spiritual sacrifice, 'the devotion of a soul dear to God.'"<sup>23</sup> While Williams points out that any kind of sacrifice is not needed in Philo's view, still Philo does not deny the necessity of the physical sacrifices according to the wider context of his writings. Philo puts stress on the attitude of the performer more than on the ceremony itself.

In the last quarter of the first book of *On the Special Laws* (1.259-345), Philo seems to believe that the motive of the worshipers determines the value of the sacrifices.<sup>24</sup> He is likely to be acknowledging the limit of the sacrificial ritual, and trying to figure out what the Law truly wants the people of God to achieve through the perpetual performances.

In brief, while almost all of the ancient Jewish writers do not seem to recognize the limit of the old sacrificial system, but merely echo in their own writings what the Law said and what their ancestors have written, Philo has the more advanced idea that more important than the ritual itself is the attitude of the worshipers. However, he also does not have any measure to cease the perpetual sacrifices.

### Analysis of Perpetual Sacrifice in Hebrews

Now, it is time to take a look at what the author of Hebrews says about the regular sacrifices according to the Law. The text of Hebrews 10:1-4 contains the centerpiece of Hebrews' thought on the perpetual sacrifices which were described in the Old Testament, and 10:14 condensedly suggests

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22 James Drummond, *Philo Judaeus: Or, the Jewish-Alexandrian Philosophy* (2 vols.; London: Williams and Norgate, 1888), 2:319.

23 Ronald Williams, *Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 166.

24 Erwin R. Goodenough, *By Light, Light* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1935), 110-111.

the other sacrifice which is perfect as an alternative.<sup>25</sup>

## Historical Context

Hebrews is a careful exposition of the impact of Jesus' sacrifice on the significance of the Old Testament sacrificial ritual. It was written by an unknown author who was not in Rome to the Jewish Christians between A.D. 65 and 70 to prevent the readers from apostasy in spite of the severe persecution and hardships.

Even though the third-century Chester Beatty Papyrus (P46), dated to A.D. 200, locates the book between Romans and 1 Corinthians<sup>26</sup> and Eusebius and Origen thought that Paul wrote the epistle (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.14.2-3; 6.25.11-14), several pieces of evidence disprove Paul's authorship. The author of Hebrews leaves out both his or her name and a salutation in the beginning, while all of Paul's letters include his name at least once. Besides, unlike Paul, who asserts that he has received the Gospel directly from Christ by revelation in 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 and Galatians 1:11-12, the author of Hebrews identifies him or herself as a second-generation recipient (Heb 2:3). Some scholars have suggested several other names such as Apollos, Barnabas, Luke, Priscilla, Silas, and so on. The issue on the authorship is still controversial and the statement of Origen, "But who wrote the epistle, in truth, God knows" (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.25.14) should be remembered.

The title of the book, *Pros Hebraious*, is found in all the Greek manuscripts.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, several verses such as 1:1-14; 3:6; 4:14 and 10:23 disclose the fact that the first readers were Jewish Christians who were familiar with the Old Testament and Jewish tradition who were second generation believers who heard the message of salvation from people who heard it directly from Jesus (2:3).

The author's reference to a third party, namely, "those from Italy" (*apo tēs Italias*, 13:24) who greet the readers, reveals the likelihood that the readers were not living in Italy at the time of writing. They might have been experiencing temptation from within to apostatize or regress to the Jewish religion (13:9), or persecution to abandon their faith from outside (10:32-34; 12:4).<sup>28</sup> Hebrews' author regards all the hardships as the disciplines of God the Father toward his children (12:7).

It is difficult to trace the precise date when the book was written due to the lack of any clear evidence. A tentative hypothesis may be suggested through several external and internal pieces of evidence. The use of Hebrews in 1 *Clement* written in A.D. 96 offers the *terminus ad quem*, and the *terminus a quo* can be assumed as A.D. 49 when the expulsion of the Jews from Rome (Acts 18:2) happened (Suetonius, *Claud.* 25.4), because "those from Italy" in Hebrews 13:24 possibly indicates a group of Jewish Christians who had been expelled from Rome in A.D. 49 and were living somewhere else. Moreover, the author casts definitive evidence of date with asking, "otherwise, would they [sacrifices] not have ceased being offered?" (Heb 10:2). This "affirmative-response-expected" question offers crucial support of the fact that the sacrificial offering was active at the time Hebrews was written,<sup>29</sup> and if so, Hebrews should have been written before the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in A.D. 70.

Around the time of Hebrews' being written, in between A.D. 49 and 70, there were two known

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25 For a deeper understanding of the text, this section will concisely explore the historical context of the whole epistle and the literary context of Hebrews 10. Based on the historical and literary contexts, how Hebrews depicts the sacrifices that have been continued according to the Law and the sacrifices that have been completed at once will be studied.

26 D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2005), 600.

27 Theodor Zahn, *Introduction to the New Testament* (trans. John Moore Trout et al.; 3 vols.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1909), 2:294.

28 See also, Suetonius, *Claud.* 25.4. "Those from Italy" might be the ones who were expelled from Rome in A.D. 49.

29 Carson and Moo, *Introduction*, 606-7.

persecutions. One was a mild oppression under Claudius in A.D. 49,<sup>30</sup> and the other was a severe persecution by Nero in A.D. 65.<sup>31</sup> If the author was warning the readers not to give their faith up, the persecution that the author had in mind should have been the latter one due to its inclemency. Then, A.D. 65 becomes the earliest possible date of Hebrews.

The only clue from where the epistle was written is Hebrews 13:24, noting that people from Italy send the recipients greetings. Because the people who left Italy and are not in Italy are with the author, it can be concluded that the author was not in Italy at the time of writing. Therefore, Hebrews must have been written between A.D. 65 and 70, and at least not from Rome.

The recipients were facing persecution (10:32; 12:4) and confronting the temptation to fall away from the faith. The author warns them against apostasy through the warnings and the exhortations to overcome their hardships.

### Literary Context

Instead of a greeting, the author begins this epistle immediately with the exposition of Jesus Christ who is the revelation of God (1:1-3). He proposes a triparted identity for Jesus, emphasizing his superiority, eternal high-priesthood, and divine/human mediatorship.

First of all, Jesus Christ is superior to angels (1:5-2:18) and Moses (3:1-4:13). Moreover, Jesus is the great high priest in the order of Melchizedek (4:14-7:28).

In this second major section of Hebrews, the author argues that Jesus Christ is the great high priest (4:14-5:10). Based on this fact, he exhorts the addressees not to fall away from their faith (5:11-6:12), because God's promise is faithful (6:13-6:20). Although already mentioning Melchizedek earlier (5:6, 10), the author has not explained in detail, apparently because he thought the readers were slow to learn (5:11). However, he now again refers to Melchizedek at the end of chapter 6 (6:20) and through the whole chapter 7. Christ is "another priest like Melchizedek" (7:15, NIV) and "a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek" (7:17). Hebrews 7:25 suggests the great benefit that God's people can have due to the high-priesthood of Jesus Christ.

Finally, Jesus is the mediator of the new covenant that is the better covenant than the old covenant which is imperfect (8:1-10:18).

With these three aspects to the identity of Jesus, the readers could be encouraged to keep their faith in the midst of persecutions and temptations. The author gives some spiritual exhortations emphasizing faith and perseverance before concluding with a sermon (10:19-12:29). In conclusion, the author exhorts the readers to have a disciplined life with strong faith and greets them with a benediction (13:1-25).

The passage that is being studied, Hebrews 10:1-4 and 14, is in the middle of the whole epistle. The exposition on the second part of the identity of Christ as the great high priest in the order of Melchizedek (4:14-7:28) reaches its climax in this passage.

The focused passage of this study, 10:1-4 and 14, belongs to the third part which is the central exposition (5:11-10:39) and acts as the conclusion of the first three parts (1:5-2:18; 3:1-5:10; 5:11-10:39) which can be said to include the theoretical parts before the application exhortations. Hebrews 10:1-4 and 14 may be translated:

For the law, having a shadow of the good things which are coming and not the image itself of the matters, can never make perfect those who approach by the same sacrifice which they offer continually year after year. Otherwise, would not they have stopped being offered since the worshipers, having been purified once for all, would no longer have any consciousness of sins? But in these sacrifices, there is a reminder of sin year

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30 Suetonius, *Claudius* 25.4.

31 Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.44.6.

after year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins (10:1-4)...For by one offering He (Christ) has perfected for all time those who are made holy (10:14).

The first half of Hebrews chapter 10 sums up all the previous arguments of the author, and selected passages like 10:1-4 and 14 appear to be the condensed statement of the author's conclusion before the exhortation (10:19-12:29). After stating in resolute tones that there is no longer any need for an offering for sin (*ouketi prosphora peri hamartias*), the author moves on to the encouragement part and then concludes his sermon with practical exhortations (13:1-17), a benediction and final greetings (13:18-25).

### What Hebrews 10:1-4, 14 Tells about Sacrifice

Hebrews 10:1-18 draws the author's final evaluation of the regular sacrificial system and suggests the "once for all" sacrifice done by Christ completes it.

Hebrews 10:1 begins with the word *gar* which can be rendered as "for," and it shows the reason why the annual sacrifices cannot make the worshipers perfect: The Law, the text explains, is not the real image but merely a shadow of the good things. Due to the flaws of the Law, the same sacrifices repeated every year that the Law commanded to offer cannot make the worshipers holy.

After emphasizing the insufficiency of the sacrifices by the Law through the conditional clause in 10:2, "otherwise, would not they have stopped being offered since the worshipers, having been purified once for all, would no longer have any consciousness of sins?," the author briefly expounds the exact reason why the sacrifices should be offered year after year in verses 3 and 4. The worshipers should have offered the blood of the animals every year because the sacrifices were an annual reminder of sins, not of a mediator or a tool for the expiation of sins (10:3). The blood of bulls and goats do not have any power to cleanse or remove sins (10:4).

Instead of the blood of animals or the perpetual sacrifices that cannot take away sins, the sacrifice that can bring forgiveness at once and for ever is being presented (10:14). The author expresses the key feature of Christ's sacrifice differently than is elsewhere done in Hebrews with a single word, either *ephapax* or *hapax*, that each can be rendered as "once for all,"<sup>32</sup> but using instead several words, *mia* ("one") and *eis to diēnekēs* ("for all time"), together in 10:14 to put stress on the perfection of the sacrifice of Christ. As Hugh Montefiore argues, this section not only sums up the previous arguments but also emphasizes "the one perfect and sufficient self-oblation of Christ compared with the multiplicity of levitical sacrifices."<sup>33</sup>

In summary, Hebrews maintains that the annual sacrifices cannot make anyone perfect because the blood of animals is not capable of expiating sins (10:1-4). Therefore, no sacrifice for sin is needed any longer because Christ has made the believers perfect forever by one perfect sacrifice (10:14, 18).

