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Goals of the *Africanus Journal*

The *Africanus Journal* is an 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., *Julius 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 diverse articles on God as poet, the legacy of the Nubian church, Luke’s reports of Jesus’ Sabbath miracles that convey the in breaking of the kingdom of God, and numerous reviews of books in the disciplines of Bible and theology.

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L to R: William David Spencer, Joo Yun Kim, Dae Sung Kim, Mark Harden, Quonekuia Day, Jennifer Creamer, Aida Besancon Spencer

“The Africanus Guild provides an excellent opportunity to study with scholars who affirm the inerrancy of Scripture at the doctoral level. My mentors continually challenge me to greater thoroughness in research and clarity of expression in writing. The Africanus Guild has given me the support I need to become a better researcher, writer and teacher in a multicultural context.”

–Jennifer Creamer

Jennifer is currently studying for a doctorate in New Testament at North-West University and is a member of the Africanus Guild program at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. She has completed master’s degrees in Old Testament and in New Testament at GCTS. Jennifer has taught biblical studies at various University of the Nations campuses around the world.

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God and Poetry¹

JEFFREY NIEHAUS

If God is the creator, and if he created by words, it can be appropriate to call him a poet. The Greek word for poet means a “maker” (*poiētēs*, from the root, *poieîn*, “to make”), as has often been observed, and in light of this it seems all the more appropriate to call God a poet. On such an understanding God’s poem would be the created order—the visible cosmos and the invisible realm (“heaven”). As for the visible realm, we are told that God did not make it from preexistent matter, but created it from nothing (Rom. 4:17). We are also told that God not only created the matter but also formed it into a cosmos, and this is what the biblical creation account (Gen. 1:1–2:3) portrays.

In Coleridgean terms, which we will discuss below, one could say that God’s creation of energy, matter and the space–time continuum was like a work of the primary imagination, and any formation or poetic modification of energy and created matter in that continuum was like a work of the secondary imagination. The same would probably be true of God’s creation of the invisible or heavenly realms, but we cannot say much about that since we are not told much about it.

1. God and His Ideas

In order to understand what we may reasonably hope to understand about God and his poetic nature, it is important to be able to affirm not only that God created the visible and invisible realms, but also that God is a *planner*—that he can plan and has indeed planned—and the Bible is clear enough on this matter.² If God is one who can plan, however, that means he has ideas of what he intends to do before he does them. It follows that when he created the cosmos, he did so according to his plans or ideas.

If God had ideas of what he would create before he created them, one may make such statements as the following:

God knows all things beforehand, and this is no new idea. But among the things he has known are those things he would create. This is implicit in the statement, “In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him *who works everything in conformity with the purpose of his will...*” (Eph. 1:11). God had an idea (a “plan”) of the cosmos before he chose or willed to create the cosmos, and God had an idea of man before he created man. Before he created a plant, God had the idea of that plant. Before he created an animal, God had the idea of that animal. Put in terms of Eph. 1:11, if God *purposed* to create a thing, he had an idea of that thing. In that sense, each created thing had its archetypal idea in the mind of God. These statements are not a form of unbiblical idealism but are the implications of what Paul has written: God works everything in conformity with the purpose of his will. One might add that Rom. 4:17 implies the same. There we read that God “calls things that are not as though they were.” God could not call things that are not as though they were, unless he had an idea of them before he called them.³

1 This article is an excerpt from chapter one of *God the Poet: Exploring the Origin and Nature of Poetry* by Jeffrey Jay Niehaus (Wooster, OH: Weaver, 2014).

2 So David says, “But the plans of the Lord stand firm forever, / the purposes of his heart through all generations” (Ps. 33:11), and we read of “God’s deliberate plan and foreknowledge” that had to do with salvation (Acts 2:23), and similarly how “God had planned something better for us” than he had revealed to Old Testament believers (Heb. 11:40).

3 Jeffrey Niehaus, “Covenant: An Idea in the Mind of God,” *JETS* 52/2 (June, 2009), 245–46. All of this understands that God is outside time, something also known by, e.g., Dante and his forebears; cf. chapter two of *God the Poet*.

Such considerations imply a further question: What is the nature of an idea? Without entering the tangle of epistemological or phenomenological considerations which have preoccupied philosophers for some time, we can find in the biblical data a sufficient answer to the question for our purposes. Paul tells us that God calls into existence things which “are not.” In order for God to call them, he must have some idea of what they are, as we have observed. But, since God is omniscient, his *idea* of a thing encompasses everything about it, including its *form* or *appearance*.

We have said that God can foresee what he plans to do. But if he *foresees* it, that means *sees* It before it comes to be. If he sees it in advance, he *envisions* it, since he sees what has not yet come into existence. The idea of each created thing, then, is as it were an *image* or *imago* in the mind of God. Accordingly, God plans to create the human in his “image” and according to his “likeness” (Gen. 1:26). The faculty which God employs when he foresees, since it has to do with seeing *what is not yet there*, may reasonably be called God’s imagination (a word whose root is *imago*, or “image, appearance”). If we allow that God is a poet—a “maker”—we may go further and call it his poetic imagination.

We are deducing, then, that God had ideas of what he would create before he created them. We are further deducing that he had those ideas by virtue of his imagination, the power of idea-forming or ideation which produced the archetypal ideas after which God created the visible and invisible realms and all that were in them. Finally, although we have stressed the concept of idea as form or appearance, in order to highlight its connection with the ideational *imagination*, we reaffirm that God’s idea of a thing is exhaustive and includes everything that could be known about that thing, and not only its form or appearance. As the master poet, he imagines perfectly, and so foresees and also foreknows, what he will call into being. And, as a poet, God uses words to give form to his ideas, and we will say more about this below when we discuss the relation of God’s words and Spirit, and human words and spirit (or Spirit).