### Conclusion

In ancient times, the Jewish people offered sacrifices again and again according to the Law. Several passages in the Old Testament prove the fact that performing sacrificial rituals every day and every year was God's commandment through Moses. They kept obeying the Law literally in the Second-Temple period. Some ancient Jewish documents such as the *Mishnah* and the works of Josephus and Philo also state that these regular sacrifices were being performed at that time.

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32 In Hebrews, both *ephapax* and *hapax* are used several times to express the perfect feature of Christ's sacrifice. *Ephapax* is used three times (7:27; 9:7, 12; 10:10), and *hapax* appears four times (6:4; 9:26; 10:2). The concept of "once for all" is common and important in Hebrews because it discloses the perfect feature of Christ's sacrifice which gives the readers the boldness to overcome any kind of hardship.

33 Hugh Montefiore, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Harper's New Testament Commentaries; New York, N.Y.: Harper & Row Publishers, 1964), 163.

There was a plethora of technicalities over how the ritual should be conducted and what was allowed and prohibited. The Jewish people seem to have thought that they could please God through the sacrifices, but the requirement of its perpetual performance illustrates its deficiency.

Philo of Alexandria seems to have been a step ahead than the others in mentioning the importance of the worshipers' attitude as well as the ritual itself. It is likely that he acknowledged the imperfection of the old sacrifices because he added the intrinsic condition which was the heartfelt attitude of the worshiper to the sacrificial ritual. However, he was also in the flow of the need of perpetual sacrifices since he still insisted that the Mosaic Law was "the most fruitful image and likeness of the constitution of the whole world" (*Moses* 2.52).

On the contrary, Hebrews suggests an entirely new sacrificial system. As Craig Koester says, "Hebrews does not simply argue that blood sacrifice should be replaced with the worshipers' deeds of kindness"<sup>34</sup> as Philo also thought. Hebrews contends that no more regular sacrifices are needed because one perfect sacrifice has been offered to God by Christ. In light of the theme of the whole epistle, therefore, Christians should recall the perfect sacrifice that Christ offered once for all whenever they confront any hardship in their lives of faith. If Christians remember the superiority of Christ who forgave them through the once-for-all sacrifice, they should not fall away from the faith because Christ is Almighty God so that He can give them strength to endure any hardships in their lives.

Jae-Seung Lim is a Ph.D. student in the New Testament at McMaster Divinity College, ON, Canada. He had been enrolled in M.A. in Religion at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Hamilton, MA while serving as a Byington Scholar for Dr. Aída Besançon Spencer from Fall 2016 to Spring 2017. He also finished the Th.M. (*Cum Laude*) in New Testament studies at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in 2015.

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34 Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AYB 36; New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2008), 436.

Review of *Evangelicals Around the World: A Global Handbook for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* edited by Brian C. Stiller, Todd M. Johnson, Karen Stiller, Mark Hutchinson, eds., (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2015)

WILLIAM DAVID SPENCER

This ambitious book by The World Evangelical Alliance seeks “to define and outline the life and history” of the estimated “600 million...Evangelicals...around the world” (1). For readers who comb *Christianity Today*’s website and magazine, World Vision and other mission agency reports, the David Jang-related *Christian Post*, and other sources for glimpses into the activities, impact, plight, and success of global Evangelicalism, this book is a Godsend—literally. The hardcover by HarperCollins affiliate Thomas Nelson looks a lot like a textbook, with color pictures throughout and succinct articles (the longest about 15 pages), replete with charts and graphs, accessibly constructed to distill for readers orienting summaries that are ordinarily difficult for non-specialists to locate. It even has eight pages for notes at the end. Where else could one locate a breakdown of “Christians and Evangelicals by country in Asia,” comparing the populations, number and percentage of Christians, and specifically of Evangelicals for 51 Asian countries, all on two carefully laid out and accessible pages (316-317)? Or, a graphic summary that tells us at a glance the comparison of the percentage of Muslims to Christians in Africa, Africa’s percentage of the world’s global population, the growth rate of its Christians and of its missions, and even more on a single page, drawn from statistics compiled by the World Christian Database and Operation World, among other sources? It’s like having all the notes one takes at an Urbana conference codified and explained under one cover.

The articles are all accessible and read like a great adventure story, which is, essentially, what the mission movement is: God’s search and rescue operation across the world. Sentences like this one from John Charles Kerr abound, “Meanwhile, the gospel was moving northward into Zambia’s Barotseland from the south” but “such initiatives from the South were curtailed when, in 1890, Cecil Rhodes hoisted the British flag at Fort Salisbury and a full British protectorate was established over the entire region. The chiefs were pushed to the sidelines. Migrants were left with the task of advancing the gospel” (258). The writing is well done and well edited (notice the strong, active verbs, “moving,” “curtailed,” “hoisted,” “pushed,” and the paratactic sentences describing the impact on the chiefs and the migrants) and it keeps the great adventure of this all pulsing for today’s Christian readers who want “based on true events” labeled on all their Christian films and even their fiction. This is better than both because, in one full sweep, it chronicles the current state of God reaching the world through faithful people. And it does it in a remarkably slim volume, despite its 422 page size. The paper, though of good quality, is very thin, so the book does not look as long as it actually is.

The editors have gathered an excellent cadre of contributors from around the entire globe. Many of these are evangelical household names like Miriam Adeney, Timothy George, Ron Sider. Others are well known to those who follow the global Christian movement like India’s indefatigable scholar Ken Gnanakan; or Brazil’s C. Rosalee Velloso Ewell, executive director of the Theological Commission for the World Evangelical Alliance; or Argentinian educator, pastor, writer Pablo Alberto Deiros; or the Israeli Arab scholar Azar Ajaj, president of Nazareth Theological Seminary; or Wycliffe’s Seed Company former president Roy Peterson, who is today’s president of the American Bible Society; or editor Mark Hutchinson, whose many works on global missions include the *Cambridge Short History of Global Evangelicalism*. And still others are think tank scholars like Larry Eskridge of Wheaton College’s Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals, whose recent book *God’s Forever Family: Jesus Movement in America*, is the current definer of this

important revival movement, and my colleagues here at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, editor Todd Johnson, renowned for his work on such massive and authoritative compilations as *The World's Religion in Figures*, *Atlas of Global Christianity*, *World Christian Encyclopedia*, and, of course, his service as editor of the World Christian Database, well-known Hispanic Biblical scholar Aida Besançon Spencer, author of the definitive work *Paul's Literary Style* and of *Beyond the Curse: Women Called to Ministry* (first published in 1985 by Thomas Nelson and still in print from Baker), and Chinese missiologist Kevin Xiyi Yao, former professor at the China Graduate School of Theology in Hong Kong.

In short, this book is a treasure. It supplies information that all of us need to know and normally are frustrated to find, as we search everywhere, gathering facts up in unrelated bits and pieces we try to synthesize. But, along with its great contribution as the go-to information source, this book is inspiring. Missions is how God is reconciling the world (2 Cor 5:18-20) and it is the fulfillment of the Great Commission that all of us have been given (Matt 28:18-20), so it lets us know what to pray, and who to support, and even where to go on our own short term mission trips.

Rev. Dr. William David Spencer is Distinguished Adjunct Professor of Theology and the Arts at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary's Boston Center for Urban Ministerial Education, founder of its Athanasian Teaching Scholars Program, cofounder of its Africanus Guild Ph.D. Support program, and cofounder and coeditor of *Africanus Journal*. He is the author or editor of 14 books and hundreds of articles, chapters in books by others, editorials, stories, poems. His forthcoming book, edited with Jeanne DeFazio, is *Empowering English Language Learners: Strategies of Christian Educators* (2018). He blogs with his wife, the Rev. Dr. Aida Besançon Spencer, at [aandwspencer.com](http://aandwspencer.com) (Applying Biblical Truths Today).

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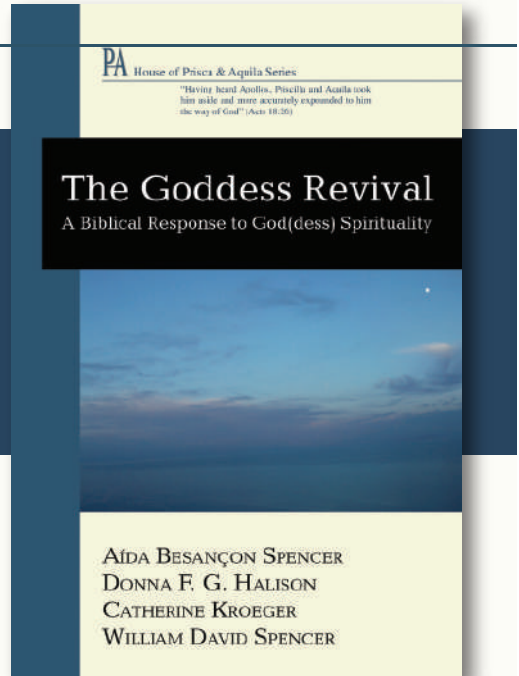
*The Goddess Revival* is a Christianity Today Book Award Winner, 1996.

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**Review of *Berkeley Street Theatre: How Improvisation and Street Theater Emerged as a Christian Outreach to the Culture of the Time* edited by Jeanne C. DeFazio (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2017)**

JEFFREY S. MILLER

While the Palace of Versailles and the tombs of ancient Egypt offer spectacular glimpses into the lives and times of powerful past rulers, a very different but equally satisfying pleasure is had when visiting the Geffrye in London, a little-known gem-of-a-museum that allows you to see how ordinary people lived in specific eras and get a taste of their home life. Such is the kind of delight to be had in the compilation, *Berkeley Street Theatre*. Part socio-religious history, part personal testimony, part apologetic, part dramatic calling, this volume does not seek to dazzle or impress with scale or reach but instead inspire with personal touch and experiential insight.

Sandwiched between David Gill's succinct forward on the CWLF (Christian World Liberation Front) context out of which the Berkeley Street Theatre emerged and William David Spencer's substantive survey of the Jesus Movement and its creative output, is the meat of the book, a collection of reflections from artists (actors, directors, writers, musicians) who were part of the "guerrilla theatre" of the Berkeley Street Theatre back in the late 1960's and early 1970's (Part One) and representative examples of those who are involved in some form of it now (Part Two). Those artists looking back give us a sense of their individual journeys to the company, the kind of pieces they created and performed, the day-to-day challenges of the work and the rewarding exchanges they had with their audiences. Not surprisingly, the contemporary artist essays do much of the same. What binds them together is a clear, humble commitment to share Jesus through poignant, quality drama, mostly on the street, where audiences are not expecting them and an equal commitment to help any others do the same.

One chapter on contemporary companies in Part 2 is particularly notable for the thoughtful breadth of its discussion – J.M.D. Myers' piece on the Still Small Theatre Troupe. (Full disclosure: the writer of this chapter is a former student and I found my own name mentioned in her essay.) Myers writes lucidly about how the Still Small Theatre Troupe mission is both similar to and different from that of the Berkeley Street Theatre. Grounded on sound biblical principles as well as an astute understanding of drama, human nature, and the current cultural milieu, the model of Still Small Theatre Troupe is impressive in its "other" orientation, from audience to partnering organizations to fellow artists. The name Still Small Theatre may say something about its overall aesthetic, but there is nothing little about the heart and commitment from which it springs, much like its predecessor, the Berkeley Street Theatre.

The cumulative impact of the book is a bit of a mish-mash. In fairness, it never makes claim to be an exhaustive historical record, a full-scale investigative report or a paradigm for guerrilla theatre. One might wish for fuller descriptions of productions (or possibly the inclusion of actual scripts!), more stories about the life-changing impact of the street theatre on audiences, a broader survey of other companies doing similar work today around the world (I am reminded of a recent encounter with a Korean theatre company doing guerrilla theatre on the streets of the Fringe Festival in Edinburgh, Scotland.) But this book is a look, a peak, an introduction, and, ultimately, a challenge.

In their very personal approach, the reflective essays frequently raise critical issues both Christian audiences and artists need to consider, such as Susan Dockery Andrews' insightful note on "why it was so easy to portray destruction and negativity but much more difficult to portray the good, true, and sacred as many-faceted and full-bodied" (31). And, in the end, the reader is left with a distinct sense that the emergence of the Berkeley Street Theatre during a pivotal time of revival

and great social upheaval, chaos and division, was nothing less than Providential for it was, though localized, an integral part of a great conversation on major ideas, including religion, politics, and gender, and the dramatic work was done with grace and rigor, upheld by prayer. By the same token, it leaves the reader with a longing for such ideas to be openly discussed again, with candor, civility, and artistic integrity. We've lost any sense of "the public square" and are all the poorer for it. Perhaps what we need today is the courage and creativity of another guerrilla theatre movement!

Jeffrey S. Miller was the co-founder and artistic director of The Refreshment Committee of St. Paul, MN, where he oversaw the creation and development of new works, including *Gloria*, *Hot Under the Collar* and *Forgiving Typhoid Mary*. For 17 years, he taught at Bethel University and was a writer/director for the live radio broadcast, *Sunday Nite!* on the Skylite Satellite Network before joining Lamb's Players Theatre in San Diego, where he and his wife, Mary, worked for 6 years. For Theatre for the Thirsty in St. Paul, MN, Jeff recently directed a new passion play, *Kingdom Undone*. Currently, he chairs the Theatre Arts Department of Gordon College in Wenham, MA, where he has directed classics such as *Tartuffe* and *Love's Labour's Lost*, musicals such as *The Mikado* and *Godspell*, new works such as *Blood and Gifts*, *Metamorphoses* and *Amadeus*, and devised plays such as *On Common Ground* and *Growing Up Christian*.

**Review of *The Zealot Myth (and Other Fables about Jesus and the Bible)* by Ron Snyder (Bellingham, WA: CreateSpace Independent Publishing, 2016)**

Stuart R. Imbach

*The Zealot Myth* seeks to answer the question, “Who is Jesus?” It is for those who know the historical Jesus and want a knowledgeable book to offer their non-believing friends that answers the questions raised by current authors who portray a fake Jesus under the guise of “fresh scholarship” and postmodern thought. It is ideal for small group study to prepare believers to be able to “provide a lucid answer to anyone who asks you to explain and defend the hope and faith you have and respond with gentleness and respect” (1 Pet 3:15). The author, a teacher, has degrees in psychology, philosophy, and history and has read widely, seeking to answer Jesus’s question, “Who do you say that I am?” for himself in the context of today’s world, culture, and academic practice. He has not only read widely but sought to evaluate what he has discovered through the tests of practical application and experience. He helpfully shares with the reader the process he works through to reach his conclusions. He shows that the beliefs, methodology, and assumptions of the Jesus Seminar and similar liberal theologies are not reached the typical way historians do their work. Their conclusions are often just the opposite of orthodox Christian beliefs (34).

This project is important to Ron Snyder because he believes that everyone’s life, in the here and now and the hereafter, hinges on what each believes about Jesus. Most of his forty years as a Christian have been engaged in the study of the Bible using commentaries and other guides to understand the Scriptures. This has led him to the conclusion that the Jesus of history is the same as the Christ of faith. Ron illustrates his conclusions by observing the work and methods of various scholars like Rudolf Bultmann who are seeking to “demythologize” the Jesus of the four Gospels, The Jesus Seminar team and other liberal theologian/biblical scholars tend to downplay the supernatural elements in the Bible. As the title suggests, Ron Snyder pays special attention to Dr. Reza Aslan and his book *Zealot: The Life and Times of Jesus of Nazareth*. This book provides a look at Jesus from the Islamic perspective.

As expected, much of the discussion focuses on the four Gospels—authors, dates of writing, factual history. Are they historical, factual statements, or are they a method of interpretation representing various people’s feelings and thoughts collected over time? Was the Apostle Paul the real founder of Christianity and the Gospels written to fill in the story of Jesus that Paul did not give us or did not know (410)? Was Paul even interested in a “Historical Jesus” (413)? Was the Epistle of James written as a polemic against Paul? Snyder continues to examine Reza Aslan’s presentation of the history of the Christian Church down through history. Snyder observes much of Aslan’s evaluation and conclusions are pure fabrication based on his false story of the Gospels and Jesus. From Aslan’s perspective, the history of the church from Constantine and the Council of Nicaea on through the Medieval Period and up to today produced more than a thousand years of horrible killings in the name of Christ (416). Snyder does a solid job of showing that these atrocities did not grow out of Jesus’s values and ethics (423). Chapter twenty-one is a “Postscript—Another Look at Islam.” Snyder asks: Was Aslan’s fabricated picture of Jesus an attempt to make Jesus into a Jewish type of Muhammad so that Aslan could dismiss what the New Testament says about Jesus? To answer this, Ron compares Allah and Yahweh, the beginnings of Islam, the Bible and the Qur’an and some other important teachings (425). Chapter twenty-two, “Why it Matters,” is a brief but powerful application of the message of the book, the author’s personal position and an answer to Jesus’s question, “Who do you say that I am?”

I believe that this book is such a good example for sharing the Gospel today that every seminary student would find it very helpful in either a professional ministry or lay ministry setting.

Stuart Imbach graduated from Prairie Bible Institute in 1960 and joined the Overseas Missionary Fellowship International (OMF) later that year. In 1961 he was sent to Central Thailand to do rural church planting and then invested a year of student ministry in Bangkok. In 1971 he was invited to join OMF's USA Home Staff, and in 1982 appointed to the OMF International Staff in Singapore as Communications Director which included OMF Books. During this time he was privileged to do some book reviews for *Practical Anthropology* and contribute to the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*.



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## Review of *The Early Luther: Stages in Reformation Reorientation* by Berndt Hamm (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014)

SAMUEL J. DUBBELMAN

Berndt Hamm states that the nine essays included in the volume are united by a disinterest in diagnosing Luther's Reformation turn either biographically or theologically (xvii). Instead his preference is given to Luther's gradual development of Late Medieval theology and spirituality. This approach follows the methodology of his teacher Heiko Oberman and has affinities with the recent work of Volker Leppin. For some, Hamm's depiction of Luther-as-mystic will be a welcomed addition to current work on the history of mysticism, for others, his suggestions will rub up against things Luther himself said of his theology. The portrayal of Luther's dependence on medieval mysticism is important for evangelicals, who can tend to caricature Reformation theology as if its only influence was *sola scriptura*.

The first chapter reconstructs the history of the terms "love" and "grace" from the twelfth century to the early writings of Luther. The theology and piety of the twelfth century, as represented by Bernard of Clairvoux, represents a shift away from external penitential actions of satisfaction towards the inner emotion of the love of God. Hamm interprets Luther as taking a step beyond both the externalizing and internalizing tendencies of medieval affective approaches to penance in his replacement of the priority of love with that of faith.

The second chapter interprets Luther's early years at Erfurt and in the cloister as integral to Luther's Reformation transformation. He suggests "that there are not only important religious continuities between Erfurt and Luther's later biography, but also that the Reformation's new and pioneering directions were set in motion already in the years from 1505 to 1511" (31). Hamm substantiates this argument by claiming that Luther's early experience of *Anfechtung* ("struggle") was essential to his later breakthroughs. Luther's insight that human sin can never be totally eliminated was a break from all late medieval programs that advocated human cooperation in salvation.

The third chapter further probes the question of how faith became the central concept of Lutheran theology since love had defined salvation at least since the twelfth century. Hamm argues that "without Luther's positive use of familiar late medieval scholastic doctrine and piety, the new centrality of *sola fide* in his theology would be incomprehensible" (60). Medieval theology tended to view faith as the beginning of the Christian life, but something that was in and of itself "insufficient for the attainment of salvation" (61).

Chapter four interprets the Ninety-Five Theses in light of the absence of justification. Luther's new understanding of salvation, which centered around his idea of "the righteousness of God" in Romans 1:17, can be found in his very first publication, a pamphlet on the seven penitential Psalms that appeared in spring of 1517 (89). Luther does not mention justification in the 95 theses, the theme of which is instead lifelong repentance (91). This indicates to Hamm that Luther had separated the concepts of faith and repentance in a way that allowed him to treat them separately.

Chapter five interprets Luther's 1519 "Sermon on Preparing to Die" in light of late medieval literature on *ars moriendi* ("the art of dying"). Hamm explains that this literature taught that a person's entire salvation rested upon the state of their contrition at the hour of death (120). Luther's 1519 sermon, then, may be seen as an "end of the traditional *ars moriendi*" (126). If believers are already justified before God, this "meant freedom from focusing on the hour of death and brought nonanxiousness for living and dying" (127).