2. God’s Imagination and Coleridge’s Two Imaginations

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the English poet and philosopher and friend of his contemporary and greater poet, William Wordsworth, wrote what may be called the most enduring proposals about the poetic imagination, inasmuch as people have been using his ideas ever since. Coleridge located the poetic imagination in the *imago Dei*, and thus related it back to God’s own imagination:

The Imagination then I consider either as primary, or secondary. The primary Imagination I hold to be the living power and prime agent of all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary Imagination I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate: or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially vital, even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead.⁴

By the primary imagination Coleridge seems to mean the divinely given (as part of the *imago Dei*) inner source of ideation, since it is not only analogous to God’s creative imagination, but is “a *repetition* in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM” (emphasis added). If we try to identify this agency—or rather the Person who possesses it and makes it possible in humans—more precisely, we probably end up *provisionally* calling it or him the Holy Spirit, functioning in a common grace capacity, since the primary imagination is something (according to Coleridge) which abides in all people and is “the living power and prime agent of all human perception.” Coleridge’s thought here is close to the biblical concept that the Holy Spirit gives life to all people, whether or not they believe in or have ever even heard of the God of the Bible, for example:

4 S. T. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, Vol. I, ed. J. Shaw Cross (Oxford: University Press, 1967), 202.

This is what God the Lord says—
The Creator of the heavens, who stretches them out,
Who spread out the earth with all that springs from it,
Who gives breath to all its people
And life to those who walk on it. (Isa. 42:5)

The NIV translation obscures the fact that the word for “breath” is the Hebrew word (transliterated *ruach*) which also means “spirit.” Consequently, an alternate translation could be, “Who gives Spirit/spirit to all its people.” This cannot mean that God gives his Holy Spirit to dwell in people who do not know him or believe in him, since the Bible makes it clear that the Spirit dwells only in those who have put their faith in Christ. It does however communicate the sense that God’s Spirit is at work imparting and sustaining all human life. This point is made by Elihu to Job: “The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life” (Job 33:4). The parallelism of “Spirit” and “breath” (a standard Hebrew poetic technique) highlights both the creative role of the Spirit and the life-giving role of that same Spirit (cf. Isa. 32:15, which envisions a future outpouring of the Spirit which will bring life: “till the Spirit is poured on us from on high / and the desert becomes a fertile field / and the fertile field seems like a forest”). By contrast, if God were to withdraw his Spirit, all people would die:

If it were his intention,
and he withdrew his Spirit and breath,
all humanity would perish together
and mankind would return to the dust. (Job 34:14)⁵

The Holy Spirit, therefore, sustains creation (through God’s word or possibly the Word, i.e., his Son, Heb. 1:3). He also enables the primary imagination, “the living power and prime agent of all human perception,” of which Coleridge speaks, making it possible for us to make sense of the world around us.

The Holy Spirit does not only make perception (and indeed life itself) possible. The Spirit of God also inspires a true poet and produces true poetry. Milton, therefore, showed great insight when he appealed to the Holy Spirit as his Muse:

Sing, Heav’nly Muse, that on the secret top
Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire
That Shepherd, who first taught the chosen Seed
In the Beginning how the Heav’ns and Earth
Rose out of Chaos. (*Paradise Lost*, Book I, lines 6-10)⁶

Only by the illumination of the Spirit could Milton hope “to justify the ways of God to men” (Book I, line 26).

We have cited and somewhat explored Coleridge’s “primary imagination,” because his identification of it and brief account of it are useful for our forward progress in understanding—or at least suggesting—more about God’s Spirit and his imagination as they relate to a poet. The same may be said of what Coleridge calls the “secondary imagination.” We will consider the two in tandem, as a

5 Here again we have God’s “Spirit” and “breath,” not in parallelism, as in Job 33:4, but together, perhaps in hendiadys (“his Spiritual breath”), showing how “breath” can sometimes be synonymous with, or indicative of, God’s Spirit. So God breathed the breath of life into the first man, and he became “a living being,” indicating also the vivifying role of the Holy Spirit (Gen. 2:7; and cf. Ps. 33:6, “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, / their starry host by the breath (*ruach*) of his mouth,” pointing to the creative role of God’s “breath” or Spirit).

6 Cf. John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. Merrit Y. Hughes (New York: Odyssey Press, 1935), 8, n. 7, in which we read that Milton “thought of his epic ‘not to be obtained by the invocation of dame memory and her siren daughters, but by devout prayer to that eternal Spirit who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out his seraphim, with the hallowed fire of his altar, to touch and purify the lips of whom he pleases’ (P.W. III, 149).”

way of proposing a picture of what happens in a poet when he produces poetry that is truly inspired.⁷ First, however, we consider how God spoke the cosmos into being.

3. God as Poet

One thing to be shown about God as a poet is that his Spirit can produce words. This is easily established by what Jesus promises his disciples, “But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come” (John 16:13). We learn another important piece of information from this statement, namely, that the Spirit speaks *what he hears*. This means that the Father tells the Spirit what to say, and the Spirit then speaks to and through people. This is preeminently so in the case of Jesus, who could say, “The words I have spoken to you are Spirit” (John 6:63). It was also true of the prophets, and it can be true of God’s people in any age, as the Spirit may move.

Jesus’s statement provides the start of an outline which can display a dynamic of divine creative activity. How, then, does (or did) God create?⁸

The triune God is the creator. We know that the Word and the Spirit were at work in creation. We may say so on the basis of Genesis 1:2 and John 1:1 ff., which display the presence of those two Persons of the triune God in creation. We know, moreover, that the Spirit was at work in the ministry of the incarnate Word. We reason by analogy that the Spirit was at work in a parallel manner in the ministry of the *preincarnate* Word. If we allow this proposition for now, we may display God’s creative process in a simple paradigm:

Preincarnate Word	Incarnate Word
1 <i>The Spirit works</i>	<i>The Spirit works</i>
2 <i>through the preincarnate Word</i>	<i>through the incarnate Word</i>
3 <i>to produce Kingdom words/works of power</i>	<i>to produce Kingdom words/works of power</i>

Further analogous reasoning helps us to understand that a similar paradigm applies to the work of the prophets in the Old Testament and the church in the New. That leads to the following, more ample paradigm which applies in a fallen world (understanding that, as Gen. 1:31 implies, there was no warfare before the creation):

The Major Paradigm (Final Form)
1 <i>God works</i>
2 <i>by his Spirit</i>
3 <i>through the Word/a prophet-figure</i>
4 <i>to war against and defeat his foe(s)</i>
5 <i>God establishes a covenant with a people</i>
6 <i>God’s covenant establishes that people as God’s people</i>
7 <i>God establishes a temple among his people, because he will reside among them</i>

⁷ Inspired but, we would add, not inerrant, since only Scripture—and the words of Christ—possess that quality (cf. John 6:63, 7:18, 10:35).

⁸ The following discussion is based on a fuller range of evidence developed elsewhere. Cf. footnote #9, below.

We add the consideration that the Father determines what his Spirit will say, or moves his Spirit to do what he will. It is now possible to illustrate, in the following simple diagram, basic parallels between the major stages of God's work:

KINGDOM CREATION PARADIGM

Father	Father & Son	Father	Father & Son
1	1	1	1
Holy Spirit	Holy Spirit	Holy Spirit	Holy Spirit
1	1	1	1
Preincarnate Word	Prophet/Seer	Incarnate Word	Church
1	1	1	1
Kingdom Work	Kingdom Work	Kingdom Work	Kingdom Work

The Father caused the Spirit to work through the preincarnate Word to produce the words and works of power that were the creative *fiats* and their resultant products. Likewise, the Father caused the Spirit to work through the incarnate Word to produce the words and works of power that were Jesus' words (cf. "The words I have spoken to you are Spirit, and they are life," John 6:63) and signs and wonders (e.g., ". . . if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" Matthew 12:28). On the other hand—once Jesus had ascended to be with the Father—the Father and the Son together sent (and send) the Holy Spirit to dwell in, work in, and work through all believers (John 15:26, cf. Luke 11:13). By analogy, we suggest that the Father and the Son likewise sent the Spirit to work through (although not yet to dwell in) God's people in Old Testament times.⁹ The Holy Spirit, then, works through persons in any age to *realize* God's plans and ideas. This is God's poetic process: he imagines what he will create, and then causes his Spirit to work through the person of his Son, or through a human person in a poetic act, to create a work that is faithful to God's original idea.

The dynamic we have displayed shows that God's Spirit worked through his Word (his preincarnate Son) to produce the original creation. I suggest that the same process is true as God sustains what he has created. When Hebrews 1:3 tells us that he is "sustaining all things by his powerful word," and when we know that it is God's Spirit who speaks and who brings (and who is) life, the likelihood that the Spirit is sustaining all things through the Word, just as he created all things through the Word, is very great. We proceed on this understanding.

The sustaining work of the Spirit through the Word is ongoing. Otherwise, as Job says, if God withdrew his Spirit, all would perish. So the cosmos is indebted, for its moment-to-moment continuation, to the Spirit who works through the Word, and to the Word who allows the Spirit to work through himself, and to the Father who continues this process in faithfulness to his original creative ideas and in his covenantal faithfulness to creation.¹⁰ God is the poet whose Spirit created by words through the Word, faithful to his archetypal ideas, and he is the poet who continues to sing his creative song. It is not without reason, then, that Lewis portrayed Aslan as creating Narnia with a song.¹¹

⁹ The foregoing discussion is taken almost verbatim from a summary made in the first chapter of a forthcoming biblical theology. Important lines of evidence indicate that the Holy Spirit did not dwell in any of the Lord's people before Christ, and this matter is also taken up in that work. For the paradigm and discussion of it, cf. already Jeffrey J. Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology*, hereafter *ANETBT* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008), 172-76.

¹⁰ For the idea of an Adamic or Creation covenant, cf. Jeffrey Niehaus, "Covenant and Narrative, God and Time," *JETS* 53/3 (September 2010), 538-41.

¹¹ C. S. Lewis, *The Magician's Nephew*, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, Vol. 6 (New York: Macmillan, 1955), 87-103.

4. Inspiration and Imagination

We return now to our discussion of what Coleridge termed the primary imagination and the secondary imagination. Unfortunately, he did not elaborate much on these terms, beyond the brief account of them which he gave at the end of the thirteenth chapter of the *Biographia Literaria*, quoted above. He wrote enough, however, to open the discussion and imply a direction for it, and we now dare to take up the thread where he left it. I will, moreover, address this matter on the basis of my own experience as a poet—experience which, after all, motivated me to consider attempting such a work as the present volume.

We recall that Coleridge defined the primary imagination as “the living power and prime agent of all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM.” By “the eternal act of creation” Coleridge means first the role of imagination in enabling the subject to see itself as object in an ongoing process of self-creation, in the case of God, so that God *is* because of himself (“I AM *because* I AM”—what the theologians call God’s *aseity*, his self-existence).¹² What he says also however implies essentially what we read in Hebrews 1:3, that “The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.” That is, God sustains all things by constantly “creating” them or recreating them—maintaining them in a created status (from nanosecond to nanosecond, so to speak)—as suggested by the passages noted above (Isa. 42:5, Job 34:14). Coleridge’s statement therefore assigns the primary imagination a twofold role: to enable perception which agrees with the Creator’s ongoing sustaining of creation in a created status, and also thereby to lay the foundation for creativity which employs perceived data as a shared, sustained, and ordered frame of reference in which and on the basis of which the secondary imagination will create whatever it will create. However, although this “agency” in a human being is enabled somehow by the Holy Spirit, the primary imagination does not create *ex nihilo*, as God did, but it is in perfect harmony with God’s ongoing support (or “creation”) of all things, and gives us a faithful and organized perception of them.

As the primary imagination enables perception in all people, it is also essentially what underlies a poet’s ability as a creator. As it works within a poet it lays a foundation for poetry, and the poetic beauty and truth produced are in harmony with that foundation. This sort of poetic production is what one could justly call inspired—to the extent that the poet can allow its ideas to flow without obstruction as he composes.