Chapter six contends that the German and Swiss Reformation may be understood as a “liberation movement” that had its roots in Luther’s theology of freedom. The starting point for Luther’s understanding of freedom was accepting the truth of God’s judgment that everyone is a sinner. Here Hamm points to Luther’s concept of the “imputation” of Christ’s righteousness to sinners. Luther’s fundamental experience of freedom is understood as the remission of sin (163). In his lectures on Romans Luther described a Christian as entirely sinful and entirely justified at the same time. In this regard “Luther ultimately broke with the medieval religion of achievement and its conditional concept of freedom” (164). Freedom, then, becomes “the central expression of Luther’s theology” (167). Starting in 1517 Luther even begins to sign his name as “Martin Eleutherius,” the “liberated or Freed One” (167).

Chapter seven interprets *The Freedom of a Christian* (1520) through its preface to Pope Leo X. Hamm concludes that “these two often separated writings are unified in that they express a simultaneous freedom from the pope and pastoral care to the pope” (172). The two texts thus constitute a compositional unity. The contradictory nature of Luther’s words to Leo are a part of Luther’s “differentiation between faith and life or doctrine and life, between the dimension of the truth of the word of God received in faith and the ethical dimension of life, its sinfulness or sanctification” (179). Likewise, the tract on freedom differentiates between the inner freedom of faith and the outer servitude of love. In the freedom of faith, Luther criticizes the Pope, whereas in servitude of love he reaches out towards the Pope (181).

Chapter eight reconstructs Luther’s view of faith as a kind of “evangelical mysticism.” Hamm argues that “Luther’s mature theology, the one that can be described in the fullest sense of the word ‘Reformation’ theology, not only has a mystical side or dimension to it, drawing on traditional themes, images, and concepts, but also reveals mystical traits in its compositional entirety” (195). Building upon the work of Bernard McGinn, Hamm proffers the following definition of mysticism: “Where a mystical relationship of God to humanity is invoked, it always has to do with the personal, direct, and holistic experience of a blessed nearness to God that reaches its goal through an inner union with God” (196). Hamm suggests that Luther stood within the tradition of the “democratization of mysticism” of Jean Gerson that led him to combat forms of “elitist mysticism,” such as the speculative mysticism of Dionysius the Areopagite (197-8). Hamm suggests that Luther placed himself within the medieval traditions of a bride/marriage mysticism (Staupitz) and in the mystical tradition of the darkness of *Anfechtung* (Gerson), while giving a Christo-centric and word-centered depth to both traditions.

Chapter nine lays out eight propositions interpreting Luther’s view of *sola fides*. Hamm comments that the traditional *solus* formulations used to describe Reformation theology are rightly applied to Luther’s views; but what is often not understood is that “the Reformation owed its view of justification to a specific late medieval tradition of the previous years and decades” (234). All late medieval theologians taught that justification was by grace alone; what varied was just how much one participated in accessing this grace. Gabriel Biel and later Johann Eck were part of a school that taught that people had enough freedom to decide for or against God’s saving grace. On the other hand, a small Augustinian school existed that taught reception of God’s grace was “not grounded in the sinner’s prepared disposition, but in predestination alone, God’s eternal gracious election” (236).

In conclusion, Berndt Hamm’s book is to be commended for the labor of its historical work and its boldness in reconstructing Luther’s relationship to the mystical tradition. I agree that Luther was strongly influenced by late medieval theology and mysticism. Such a claim is not very contentious. What is controversial is Hamm’s insistence that Luther’s mature theology belays mystical traits in its compositional entirety. Such a thesis works following his expanded definition of “mysticism,” it is a little harder to substantiate in light of Luther’s own understanding of the term and the connotations that the term has for the majority of readers today. At the same time,

Hamm completely dismisses any connection between Luther and the Dionysian tradition. Both Piotr Malysz and Knut Alsvag have recently offered interpretations that take Luther's relation to the Platonic-Dionysian tradition more seriously. Thus there needs to be more work on Luther's relationship to the Christian apophatic tradition.

Samuel J. Dubbelman graduated with an M.A. from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Hamilton, MA, in 2015, alongside of his wife McCall, who works in the admissions office. Sam is currently a Ph.D. student at Boston University School of Theology.



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**Review of *Reclaiming Pietism: Retrieving an Evangelical Tradition*  
by Roger E. Olson and Christian T. Collins Winn  
(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015)**

DAVID A. ESCOBAR ARCAJ

*Reclaiming Pietism* is written with awareness of the negative reputation and distorted meaning that the word “Pietism” has acquired and with intention and attention to those “interested in the spiritual life and in developing a theology that is grounded in experience while at the same time remaining biblically faithful” (xii). More specifically, it is about reclaiming “the word Pietism by engaging the history of Pietism to understand the original motives and themes that energized the movement” (1).

Chapter one unpacks the various misconceptions of Pietism and corrects them in terms of the “actual history of the Pietist movement” (xii). Citing influential scholars F. Ernest Stoeffler and Harry Yeide Jr., *Reclaiming Pietism* explains how “Pietism” got a bad reputation. Original Pietism (Spener’s *Pia Desideria*) had much to contribute to the theologies of Ritschl (19<sup>th</sup> century modern liberalism) and Barth (20<sup>th</sup> century neo-orthodoxy and dialectical theology) whose criticisms gave Pietism a bad name. Originally, Pietism focused on the individual dimension to salvation. Its emphasis was not inherently individualistic, or monergistic, but rather synergistic. Not necessarily Pelagian or even semi-Pelagian, it included an “emphasis on the vertical dimension of the Christian life while not becoming otherworldly” (17).

Chapter two examines the Christian mystics and the devotionally minded Puritans that serve as the precursors of historical Pietism. We are informed of Pietism’s late medieval precursors (*Theologia Germanica* and Thomas a Kempis’s *The Imitation of Christ*), Reformation era precursors (Caspar Schwenckfeld and Paracelsus) and the post-Reformation cousins of Pietism (Johann Arndt and Jakob Bohme). A key historical incident that overlaps the life of these latter figures was the Thirty Years’ War, a situation that exacerbated the bad conditions of German Lutheranism and led to the Age of Orthodoxy or the Era of Confessionalization. The aftermath of this period led to the production of Puritan devotional writings and the emergence of figures such as Jean de Labadie who initiated the practice of hosting “conventicles” (sort of like Bible studies) in his home in Geneva and later in Holland. The late medieval to the early modern period witnessed a series of voices who called “for a deeper practice of devotion of God and a more fervent love of neighbor” (37). Chapter three traces the beginning and development of the Pietist movement in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by focusing on its founders, namely: Philipp Jakob Spener and August Hermann Francke. Movements that sought to renew church and Christian society were initiated, among other sources, by Spener’s book *Pia Desideria: Or, Heartfelt Desires for a God-pleasing Improvement of the True Protestant Church* and Francke’s conversion. The latter defined Hallensian Pietism (e.g., Francke’s educational work particularly among orphans, the Halle orphanage).

Chapter four explores the radical Pietism and the work of Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf and the Wurttemberg tradition. On the one hand, Zinzendorf attempted to reconcile the radical and ecclesial forms of Pietism, a vision of the church that still exists in the contemporary Moravian church. On the other hand, Wurttemberg Pietism was advanced by the eschatological vision of Johann Albrecht Bengel and Friedrich Christoph Oetinger’s holistic worldview. Chapter five expounds on the defining themes of Pietism in both past and present. These include the following: embracing and acceptance of orthodox Protestant Christian doctrine; experiential, transformative Christianity; conversion, conversational piety, visible Christianity; love of the Bible, life together; world transformation; ecumenical Christianity and the common priesthood of all believers. Chapter six narrates “how German Pietism moved onto British and North American soil through the evan-

gelical awakening led by John Wesley and others” (xiii). Here we are told about the influence of Pietism on American culture; how the role of Pietism has been misunderstood; how Pietism’s presence flourished in England and in America; the practices and impact of the Moravians in America; the influence of Pietism on the Wesleys and early Methodism and a brief description of early radical pietism social experiments in colonial America.

Chapter seven outlines “the reformation of Pietism during the long nineteenth century in Europe” and discusses how “several leading modern theologians and philosophers took up elements of Pietism in their systems of thought” (xiii). The intellectual challenges of modernity associated with the nineteenth century movements of rationalism, romanticism and idealism led to the reformulation or reinvention of Pietism in figures Friedrich Schleiermacher’s theological orientation of religion as “feeling of absolute dependence”; Soren Kierkegaard’s critique of Danish Christendom and the search for authentic Christianity; the German awakening movement, the Christocentric theology of experience approach of Friedrich August G. Tholuck, the integrated vision of society of Johann Hinrich Wichern and the inner mission and the Blumhardt movement. Chapter eight examines “contemporary figures who have appropriated Pietism, looking especially at theologians such as Donald Bloesch, Richard Foster, Stanley Grenz, and Jurgen Moltmann” (xiii). Finally, *Reclaiming Pietism* comments on the role and influence that Pietism has played on these contemporary German-speaking twentieth century figures. All of these four figures have much to contribute to the renewal of contemporary Christianity and none of them “could be considered anti-intellectual or legalistic or ‘holiest than-thou’ super-spiritual people who were or are too heavenly minded” (181).

*Reclaiming Pietism* is dedicated to evangelicals “who, apart from Pietism, tend to fall into dead orthodoxy” (xiii). I appreciate this work. I love this topic. I am inspired by these themes. I appreciate the sympathetic retrieval of the authors of *Reclaiming Pietism*. I love the fact that these authors are able to get over the Calvinist-Arminian divide and recognize that Pietism not only has elements of both of these two camps, but is also part of the ongoing conversation by those who pray for reformation, renewal and revival. Finally, I am inspired by this narrative because it resonates with a contemporary church who struggles with the current culture and most importantly by one who is called by the Great Commission and the cultural mandate not only to save souls but to be salt of the earth.

David A. Escobar Arcay is professor of education and leadership at Nova Southeastern University, Orlando, Florida and serves as instructor for Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. He is a graduate of Boston College (Ph.D.), Harvard University Graduate School of Education (M.Ed.) and Rhode Island College (M.A.T.). He is also a triple *summa cum laude* Gordon-Conwell graduate (M.A., M.Div., and Th.M.) where he was awarded the Christian Social Thought and Presidential Awards. His passion for The Great Tradition, the Reformers and the Puritan theologians has led him to study for a M.A. in Christian and Classical Studies at Knox Seminary in Fort Lauderdale, FL and a Th.M. in Reformation and Post-Reformation and Systematic Theology at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary.

## Review of *The Mediation of the Spirit: Interventions in Practical Theology* by Mark J. Cartledge (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015)

WOODROW E. WALTON

At the end of chapter two of his book, Mark Cartledge sets forth what he intends to do through the following chapters: he seeks to integrate the work of the Holy Spirit with the Scriptures and the Christian experience. As is suggested in the subtitle, “Interventions in Practical Theology,” the Holy Spirit intervenes in all that is done in Christian ministry.

Cartledge contends that insufficient attention is given to the “mediation of the Holy Spirit” in many of the books dealing with practical theology. He also claims that, “except for a few individuals, practical theologians are also very limited in their use of the Scriptures” (58). Cartledge’s book is a manifesto, part of a series of books termed “Pentecostal Manifestos,” and is the latest of that series.

In chapter three, Cartledge explains his use of the term “mediation.” The Holy Spirit is the intermediary who makes the relationship between God and humans possible (64). The Holy Spirit is related to humanity in the Pentecostal event and intercedes as a mediator. By and large, Cartledge sets out to define how the Holy Spirit functions as a mediator within the ministry of the Church. The subtitle suggests that the Holy Spirit “intervenes.” Cartledge, however, does not use that term in the sense of a “go-between” or an “intercessor.” The Holy Spirit intervenes as an “interpreter” of Scripture and of Jesus, reminding one of Jesus’s statement in John 16:12-15 (and particularly the final verse, “. . .The Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.” The Holy Spirit intervenes as an energizer who not only empowers the Church for mission, but also thrusts the Church into mission.

In chapter three, Cartledge takes the reader through a discussion of the different approaches to the work of the Holy Spirit as expressed in such writers as Amos Young, Frank Macchia, Ray Anderson, Gordon Fee, Karl Barth, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Paul Tillich, Veli Karkkainen, and Jurgen Moltmann. He also addresses the “invasive” understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit as expressed by the Pentecostal/Charismatics. However, he uses that forward slash as though the Pentecostal and Charismatic were one and the same in understanding. This reviewer perceives a difference between the two with the Pentecostal stressing empowerment for mission and the Charismatic stressing the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

In the fourth chapter, Cartledge finally states openly his intent in writing *The Mediation of the Spirit*. He explains that the “personal presence of the Holy Spirit constitutes the *ecclesia* and mediates it to the presence of the other persons of the Trinity, thus uniting the Godhead to the church. The church also mediates the presence of the Holy Spirit both internally to its members and externally to others by intermediaries. These forms of mediation are intrinsic to the life and witness of the church” (89). At this point I watched for the author to define the perimeters of what constitutes practical theology; however, he does not. Instead, he notes at the beginning of the chapter: “I am using the resources of scholarship within P/C theology to address the wider academic discourse of practical theology” (88).

For this reviewer, who holds a Doctor of Ministry degree instead of a Ph.D., “practical theology” is suggestive of the practice of ministry as expressed in preaching, pastoral care and counseling, evangelism, spiritual formation, Christian education, and mission. Prof. Cartledge does not address these areas. However, he does discuss the mediation of the Holy Spirit within the life of the early church as described in the Acts of the Apostles.

As Cartledge deals with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, he suggests that the Holy Spirit is mediated to individuals by way of the intermediary of the community of believers. Corporate identity is prior to individual identity. Cartledge moves next to the Spirit's reception narratives in Acts in which he refers to the occasions of the Spirit's outpouring on the newly evangelized Samaritans, the newly baptized Saul (Paul) of Tarsus, and on the God-fearing Cornelius and his family in Caesarea. He also deals with the Jerusalem Council in which James concluded: "it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us" (Acts 15:28). These five occasions describe five different forms of mediation of the Holy Spirit. His conclusion is that the "interplay between Scripture, the experience of the Holy Spirit, and the community-decision making processes, and especially the modes of rationality employed is essential to ecclesial life" (108). The author closes his chapter by identifying three features of the Holy Spirit's mediation in the life of the early church as described in Acts: eschatology, the Trinity, and the person of Christ Jesus. These three emphases must exist at the congregational level. Emphasizing salvation is not enough is what this reviewer derives from Cartledge's discussion. The Holy Spirit lifts the centrality of Christ Jesus within the life of the Christian community, affecting the lives of individuals within it and propelling the church in its eschatological mission.

Against this background, he furnishes a study of how this emphasis works within an ecclesial setting. The example he chooses to analyze is Good Samaritan United Methodist Church in Durham, North Carolina, a multiracial congregation, which was also studied by Mary McClintock Fulkerson, who teaches at the Divinity School of Duke University. He traces how a congregation whose Caucasian membership was dwindling was renewed by the power of a mediating Holy Spirit into a vibrantly growing multiracial congregation which also had people with disabilities and individuals of different ethnic backgrounds. In this situation, participants brought their own spiritual experience with the Holy Spirit and flourished according to their individual gifts, facilitating the growth of the entire congregation, and enabling the church to fulfill its mission in Durham and outward. This reviewer read this chapter with great interest. Without going into detail, Cartledge concentrated on three major components: the affective associations the members had with one another, the individual narratives of each individual life, and the unity that existed within the congregation. Cartledge depended a lot on Fulkerson's study of the church and her four elements of the congregation's life: formation, worship, homemaking, and interpretation of the Bible.

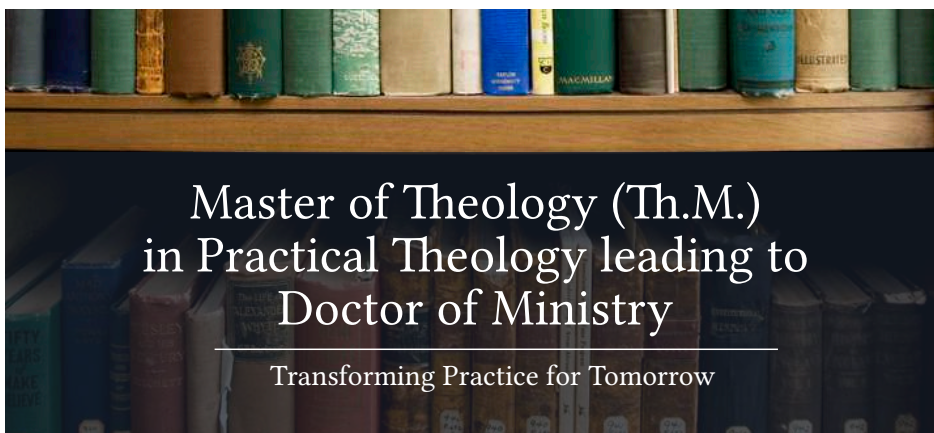
Cartledge also chose the incidents of the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost as examples of the mediation of the Holy Spirit. First of all, the Ethiopian treasurer represented not only a diasporan Jew, but also a disabled person and a person of position (treasurer to the *Candace* [queen] of Ethiopia). On the day of Pentecost, those who heard Peter preach were people from at least fifteen different regions representing the Near East and the western Mediterranean. This makes the experience of Good Samaritan United Methodist Church reminiscent of what transpired in Acts.

Cartledge ends his book with a discussion of the soteriological ramifications of the mediation of the Holy Spirit upon a church, within a church through its individuals, and from a church through membership to the world. This book is worth reading for either the Pentecostal or the Charismatic. Cartledge represents the Charismatic side, but is fair and accurate in his understandings of such "classical" Pentecostals as the Assemblies of God, Pentecostal Holiness, and other Pentecostal bodies emerging out of the Azusa Street revivals at the outset of the twentieth century.

The author himself is Anglican and teaches at Regent University School of Divinity in Virginia Beach, Virginia, which itself is a Pentecostal/ Charismatic institution.

What makes the book most interesting to read for this reviewer is that the reviewer lived in Durham, North Carolina, from 1957 to 1960, as a student at the Divinity School of Duke University, and knew full well the situation out of which the Good Samaritan United Methodist Church emerged as a vibrant Holy Spirit-filled congregation during the years of the Civil Rights Movement.

Woodrow E. Walton, D.Min., and his wife, are residents of Fort Worth, Texas. He is an author and a retired Assemblies of God minister, and graduate school dean. He has written for the *Pneuma Review*, the *Africanus Journal*, and for Christians for Biblical Equality and maintains membership with the Evangelical Theological Society, the American Association of Christian Counselors, and the Overseas Ministries Study Center. He has two grown children and two grandchildren.



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# Review of *Authentic Fire: A Response to John MacArthur's Strange Fire* by Michael L. Brown (Lake Mary, FL: Excel Publishers 2014)<sup>1</sup>

JOHN P. LATHROP

In November of 2013, Dr. John MacArthur released his book *Strange Fire: The Danger of Offending the Holy Spirit with Counterfeit Worship*. MacArthur, who is firmly outside of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements, wrote to address what he perceives to be doctrinal errors and abuses found in these two movements. His book drew strong reactions from both Pentecostals and Charismatics. Dr. Michael Brown, who has been in the Pentecostal/Charismatic branch of the church for many years, wrote *Authentic Fire* to address issues raised by MacArthur in his book.

Brown writes, “*Authentic Fire* is not meant to be a rebuttal of *Strange Fire* at every point” (vi). But it corrects what he feels are “serious errors and misstatements” (vi) in MacArthur’s book. Brown’s book contains ten chapters. There are also four appendices written by Craig S. Keener, Sam Storms, Steven S. Alt, and David Shibley.

The chapter titles in the book are “A ‘Collective War’ Against Charismatics,” “Rejecting The Strange Fire, Embracing The Authentic Fire,” “A Great Big Blind Spot,” “The Genetic Fallacy And The Error Of Guilt By Association,” “Testing The Spirits: Another Look At The Evidence,” “Sola Scriptura And Therefore Charismatic,” “Shall We Burn One Another At The Stake?” “Spirit And Truth, Right Brain And Left Brain,” “A God To Be Experienced,” and “Moving Forward After Strange Fire.”

The big issue, of course, concerns the present-day work of the Holy Spirit; more specifically, it concerns some of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Are all of the gifts of the Holy Spirit mentioned in the New Testament in operation today? Brown answers in the affirmative and makes his case for the continuationist position in Chapter 6, “Sola Scriptura And Therefore Charismatic.” However, there are some other issues that he addresses as well. I will mention only three here. First, in chapter 2, “Rejecting The Strange Fire, Embracing The Authentic Fire,” Brown shows the charge that Pentecostals/Charismatics do not address the errors in their movements is not true. Brown cites texts from some of his own books, dating back to 1989, that have addressed problems in these movements (21-32). He also mentions a number of other people in the Pentecostal/Charismatic camps who have dealt with errors in the movements. Those he mentions include David Wilkerson (14-15), John Wimber (16-18), Jim Cymbala (15-16), Lee Grady (18-19), and New Testament scholar Dr. Gordon Fee (15, 57).