The secondary imagination, however, is the faculty within the poet which actually composes. Coleridge defines the secondary imagination as follows: “The secondary Imagination I consider as an echo of the former.” This echoing quality is consistent with a human’s being made in the image of God, which is a reflex of God’s form and nature. The secondary imagination is “co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation.” It coexists with the will, and the will determines how it shall be employed. This imagination, too, is creative, but in the following way: “It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate: or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify.” Whereas the primary imagination enables one to be in poetic harmony with the poetic world God has created and continually creates—in short, to perceive it faithfully in response to God’s ongoing recreation—, the secondary, in a similar harmony,

¹² Cf. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, Vol. I, 202. If we ignore the Masoretic vocalization and read the verbs differently (e.g., “I cause to be what I will be”), the idea of God’s *aseity* is even more clearly what the divine self-naming is about. One could also translate, “I will create what I will create,” a statement of God’s apparently ongoing creation/recreation of the created order, to which Heb. 1:3 also points. Finally, all three translations, “I am (will be) that/because I am (will be),” “I will create what I will be,” and “I will create what I will create,” are possible and could occur to a reader of the pre-vocalized text, and I think it is part of God’s wittiness that what he said to Moses could subsequently be handed down in an originally unvocalized text that implies all three things, all three of which are true.

produces art which reflects the soundness of the created order or, when it is not in such simple harmony, still “struggles to idealize and to unify,” in other words, takes the perceptual data made possible by the primary imagination and “struggles” or labors to arrange them into works of art.

As the secondary imagination works within a poet, therefore, it produces poetry which is or strives to be in harmony with the beauty and truth produced and sustained by the Holy Spirit working through the Word. In this creative process, the poetic production may or may not be simply and purely inspired, but in any case the secondary (or “poetic”) imagination works to achieve a level of clarity and beauty and truth that has been seen in what has been perceived, and this is sensed as a goal imparted by the Spirit, and both within the same poet.

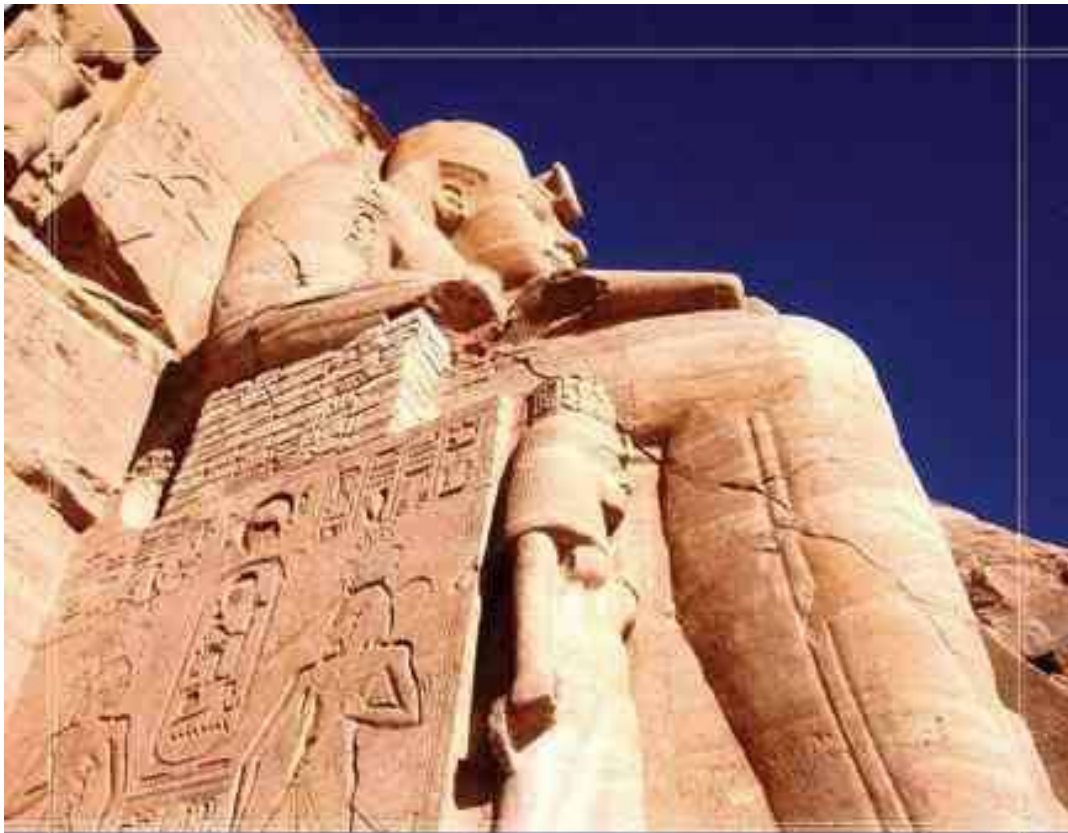
Since one cannot be in the soul of another person, and one cannot be in the soul of a poet, living or dead, one cannot unequivocally say, of two passages from the same poet, which is more inspired or in immediate harmony with a divine idea, and which is more the result of hard work and gradual iteration toward a level of quality that would appear immediately inspired or might be thought to be so inspired, or perhaps better, comes closer to realizing the idea God had in mind by calling for the work. Impossible as it may be to make such a distinction with certainty, it remains true that people who have experienced good poetry (or good art in any other form) often have a sense that a particular work, or part of a work, must have been “inspired,” even if they have only a vague idea of what that means, or what the source of the inspiration might be. It is also true that a poet may have a sense of the same distinction.

Another aspect to the poetic process which ought to be mentioned has to do with the true origin of a poem. We are told by the apostle that “we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Eph. 2:10). Now, if one is composing a poem, and if that poem is a work to which God has called the poet, then the poet’s goal and hope are (or should be) that the poem would realize *God’s idea of it*, as much as possible. The same concept logically applies to any work to which God calls a person—anything from, e.g., ministering to the needy to building a house to composing a symphony—but we are speaking here of poetry in particular.

The Christian poet should consequently be in the best position to realize such a goal, since he can not only be aware of it in principle but can also draw on the help of God’s Spirit to accomplish the goal. We understand that one cannot draw on God’s Spirit as one would draw on a bank account. There can be no presumption here. But, one can pray for God’s help and for the guidance and inspiration of his Spirit in the composition—the initial writing and any appropriate revisions—of a poetical work. In any such undertaking humility is paramount, and patience is a closely related and valuable attribute.