The second charge that MacArthur made in his book *Strange Fire* that Brown challenges is that Charismatics have not made any theological contributions to the church. Brown, cites MacArthur in *Strange Fire*, “In recent history, no other movement has done more damage to the cause of the gospel, to distort the truth, and to smother the articulation of sound doctrine . . . The Charismatic Movement *as such* has made no contribution to biblical clarity, no contribution to interpretation, no contribution to sound doctrine” (50). Brown demonstrates that this charge is not true by listing a number of people who are within the Pentecostal/Charismatic camps who have made significant contributions in the areas of biblical studies and theology. His list includes Gordon Fee (56-58), Craig S. Keener (58-59), Ben Witherington (59), Jeffrey Niehaus (61), R. T. Kendall (62-63), and J. Rodman Williams (63).

A third charge that MacArthur raised in his book concerned ministries of philanthropy. He asked where such ministries were to be found in Pentecostal/Charismatic ranks. Brown answers this question by supplying the names and locations of individuals and ministries who are actively

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<sup>1</sup> *Authentic Fire* is available through Amazon Kindle. Hard copies of the book may be purchased through Dr. Brown’s website: [www.askdrbrown.org](http://www.askdrbrown.org).

engaged in these ministries of service. He mentions Adult and Teen Challenge, which was founded by the late David Wilkerson (65). This ministry has continued to this day and is active in almost 100 countries; it has helped many thousands of people, especially those struggling with addictions (65). Brown also mentions Drs. Mark and Huldah Buntain, who were missionaries with the Assemblies of God for many years (66). Struck by the needs of the poor in India, they launched a number of ministries of compassion, including a hospital and stations that currently feed 25,000 people daily (66).

As was mentioned earlier, there are four appendices in the book. Appendix A was written by Craig S. Keener; it is called “The Ongoing Evidence of Miracles, with Thoughts on African Charismatic Christianity.” Appendix B was written by Sam Storms and concerns the gift of prophecy. It is entitled, “Why NT Prophecy Does NOT Result in ‘Scripture-quality Revelatory Words’ (A Response to the Most Frequently Cited Cessationist Argument against the Contemporary Validity of Spiritual Gifts).” Stephen S. Alt wrote Appendix C, “Did the Authentic Fire Cease in the First Century? A Response to Tom Pennington’s ‘A Case for Cessationism’.” Appendix D, “A Missions Perspective on Charismatics and Cessationists,” is written by David Shibley. All of the appendices are relevant to the controversy at hand.

*Authentic Fire* is very easy to read and has much to offer. Michael Brown is definitely a Charismatic, but he understands the cessationist position. In the book, he recounts his own journey in that direction at one point in his life (164). This allows him to interact intelligently and with some compassion to the cessationist position. A second strength of this book is that Brown acknowledges that there are faults within the Charismatic Movement. However, unlike MacArthur, Brown does not see aberrations as invalidating the movement. His position is basically, keep the authentic fire and correct or reject the strange fire. A third strength of Brown’s book is that its tone is respectful, though at times it is quite direct. When Brown addresses a subject he does not use inflammatory rhetoric but rather speaks with dignity and with facts.

*Authentic Fire* is not an academic book; however, it draws very heavily upon the Bible and, I believe, provides a fair treatment of both Scripture and history. I think that this book would be a great resource in a systematic theology course that deals with the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. It would also be useful in a course dealing with Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity. I highly recommend it.

John P. Lathrop is a graduate of Zion Bible Institute and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and is an ordained minister with the International Fellowship of Christian Assemblies. He has written for a number of publications and is the author of four books: *Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, and Teachers Then and Now* (Xulon Press, 2008), *The Power and Practice of the Church: God, Discipleship, and Ministry* (J. Timothy King, 2010), *Answer the Prayer of Jesus: A Call for Biblical Unity* (Wipf & Stock, 2011), and *Dreams & Visions: Divine Interventions in Human Experience* (J. Timothy King, 2012). He also served as co-editor of the book *Creative Ways to Build Christian Community* (Wipf & Stock, 2013).

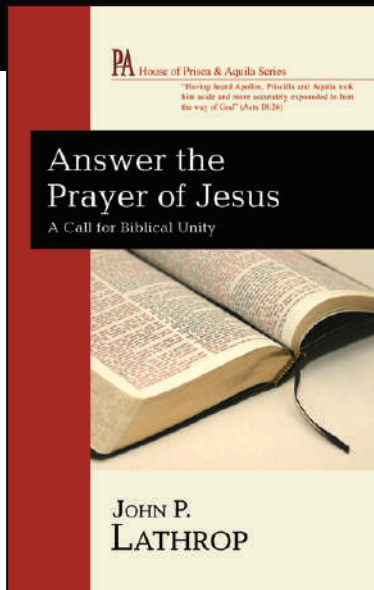
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—ELDIN VILLAFANE, Professor of Christian Social Ethics, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, and author of *Beyond Cheap Grace*

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**Review of *The New Covenant as a Paradigm for Optimal Relations: Marital Principles Derived from a Theological-Psychological Integration* by Pablo Polischuk (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016)**

CARLOT DUCASSE CELESTIN

Dr. Pablo Polischuk is a renowned Christian Clinical Psychologist. He is the George Bennett Professor of Pastoral Counseling and Psychology at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. He is a very impressive speaker, Pastor-Teacher and Counselor who can easily speak to a variety of topics with ease and expertise. Very few psychologists demonstrate such a command of biblical theology as Polischuk demonstrates in this book. He presents to us a finished product that is not devoid of absolute principles or moral values. He offers to the pastors, the educators and the educated public at large an insightful theologically-based and psychologically sound handbook for those of us who aim to integrate faith with psychotherapy. In this book, Polischuk addresses the needs of educators, teachers, pastors, and those who are interested in keeping their knowledge in the Word of God and learning to integrate their biblical knowledge about relationships and psychology. The foreword states the purpose of the book is to “provide a solid, basic foundation for the practice of metacognitive-dialogical therapy and counseling, as well as to offer enough information to pastoral counselors and providers human services and ministry so that they may benefit from the accumulated and consolidated wisdom distilled in the pages of this presentation” (p. x). He adopts the theological concept of the New Covenant as a paradigm to guide people who are entering or are in intimate relationship (p. xvii). His assertion is that the New Covenant is a high call to imitate God’s way (*pedagogos*, ch. 3). He understands the New Covenant as “principles of human relations” (p. 71).

In chapter 5 he argues that all “covenants convey a functional purpose” or what Prof. Polischuk himself calls “purposive responses” (p. 225) to engage two parties by means of intentional, interactive elements, seeking to connect these parties in discrete terms. Marriage is a covenant of three: God, husband, and wife. God relates to the couple in what may be called a triological interaction: first God relates in dyadic fashion to Adam and then to Eve as his created children. God then relates to both who are destined to become intimately bonded as one flesh (p. 19). He argues that the principles of the New Covenant are applicable to all believers (his audience), serving as an exemplary and guiding model for relationships patterned after God’s ways of engaging in living in relation to one another. He correctly argues that “God empowers our inner being by granting us sensitivity, empathy, love and passion as what the writer may refer to as levels of analysis” (p. 244). The ways we interact with each other exemplify the ways in which husband and wife relate to one another as imitators of the Father’s empowering ways (p. 146).

Polischuk argues that these basic principles as characteristics of the New Covenant are only possible for one to apply if the person has a renewed mindset, in other words, is a person who has been transformed (*metamorphosis*) according to Romans 12:2, changing in structure and functions (p. 324). Unless one is a participant of this renewed self, Polischuk argues that one is devoted of “zest, vitality and novelty, one that is trapped into deadly routines” (p. 327). He offers this New Covenant as the paradigm for optimal relations. Only a renewed mind “may be actualized in existential living, adopting a metacognitive perspective, and seeing God’s Spirit provide a new perception of his empowering presence animating our lives” (p. 337). This is a basic premise of the book: that “human effort and willpower” are essential qualities to enter into this process of renewal of the mind. Apart from that, the person will come short of enjoying satisfaction in relationships. He concludes that believers are called to be imitators of God as dear beloved children and walk in love and it is in that capacity that one can enter, remain, and enjoy a relationship, in light of the New Covenant paradigm.

These perspectives are compatible with his “metacognitive-dialogical therapy and counseling,” though their borders may appear to be a “no man’s land” in which readers can get lost if they cannot appreciate a good theology. Even more data on the clinical solution to the issues of guilt, forgiveness, grace, hope, acceptance and on developmental issues including the problem of bitterness, mental disorder, resentment or an unforgiving spirit which is often cited as being particularly destructive to the physical, mental, and spiritual health of its beholders within the “metacognitive” process in forgiveness would have been helpful (p. 341). One thing that Polischuk underlines is a clear understanding of God’s forgiveness and how believers can dispense it toward one another, making it clear that belief in God influences the practice of forgiveness. Though nonbelievers, who do not have the willpower or the capacity to forgive, since it is a spiritual discernment, are not the focus of this book, I wonder if all human beings can relate to the fact that people harm each other as a result of innumerable prior actions, in the context of a web of influences, and as a result of ignorance about the human condition and drive to meet his or her own degree of satisfaction in marriage or relations (p. 332) even if it causes discomfort to others. The theological concept of the Imago Dei leads us to recognize the fact all human beings are born with the capacity of acceptance, though not as an act of the grace that one has received. At the same time, we all know people who are beneficiaries of the New Covenant, but who have trouble forgiving slight hurts or who hold grudges over minor offenses and are viewed as being psychologically troubled. So these people, according to cultural norms (way of life), do not care or recognize whenever they have injured someone: they literally lack the motivation to receive forgiveness or to request forgiveness due to their psychosis. In the redemptive work of God, anyone who can appreciate grace is responsible to extend it to others. This capacity evokes the absence of disorders. Where this book focuses is on developing a metacognitive-dialogue for therapy. The integrative model he follows is clearly a theological approach that offers a basic program of psychological understanding to comprehend how humans are to relate with one another. Just as every psychotherapy applies some psychology, some understanding of how the human mind and emotions work, is lived in theology, an integrative model is one that takes seriously theology and psychology with their total reality and to explain the application of each other in counseling. In this integrative model neither theology nor psychology will need to be formalized, so those familiar with these disciplines will comprehend them implicitly.

From this book’s perspective, theology is understood as the embodiment of the “New Covenant” and psychological arguments are brought forward to explain how the New Covenant is or must be the paradigm for relationships. One can observe in the book that every human society has had its share of difficulties to define a true integration model, but, the author argues, both modern theology and modern psychotherapies opt for integration, seeing fullness of human being in God’s Master design (p. 9) as comprising the physical, the mental, the emotional, and the spiritual, although one or another of those facets may not be fully defined and applied.

The difference between psychology and theological integration is commonly construed as a reflection of the different approaches of science and religion. Scientific method relies on humans, these days agreeing with Protagoras that humanity is the measure of all things, and, therefore, studying that which is verifiably perceivable by the five human senses. Without a differentiated and relational notion of the cultural (the arts, media, styles, religions, value-orientations, ideologies, imaginaries, world-views, soul, and the like), any attempt to integrate will fall short of its purposive function. Understanding the therapeutic value of this process of metacognitive dialogue, Polischuk is offering a particularly important integration of theology and psychology. Theology insists on the reality and significance of some power outside of the self and in some way greater than the human individual, even collective humanity, and transcendent of ordinary sense experience (p. 336). Applied elements are what would follow after these defined elements, beginning with an assessment from the perspective of both disciplines, starting with beliefs (what does one believe?)

and motivation (why does one do what one does?). From a strict measurement perspective, beliefs consist of a person's convictions about the truth or falseness of the content of a statement. Theologically, all truth is God's truth, and is absolute. Theoretically, truth applies from experience and other methods of learning and guides and interprets new experience (rule-governed behavior).

Further, Polischuk differentiates between content and function. There is specific content in theological application, as in doctrinal beliefs about the New Covenant, beliefs about the current lack of understanding of human relations in terms of the New Covenant. His argument centers on "gratitude." Gratitude refers to awareness or recognition of God's grace. Grace may take the form of a gift or, alternatively, may be seen as the provision of strength to accomplish a difficult task (ch. 4). The understanding of the New Covenant may evoke a sense of gratitude at many points and directs a new behavior.

For the sake of the church, Polischuk puts in the hands of church leaders and religious professionals an innovative germinal book on relationships both marital and individual. The focus is both therapeutic and theological. What distinguishes this book from other treatises on marriage is that it is based not on clinical speculation or biblical jargons but on a clear-cut articulation of how one is supposed to understand relationships from a spiritual context. The book is an eye opener. The treatise is simple: marital relationships must be understood from the context of the New Covenant. The New Covenant is a covenant of grace and mercy. Love is the defining factor. This love, Polischuk argues, is *agape love*. Hence, the marital principle that Polischuk is offering is that in order for one to love, one must embrace the New Covenant. If love is to be authentic, it must be lived in light of the New Covenant.

This is a research book that all pastors need to have at their disposal, and every Christian marriage counselor needs to have it as a reference book. When counseling a couple with distress, the book propels couple therapy in this century with a solid biblical and psychological research for comprehensive use. It is a wonderful highly qualified innovative approach to understand better the idea that marriage is for better or for worst but "to keep," as it is often said. My students are using this book in two different classes: Pastoral Care in Urban Churches and Marriage Counseling as a unique tool for research and practice. Dr. Polischuk gives the professionals and others who are interested in increasing their knowledge and developing their competence comprehension of marital therapy from a biblical perspective. Read it and become much more competent!

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## Review of *Darkness Is My Only Companion: A Christian Response to Mental Illness* by Kathryn Greene-McCreight (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2015)

KAREN MASON

Dr. Kathryn Greene-McCreight is an Episcopal priest and theologian but writes as a Christian with mental illness. She tells her readers that her book *Darkness* is a book of “theological reflections on mental illness” (p. xii). The title comes from the last verse of Psalm 88: “My friend and my neighbor you have put away from me, and darkness is my only companion.”

*Christianity Today* calls her book “a safe guide for those who battle the darkness of mental illness.” Greene-McCreight wrote the book because she found no books by Christian authors that helped to address her questions about suffering and God in the context of mental illness. She asked, “How could I, as a faithful Christian, be undergoing such torture of the soul?” (p. xxi).

This 2015 second edition is revised and expanded from the first 2006 edition. It incorporates updated research and adds anecdotal and pastoral commentary as well as a foreword by the current Archbishop of Canterbury. It is laid out in three parts: 1. Facing Mental Illness, in which Greene-McCreight relates her story; 2. Faith and Mental Illness, in which she struggles with theological questions and their bearing on mental illness; and 3. Living with Mental Illness, in which she focuses on how to be a friend to the mentally ill.

In Part 1, Greene-McCreight lays out the difficulty: the perceived hiddenness of God: “During a depression, as during Noah’s flood, the good providence of God is hidden from view. All I can see is the storm, all I can smell is the dung of my own ark, and all I can perceive is the very wrath of God. And worse than Noah, I have no companions in my ark, just my own stinky, contentious inner beasts. Darkness is my only companion” (p. 14).

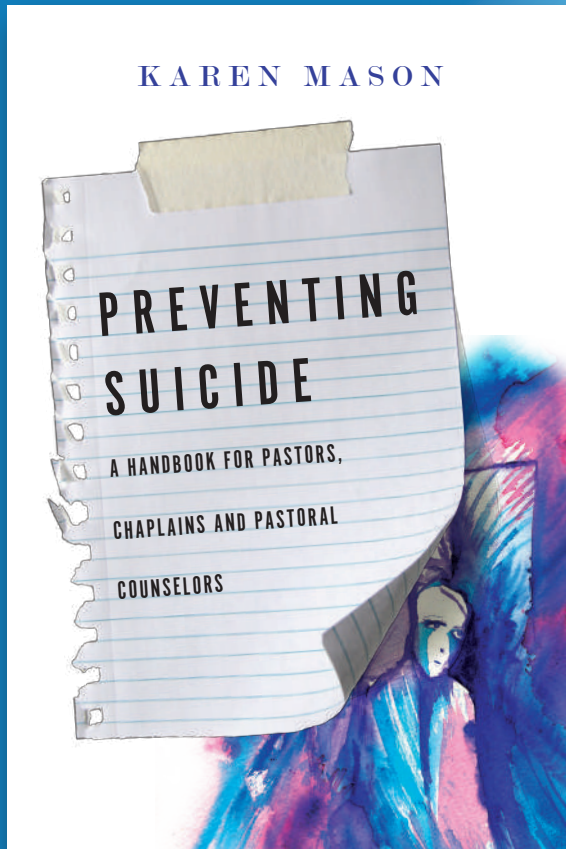
In Part 2, she lays out how a Christian can face mental illness, with hope “that one will praise God once again” (p. 84), with conviction that God never abandons the Christian, that “God held my soul firmly throughout, keeping me longing for him—even though it felt to me as if I had been abandoned” (p. 98), that like the psalmist people are drawn into relationship with God in their suffering (p. 103), that the mentally ill Christian is loved by God, and that prayer within a worshipping community is healing.

In Part 3, Greene-McCreight emphasizes the importance of relationships with clergy, friends, and family. She relates that her lifeline has been a cord of three strands: the religious strand (worship and prayer), the psychological strand (psychotherapy), and the physical strand (medical treatments, hospitalization, and exercise). Greene-McCreight witnesses to God’s working in the pain of her mental illness.

I would recommend this book to any Christian touched in any way by mental illness. Given that one in five Americans has a mental health problem, it is likely that all Christians should read this book. It is time to end the stigmatizing misconception that mental illness does not exist in the Church and that a Christian’s mental illness is a sign of their distance from God. In addressing the stigma, God’s people can get help in their pain. A strength of *Darkness* is Greene-McCreight’s commitment to make sense of her mental illness in the light of the truth of Scripture and to wrestle as a person of faith with bipolar disorder.

Karen Mason, Ph.D., is Associate Professor of Counseling and Psychology at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. She is the author of *Preventing Suicide: A Handbook for Pastors, Chaplains and Pastoral Counselors* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2014).

# Discover the Church's Role in Suicide Prevention



233 pages, paperback, 978-0-8308-4117-2, \$18.00

Many pastors, chaplains and pastoral counselors play a vital role as agents of hope to people who are struggling, but most of them feel overwhelmed and unprepared to prevent suicides. In this practical handbook, Karen Mason integrates theology and psychology, showing how pastoral caregivers can teach the significance of life, monitor those at risk and intervene when they need help. Discover how you and your church can be proactive in caring for those at risk of self-harm.

*“Do real Christians die by suicide? Yes. Only God knows how many. But most pastors, chaplains and pastoral counselors already know someone they could help choose living instead of dying . . . if only they knew how. If you’re in that role, this book is for you. And if you’re preparing for ministry this book is also for you, because there is little doubt that you are going to find yourself in this dark trysting place where death meets life more often than any of us would wish.”*

**DAVID B. BIEBEL**, coauthor of *Finding Your Way After the Suicide of Someone You Love*



**KAREN MASON** (PhD, University of Denver) is associate professor of counseling and psychology at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and a psychologist working in the mental health field since 1990. She previously managed the Office of Suicide Prevention for the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and is a member of the American Psychological Association.



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## Review of *Soulmates: Friendship, Fellowship, and the Making of Christian Community* by David Horn (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2017)

JEFFREY ARTHURS

Writing for ministers and informed laypeople, David Horn has produced a thoughtful and well-argued contribution to ecclesiology, specifically to our understanding of Christian community. The author compares and contrasts “friendship” with “fellowship,” concluding that we have mistakenly equated the two. When the Bible talks about “fellowship,” we must not suppose it means “friendship,” which is exclusive, preferential, and reciprocal. “Fellowship” is nonexclusive, non-preferential, and nonreciprocal. It is Christ-based, unchanging, and a divine obligation. Horn writes from the perspective of a pastor as well as a sociologist of religion. For twenty years he was the head of the Ockenga Institute at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, working daily with pastors, running programs designed to study and improve churches.

*Soulmates* is organized primarily by way of contrast with two chapters on the nature of friendship, two on fellowship, and two concluding chapters suggesting how to employ the principles of fellowship in churches and organizations.