It is important to remember, though, that inspiration is not limited to Christian poets. If the Holy Spirit can anoint and move a pagan king such as Cyrus (Isa. 45:1–6), he can do the same with anyone in any calling, including creative artists. Humility ought to be a fundamental part of the creative process and the poetic nature in any case, because we know God “opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble” (James 4:6).

Jeffrey Jay Niehaus is Professor of Old Testament at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. He has published works of biblical theology and poetry, including the following: *God at Sinai: Covenant and Theophany in the Bible and Ancient Near East* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995); *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008); *Preludes: An Autobiography in Verse* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2013); *Sonnets Subtropical and Existential* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2014); *God the Poet: Exploring the Origin and Nature of Poetry* (Wooster, OH: Weaver, 2014); *Biblical Theology, Volume One: The Common Grace Covenants* (Wooster, OH: Weaver, 2014).



ANCIENT
NEAR EASTERN
THEMES IN
BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

Jeffrey J. Niehaus

The Decline of Nubian Christianity under Islam (641-1517 CE)

VINCE BANTU

“Cush will quickly stretch out her hands to God” Psalm 68:31

Whether the psalmist had received revelation of the acceptance of the Christian tradition among the inhabitants of Cush in Late Antiquity remains an interesting possibility. What is clear is that the inheritors of Cushite territory, the Noba, maintained a Christian tradition from as early as the fourth century.¹ However, the rise of Islam in the mid-seventh century introduced a monumental shift that affected Christian communities throughout the Near East. While the spread of Islam into Christian Near Eastern regions typically brought forth their eventual subjugation, the encounter of Islam with Nubia resulted in an unprecedented truce that lasted 600 years until the eventual decline and ultimate extinction of Nubian Christianity.

Of the multitude of tragedies wrought by the recent surge of extremist violence in Iraq and Syria, a recurring calamity is the targeting of religious minority groups. A prominent example is the recent ISIS capture and occupation of Mosul, a city that had a significant Christian population for centuries until being forcibly expelled recently. Christian (as well as Muslim) buildings have been destroyed and artifacts have been sold on the black market in an attempt to destroy the past of entire religious communities.

Christian minority groups of the Middle East and North Africa have lived in a constant state of vulnerability as many communities have experienced significant decline and, in some cases, extinction. The Nubian church is one of the most well-known examples of a once-flourishing church that, sadly, have disappeared today. In the face of continuing challenges confronting Christians in this part of the world, it remains imperative for the modern Church to treasure the legacy of these forerunners of the faith.

In this vein, the following study will analyze the Christianity of Nubia and its decline under Islamic hegemony. A close investigation of the sources illuminating the Nubian milieu during its time of peace with Islam as well as the events leading to the eventual demise of Christianity in the region will provide useful insight regarding the relationship between the decline of Nubian Christianity and the contemporaneous rise of Islam.

The first military contact between Arab and Nubian forces occurred with the advances of Rashidun forces under ‘Amr ibn al-‘Ās from the recently conquered Egypt into the land south of the First Cataract. The account according to *Al-Balādhurī* (c. 890 CE) of these early battles

1 P. L. Shinnie, “Christian Nubia,” in *The Cambridge History of Africa Vol. 2 from c. 500 BC to 1050 AD*, ed. J.D. Fage (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 556-564. Though the Christianization of Nubia is a topic beyond the scope of this paper, Shinnie succinctly describes Christianity’s rapid acceptance in Nubia during the fifth century as the result of Egypt’s non-Chalcedonian influence (as evidenced by Coptic archeological remains in fourth-century Nubia). Shinnie argues for an earlier date than the traditional date of 540 CE when Justinian sent Chalcedonian missionaries to Nubia immediately followed by non-Chalcedonian missionaries sent by Justinian’s wife Theodora. A more recent monograph focused primarily on the beginning of Nubian Christianity presents the origins as occurring in three stages: “I propose that the religious transformation of Nubia occurred in three stages and the Byzantine missions marked the third and final stage, but not necessarily the most decisive for initiating the conversion process. The preceding two stages were characterized by Coptic monks’ and merchants’ dealing with Nubian elite in the late fourth and early fifth centuries and the military victory of the Nubian king Silko in the mid-fifth century,” Salim Faraji, *The Roots of Nubian Christianity Uncovered* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2012), 68-69, see also p. 261. Faraji suggests a historical methodology called African Nubiology as he critiques the Eurocentric tendency in Western scholarship to situate Nubian Christianity as a peripheral outpost of Byzantine and Roman Christianity; *Ibid*, 23. Rather, Faraji argues for the decisive forces behind the development of Nubian Christianity to have been primarily internal, specifically the Silko inscription attesting to the fifth-century Nubian monarch’s attribution of his military success to God (*Ibid*, 85).

provides much of the information regarding initial contact of Nubians and Arabs. In 641 CE an Arab cavalry of 20,000 soldiers led by ‘Uqba ibn Nāfi’ were defeated by the skillful Nubian archers who left many Arabs wounded and blinded.² This is significant in that the resistance put forth by the Nubians was unparalleled by any other nation attacked by the Muslims.³ Nubia’s excellence in archery is attested in both the pharaonic Egyptian and Meroitic literature before this period.⁴

Although ‘Amr ibn al-‘Ās was unwilling to stop his campaigns, his successor ‘Abd Allah ibn Sa’d made a peace treaty with the Nubians in 645 CE. However, al-Maqrīzī relates that the Nubians under King Qalidurut broke this treaty leading to further warfare in 651 CE. ‘Abd Allah ibn Sa’d led a cavalry of 5,000 men into Old Dongola (the capital of the Nubian kingdom of Makuria) and destroyed its city walls and cathedral.⁵ This battle ended in a treaty that marked a transition in Nubian history lasting several centuries. Commonly referred to as the *baqt* (from the Greek *pakton*), this treaty stipulated the Nubians’ freedom for Christian worship, the delivery of 360 Nubian slaves annually, and the freedom of worship for Muslims in the Nubian empire. The following is an excerpt from the text of the *baqt* as recorded by the Arab historian Maqrizi:

Verily, you are communities of Nubia enjoying the guarantee of Allah and that of His Messenger Mohammed, the Prophet; with the condition that we shall not wage war against you, nor declare war against you, nor raid you, as long as you abide by the stipulations which are in effect between us and you. That you may enter our territories, passing through but not taking up residence in them, and we may enter yours through but not taking up residence in them. You are to look after the safety of any Moslem or ally who lodges in your territories... You are to return every slave of the Moslems who runs off to you... You are to look after the mosque which the Moslems have built in the courtyard of your capital... Each year you are to deliver 360 slaves... If you (violate any of these stipulations)... this truce and guarantee which we and you have equally set down will be void... God be the witness of that between us.⁶

While the *baqt* presents the Nubians as subservient to the Arabs,⁷ it should be noted that *Al-Balādhurī’s* account describes the Arabs’ requirement of the delivery of food, clothing and wine which were to be given in exchange for the Nubian slaves.⁸ More importantly, the unique status of Nubia in relation to the Muslim world as neither *Dar-el-Islam* (“house of the faithful”) nor *Dar el-Harb* (“house of the enemy”) was like none other in this period:⁹ “Seen in this light, from the Nubian perspective, the *baqt* treaty was no sign of Nubia’s subordination to Muslim Egypt but a legitimate process of gift exchange.”¹⁰ The perspective of the Arabic sources from which much of the information regarding the *baqt* (which were written centuries after the events they describe), should be taken with a grain of salt:

As memory of the events of 652 faded into an ever-more-distant and comfortably obscure past, scholars of the ninth century began to formulate a more tolerable interpretation of history, according to which the obvious propensity of Makurian kings periodically to send substantial shipments of valuable goods to Egypt could be interpreted not as the initiation of a reciprocal royal exchange, but as a unilateral and allegedly obligatory annual tribute. The final expression of this Islamic revisionist

2 Ibid., 564-5; *Al-Balādhurī* refers to the Nubian military’s archers as “pupil smiters.”

3 William Y. Adams, *Nubia: Corridor to Africa* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), 450.

4 Shinnie, “Christian Nubia,” 564.

5 Ibid., 565.

6 Adams, *Nubia*, 451-452.

7 See Peter Geiser, *The Egyptian Nubian: A Study in Social Symbiosis* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1986), 20.

8 Shinnie, “Christian Nubia,” 567.

9 Adams, *Nubia*, 452.

10 Giovanni R. Ruffini, *Medieval Nubia: A Social and Economic History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 7.

interpretation had to await the eventual destruction of Makuria and the eradication of her court culture; it was formulated, in the end, by the fifteenth-century author al-Maqrizi, who need fear no Nubian rebuttal.¹¹

Although Nubia was able to hold off Arab invasion in the seventh century, the Nubian church existed in isolation from the rest of the Christian world as its communication with their Alexandrian Patriarch was now limited.¹² However, the relief of the danger of Arab invasion for the next 600 years allowed for the development of a distinctive Nubian culture- it is for this reason that many Nubian scholars consider the period of *baqt* as the “golden age of Christian Nubia.”¹³

Aside from Arabic sources, the primary source for information regarding Nubian history is the archeological remains in churches, homes, art and clothing. However, the era following the *baqt* is Nubia’s most well-known due to the development of its literary culture. The language of medieval Nubia, Old Nubian, is written in Greco-Coptic script with the addition of three Meroitic symbols. The appearance of Old Nubian in the ninth century was preceded by a period of three hundred years of an absence of Nubian literature following the decline of the Meroitic kingdom. The Old Nubian corpus, though extremely small, is largely religious with some examples of lay literature such as legal matters regarding land or slaves. Although the Arabic language became prominent in the thirteenth century and eventually dominated the region in the sixteenth century, it is clear that Old Nubian was the language of the Nubians during the period of the *baqt*.¹⁴

The Christian faith of Nubia is argued to be non-Chalcedonian¹⁵ and directly under the authority of the Patriarch of Alexandria.¹⁶ However, there are arguments for Nubian Christianity to be of a Melkite¹⁷ nature due to Greek inscriptions found at the church of Faras; however, this is improbable.¹⁸ It seems likely that, while there may have been brief periods of Melkite inroads in Nubia, the bishops of Nubia came under the authority of the non-Chalcedonian bishops of Alexandria no later than the eighth century and persisted as such for the remaining 600 years of Nubian Christianity.¹⁹

11 Jay Spaulding, “Medieval Christian Nubia and the Islamic World: A Reconsideration of the Baqt Treaty,” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 28 (1995): 577-594.

12 Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Sudan: A Country Study* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1992), 9.

13 Shinnie, “Christian Nubia,” 567.

14 *Ibid.*, 573-574.

15 Rejecting the formula of the Council of Chalcedon (451 CE) where it was accepted that Jesus exists in one person (*hypostases*) and two natures (*physis*) and arguing instead for one person in one nature. Often pejoratively labelled “Monophysites,” a more ecumenically respectful term that has come into modern usage is “Miaphysite.” See Dietmar Winkler, “Miaphysitism: A New Term for Use in the History of Dogma and in Ecumenical Theology,” *The Harp* 10 (1997): 33-40.

16 In one instance of documentary evidence, a Nubian king consults the Alexandrian Patriarch as to the eligibility for ordination of a particular bishop, Ruffini, *Medieval Nubia*, 15.

17 The pejorative term for Chalcedonians used by anti-Chalcedonians literally meaning “belonging to the king.” This epithet represents the association of Chalcedonian doctrine with imperial Byzantium from the perspective of Miaphysites in Egypt, Syria, Armenia and Nubia.

18 *Ibid.*, 580. It should be noted that while the Nubian bishops were under the authority of the anti-Chalcedonian Alexandrian Patriarch, Michael the Syrian mentions the Melkites “misleading” the Nubians- see Derek A. Welsby, *The Medieval Kingdoms of Nubia: Pagans, Christians and Muslims along the Middle Nile* (London: The British Museum Press, 2002), 100.