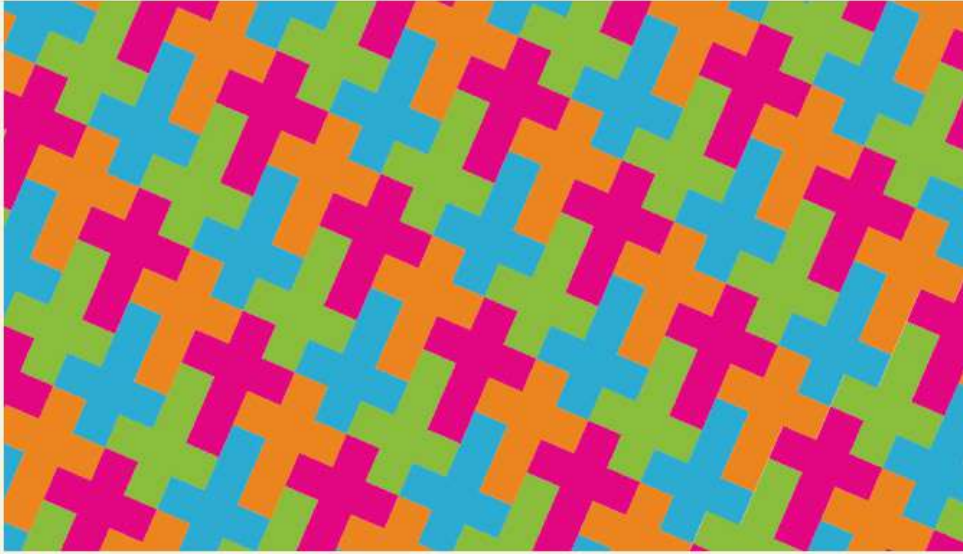
Horn draws from an impressive array of authors who have written about friendship and fellowship. Here is a partial list drawn of the poets, philosophers, and theologians he cites: Aristotle, Augustine, Bacon, Bonhoeffer, Cicero, e. e. cummings (who preferred to use lowercase letters for his name), Emerson, Fee, Gaebelien, Kant, Keener, and Kittle. That list takes us only through the letter K! As a theologian and sociologist, Horn shows awareness of and appreciation for other members of his tribe such as Berger, Stark, Weber, and Wells.

This book is carefully argued. Though doggedly committed to the thesis that fellowship is different than friendship, Horn does not overreach. For example, he affirms that the two relationships are easily identified only in their pure, abstract forms, but in the hurly burly of actual relationships; they bleed into each other. The following quotation illustrates his careful argumentation: fellowship and friendship are “exact opposite relationships with opposite goals, [but] more often than not, these two relationships coexist in the same room together. . . . In real life they seem to mimic each other” (121).

Another strength of the book is Horn’s love for the Church. Imbued with his own pastoral experience, the author makes surefooted observations about congregations such as “there is a reason why small churches stay small despite their professed desire to grow. Trust me on this; every day I work with pastors who serve these kinds of churches in New England. They reason they stay small is because they live out of a concept of friendship rather than genuine Christian fellowship” (113-114). Don’t assume from that quotation that Horn is cynical about small churches. If anything, as a true New Englander, he is prejudiced in favor of them. At times he pokes fun at the buzzwords from church growth literature such as “BHAG” (154) [a “Big Hairy Audacious Goal”].

And, speaking of poking fun, a final strength of this book is its humor, readability, and even lyrical style. Horn punctuates his theoretical and biblical exploration of fellowship with personal anecdotes as when he comments on the practice of dating: “[my wife] chose me over all those other gorillas she had previously dated. I chose her over the lovely ladies I had been dating” (99). In the pages of *Soulmates*, we meet the author’s daughter and son. We sit with him in his fellowship group, and we travel with him to L’Abri in Switzerland. *Soulmates* is pleasant reading. As a supplemental textbook for a class in ecclesiology, students might comment on how they enjoyed it, and pastors might feel that they have made a new friend in David Horn.

Jeffrey Arthurs, Professor of Preaching and Communication, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary is author of *Preaching as Reminding* (IVP), *Preaching With Variety* (Kregel), and *Devote Yourself to the Public Reading of Scripture* (Kregel).



# PREACHING AS REMINDING

*Stirring Memory in an Age of Forgetfulness*



JEFFREY D. ARTHURS

FOREWORD BY JOHN ORTBERG



## Review of *The Color of Church: A Biblical and Practical Paradigm for Multiracial Churches* by Rodney M. Woo (Nashville, TN: B & H, 2009)

LAWRENCE PK. MBAGARA

The topic of this book is church work with racially mixed people or multiculturalism, Christianity and culture. It is intended for ministers of good news: clergy, pastors, and theological interpreters in religious and theological institutions. It also relates to religion courses in colleges and universities. The author's sources of information and credentials are credible. Generally, it looks as if he is focusing on the American context but, indeed, his topic covers the whole world. While racism is pertinent to North America and Europe, tribalism and nationalism are pertinent to Africa, Asia, and the East.

*The Color of Church* has four sections, as follows: section one: biblical basis; section two: current reality; section three: implementation, and, finally, conclusion: multiplying the vision. The book also has appendixes and name and Scripture indexes.

I am overwhelmed with the material covered in chapters 1, 2, 3, and 4 (“The beginning, the end and everything between”; “Dare to dream in color”; “The belief behind the behavior: A theology of multiracial churches”; and “The biblical model of repentance from racism”). The biblical analysis emphasizes the vitality of God's creations and God's intentions for our world as well as what we can see, feel, and touch of the earth and its beauty that the human race does not destroy because of developments and pollution. The material highlighted in this section is agreeable to me and I recommend the audience to take note of it.

Section two (chapters 5-8: “The current reality: the great divide”; “To cross or not to cross”; “Giants in the land”; and “Count the cost”) is very vital and the author did much work at an academic level. From an African perspective, however, I wish it had dealt with the political divide and the problems affecting the so-called developing world and poor world countries, such as the historical scrambling of Africa: colonization destroying countries while the residue of its ethos so affected colonized people that they later copied the colonizers in everything they did, disregarding their own traditional heritages.

The section on implementation is excellent (chapters 9-12: “Rules of engagement”; “The role of worship in the multiracial church”; “Leadership in a multiracial church”; and “The call to the nations”). The biblical references are very vital to readers. They also help readers to understand the implementations. I am also grateful that the implementation highlights are impressive for covering the world. Rodney Woo has brought forward the most important issues, for example, Jesus Christ is clearly the Savior of the world (164), Christ is the only way to heaven or eternal life, those who confess their sins are saved (169-70), the Son of God, Jesus, came for all in the world and is beyond color (172-74), the world colors of humans are the beauty necessary for God's creation (178), and the world is not monotonous because of the color and the traces of humans on earth need to respect the variety of colors sincerely and in truth (181).

The conclusion (chapter 13-“Multiplying the vision”) is also important in *The Color of Church*. The great commission highlighted in this book is not a conclusion but a beginning for the multiplication of actions guided by faith in Jesus. The conclusion of Jesus's ministry in the world is the beginning of the realization of the impact of faith through the Holy Spirit of God to the world. Therefore, the church of Jesus Christ should be seen beyond the color and boundaries of ethnicities in the universe. The power of God is enough for the world and we need to understand God's power when spreading the gospel to the world.

Rodney Woo concludes his book with this reflection:

God can do the impossible. Whether race needs to be the primary focus or not, God undoubtedly has given the American church a brief moment of grace to reach across racial lines in the local church context. It is difficult to foresee whether the religious marketplace will hinder the growth of the multiracial church, or the biblical model and mandate will override the felt need to worship in their own culture. The biblical projection for the final worship, however, establishes the heavenly model with every nation, every tribe, every tongue, and every people worshiping at the throne of God. The prayer of the earthly multiracial church is “Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt 6:10). Let us enjoy heaven on earth (266).

I enjoyed and am impressed by this last paragraph for the following reasons: God does the impossible in the world, nothing is impossible to God, the Christian church must claim authority and power to spread the gospel, Christ in the church is able to empower us to do so and we should come together for the sake of all nations beyond color, and America is well situated to get all nations in the world above color and demonstrates that fact with multiethnic churches.

I recommend *The Color of Church* by Rodney M. Woo highly to all Christians in the world’s nations, rich and poor, and especially those with economic and political leadership so they can envision the writer’s vision. This is a worthy book.

Rev. Dr. Lawrence P.K. Mbagara is a Presbyterian minister of the Gateway Presbyterian Church of Boston, currently living in Massachusetts, but formerly from Kenya.

## Review of *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary—Introduction and 1:1-2:47* by Craig S. Keener (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012)

BENJAMIN FUNG

Dr Craig S. Keener (Ph.D., Duke University) is Professor of New Testament at Asbury Theological Seminary. In addition to the present work, he is the author of many books, including *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*; *The NIV Application Commentary: Revelation*; *Miracles: The Credibility of the New Testament*; and *The Historical Jesus of the Gospels*.

*Acts: An Exegetical Commentary* is a very informative commentary intended for Bible teachers and scholars. It is divided into two major sections. The first section includes eighteen chapters which form the introduction to the commentary. This section discusses subjects including the proposed genre of Acts, the argument of Acts as a work of ancient historiography, the speeches in Acts, date, authorship, intended audience, geographic background, Lukan emphasis in Acts, the unity and structure of Luke-Acts, as well as Luke's perspective on women and gender. The second section is the commentary for Acts 1:1-2:47, which discusses verse by verse in detail.

Keener gives a thorough discussion concerning the writing methodologies of Acts. He categorizes the genre of the Book of Acts as ancient history (see chs. 2-9, esp. ch. 3). By analyzing how ancient historians compose their works (see ch. 3, esp. section 1c), he compares the writing methodologies in Acts with those in the works of ancient historians and highlights the fact that the standards for writing history in the ancient world are quite different from those in the modern world. For example, different from today's writing standards, an ancient historian can fill in a missing detail to make sense of his source, but his record will still be viewed as reliable at that time. Keener believes that Luke has adopted a similar writing approach and has included inferences in Acts. However, these inclusions, judged by the writing standards of the ancient world, will not be viewed as historically unreliable. One of the examples Keener quotes is people being "full of the Spirit" and of virtues in 6:3, 5, 8; 7:55 (see p.101). Keener seems to imply that these are inferences or logical deductions added by Luke, as one cannot objectively verify whether a person is full of the Spirit and virtues or not. Another example Keener used is 25:14-27, wherein he believes that Luke again has employed inferences in the passage. This is an interesting observation, though Keener does not seem to address the work of the Holy Spirit in Luke's writings, that is, whether the Holy Spirit is the one who has inspired Luke in writing these passages and whether the inferences therein are logical deductions out of Luke's own mind.

Keener also goes to some length to defend the historical reliability of the Book of Acts (see ch. 7). He quotes from Colin Hemer and gives a list of examples which prove the historical accuracy of Acts (see pp. 204-206). He also discusses details such as the titles of officials and kings used in the ancient world, the historical background of the Artemis cult in Ephesus, Paul's missions, etcetera, and shows that all these archaeological findings and historical information match nicely well Luke's descriptions in Acts.

Overall, Keener gives a wealth of information regarding the historical and the cultural background of Acts. His book is definitely a valuable resource to serious Bible teachers and scholars.

Benjamin Fung acquired his Doctor of Philosophy in New Testament from the North-West University in South Africa in 2017. He taught New Testament Survey as an adjunct professor for the Boston campus of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in 2009 and was the sole pastor of the Greater Boston Chinese Alliance Church from June 2010 to May 2012. He is also a certified public accountant in both the U.S.A and Hong Kong. He is currently teaching and preaching in various churches and Bible schools in Hong Kong.