19 Martin Krause, “Neue Quellen und Probleme zur Kirchengeschichte Nubiens,” in *Christentum am Roten Meer: 2 Bände*, eds. Franz Altheim & Ruth Stiehl (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1971), 516-518; In another article, Krause goes so far as to suggest that Christian Nubia’s anti-Chalcedonian roots were from the beginning and that the account of the Byzantine mission in John of Ephesus is unreliable. See Martin Krause, “Zur Kirchengeschichte Nubiens,” in *Nubian Culture Past and Present: Main Papers Presented at the Sixth International Conference for Nubian Studies in Uppsala*, ed. Tomas Hägg (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1986), 293-305.

The nature of church-state relations in Christian Nubia marked a sharp change in Nubian history from earlier times. The Nubian monarch was no longer considered divine and the church was governed from outside the boundaries of the empire.²⁰ However, Ibn Selim al-Aswani reports that, during his visit to Nubia in the tenth century, the Makurian king retained the power to subject any citizen in the kingdom to slavery.²¹ Rufini's analysis of the documentary evidence from Qasr Ibrim, however, challenges previous scholarship in its understanding of the extent of Nubian royal power. Rufini's work specifically demonstrates the existence of private land ownership in medieval Nubia, challenging the idea of a royal land monopoly.²²

The two northern Nubian kingdoms, Nobatia and Makuria, were united as Makuria no later than 710 CE as evidenced by dedicatory inscriptions of King Mercurios for a church in Taifa.²³ Some scholars see this as the beginning of the united kingdoms²⁴ while others have argued that the lack of mention of Nobatia or Alodia/Alwa as separate kingdoms in Arabic sources indicate their unity during the formation of the *baqt*.²⁵ It has also been argued that the threat of Arab invaders created the impetus for the merging of the two kingdoms,²⁶ but this is not supported in the literary evidence. It is likely that the unification of the empires was a result of the recent spread of Christianity as a unifying force across Nubia.²⁷

William Adams has argued, however, that the unification of the empires had limited implications as Nobatia maintained a suzerain monarch until the fifteenth century. Furthermore, Ibn Selim el-Aswani testified to the existence of a separate language of the Nobatians from that of the Makurians.²⁸ That the *eparch* of Nobatia was a self-proclaimed "king" while also professing allegiance to the Makurian monarch is shown in the unique pottery and iconography found at the Rivergate church at Faras.²⁹ However, Ibn Selim al-Aswani describes Alodia/Alwa as having a more powerful king, a larger army, more horses, and a more fertile and larger land than the two northern kingdoms. This is interesting as Ibn Selim al-Aswani's ("the one from Aswan") diplomatic sojourn to Nobatia, Makuria, and Alodia/Alwa is one of the few extant accounts of daily life in Alodia/Alwa.³⁰

20 John H. Taylor, *Egypt and Nubia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 64.

21 Welsby, *The Medieval Kingdoms of Nubia*, 92.

22 Rufini, *Medieval Nubia*, 19.

23 Adams, *Nubia*, 454.

24 Ugo Monneret de Villard, "Storia della Nubia Cristiana," in *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 18, eds. Franz Diekamp, Ugo Monneret de Villard, & Pontificio Institutum Orientalium Studiorum (Rome: Pontificio Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1938), 81-83.

25 Adams, *Nubia*, 454.

26 Metz, *Sudan*, 8.

27 Taylor, *Egypt and Nubia*, 64.

28 William Y. Adams, "The United Kingdom of Makouria and Nobadia: A Medieval Nubian Anomaly," in *Egypt and Africa: Nubia from Prehistory to Islam*, ed. W.V. Davies (London: British Museum Press, 1991), 257-263.

29 Louis V. Žabkar, "The Eparch of Nubia as King," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 22 (1963): 217-19.

30 Welsby, *Medieval Kingdoms of Nubia*, 81.



Christian Nubia enjoyed a predominately peaceful and prosperous time during the 600 years following the enactment of the *baqt* under the Umayyad, Abbasid, Fatimid, and Ayyubid dynasties. However, there were instances of tension with their Egyptian neighbors to the north. Abu Salih relates a story of questionable authenticity³² regarding a Nubian army of 100,000 invading Egypt in 745 CE and forcing the Arab governor to release the Alexandrian Patriarch, whom he had imprisoned.³³

After initially requesting the release of the Alexandrian Patriarch Abba Michael, the Nubian king Cyriacus led his troops all the way to Cairo due to the emir Abd al-Malik's refusal to release the Patriarch. Upon arrival in Cairo, Cyriacus sent his *eparch*³⁴ to demand the release of the Patriarch resulting in the capture of the *eparch*. Upon Cyriacus' arrival in Cairo, Abd al-Malik complied and released both the *eparch* and the Patriarch. It is possible that the military weakness of al-Malik is due to internal Egyptian conflicts regarding the taxation of Coptic Christians.³⁵

At the dawn of the Abbasid caliphate, the Egyptian governor expressed grievances to the Nubians for failure to honor the terms of the *baqt* in a letter that is the largest surviving Arabic text from this early period (759 CE).³⁶ J. Martin Plumley has identified the Egyptian governor to be Maamed ibn al-Asath.³⁷ In addition to complaints about the failure to deliver the 360 required slaves and raids on Aswan by neighboring Blemmyes tribes, the letter expressed further frustrations:³⁸

31 Image from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alodia>, accessed 8/13/15.

32 Adams, *Nubia*, 454.

33 B. T. Alfred Evetts & Joshua Butler, *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt and Some Neighboring Countries* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2001), 267-268.

34 The second-in-command of all Nubia, usually stationed in Qasr Ibrim. What is unclear is the precise nature between the *eparch* and the royal family. For a detailed discussion, see Welsby, *Medieval Kingdoms of Nubia*, 93-94.

35 Welsby, *Medieval Kingdoms of Nubia*, 73.

36 J. Martin Plumley, "An Eighth-Century Arabic Letter to the King of Nubia," *Journal of Egyptian Archeology* 61 (1975): 241-245.

37 *Ibid.*, 242.

38 Adams, *Nubia*, 451-452; The *Baqt* stipulated Nubians' responsibility to control neighboring tribes. For a discussion

You do not bring to us that to which you are liable according to the *baqt* on the basis of which agreement was made with you; nor do you return those of our slaves who run away to you; nor are our merchants safe among you; nor do you hasten to permit our messengers to return to us...So look into that about which I have written to you and hasten the dispatching to us of your remaining liability according to the *baqt* for the years for which you owe and do not send that in which there is no good...Hasten that and do not delay it. If you do not obey, I shall have my view concerning what is between you and me, God willing.³⁹

Considered to be the most diplomatically significant event in Nubian history, the Nubian prince George I visited the Abbasid caliph Al-Mu'tasim in early ninth-century Baghdad.⁴⁰ Again, the Nubian monarch failed to honor the terms of the *baqt*, angering the Abbasid caliph to the point of requiring 5000 slaves. The Nubian king sent his son, the later king George I, to Baghdad. The meeting entailed several positive results for the Nubians: George I received lavish gifts, several Nubian prisoners were returned, Egyptian payment of commodities in exchange for Nubian slaves resumed, and the exchange would now occur every three years instead of every year.⁴¹

The reign of George I was one of tension with the Tulunids as well as internal struggling for the throne of Makuria. Al-Maqrizi describes how Mohammed Abdallah al-Omari led a successful campaign against the Blemmyes king Ali Baba and subsequently sent gold-miners into the eastern desert beyond Aswan.⁴² Upon their capture and execution by King George I, al-Omari launched a successful battle against Makuria in the region of Abu Hamed. George I responded with an elite force lead by his nephew Nyuti who later defected to the Tulunids. After George I's first son failed to defeat al-Omari, he sent his other son Zacharias, who bribed al-Omari to remain neutral and then captured and killed the defected Nyuti. However, Zacharias then turned on al-Omari and drove his forces back north of Aswan.

At the dawn of the Fatimid caliphate in Egypt, diplomatic relations continued as Nubia had again declined in honoring the terms of the *baqt*.⁴³ In 969 CE, the Egyptian Fatimid governor Gohar sent a letter to the Nubian king requesting that he either convert to Islam or resume the *baqt*. While it is uncertain whether the terms of the *baqt* were observed, thereafter, Nubian diplomatic relations with the Egyptian Fatimids were generally amicable.⁴⁴

of the conversion of the Blemmyes to Christianity and their subsequent relationship to Nubia see Sir Laurence Kirwan, "Studies in the Later History of Nubia," in *Studies on the History of Late Antique and Christian Nubia*, eds. T. Hägg, L. Török & D.A. Welsby (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 69-105. See also, Bruce Williams, "Studies in the Later History of Nubia," a review in the *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 64 (2005): 309-311.

39 Stanley Burstein ed., *Ancient African Civilizations: Kush and Axum* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1998), 128-131: Burstein's translation of the letter (above) attributes the composition of the letter to a person named Maymun on the 12th of Rajab, year 141 (759 CE).

40 Adams, *Nubia*, 455.

41 Giovanni Vantini, "Le roi Kirki de Nubie à Baghdad: un ou deux voyages?" in *Kunst und Geschichte Nubiens in christlicher Zeit*, ed. E. Dinkler (Recklinghausen: A. Bongers, 1970), 41-48: the article discusses the possibility that George I may have returned before the caliph under the circumstance of being a prisoner of war with the Egyptians. He dismisses this theory as an Islamic anti-Nubian version of George's first visit.

42 Shinnie, "Christian Nubia," 578.

43 Ruffini notes that "Nubia's periodic decisions to cut off *baqt* payments were thus less acts of defiance than recognition that Egypt's own payments were sometimes not forthcoming," *Medieval Nubia*, 8.

44 Adams, *Nubia*, 456.



Tensions rose at the assumption of the Ayyubid sultan Salāh ad-Dīn in 1171 CE. For uncertain reasons, Nubian forces advanced north and, after pillaging Aswan, were driven back by Egyptian forces.⁴⁶ It is possible that the insurgence was an attempt to aid the dwindling Fatimids with whom the Nubians were allied for the previous two centuries.⁴⁷ It is also possible that the Nubians were attempting to take advantage of their struggling neighbors as the raids occurred contemporaneously with times of economic hardship in Egypt.⁴⁸ The Aswan raid is also understood to be influenced by the spirit of the Crusades. In addition to the constant frustrations with the *baqt*, the Nubians were accustomed to engaging in religious conflicts, such as the attempt to rescue the Alexandrian Patriarch. It is also likely that Nubian Christians adopted the role of religious guardian of the Egyptian church.⁴⁹

The following year Salāh ad-Dīn sent his brother Shams ad-Dawla into Nubia with an expeditionary force.⁵⁰ Shams ad-Dawla seized the citadel of Qasr Ibrim, imprisoned the bishop and 700,000 Nubians, killed 70 pigs,⁵¹ and temporarily converted the citadel into a mosque. However, upon hearing negative reports from an expedition reporting Dongola to be undesirable land, Shams ad-Dawla withdrew his forces and Nubia lived in peace with the Egyptian Ayyubids.⁵²

It should not be assumed that ad-Dawla's withdrawal from Qasr Ibrim indicates the weakness of the Nubian forces.⁵³ The record of this campaign and much of what we can discern of Nubia's

45 Icon of Bishop Marianos with Madonna and Child from the early eleventh century cathedral at Faras. The icon demonstrates both Byzantine Orthodox and indigenous Nubian features, most notably the bells on the bishop's vestments. This is one of the most well-known Nubian icons that emerges during the tension between Nubia and the Egyptian Fatimids, just at the dawn of the decline of Nubian Christianity. Image from: <http://rumkatkilise.org/nubia.htm> accessed 8/13/15.

46 Ibid.

47 Shinnie, "Christian Nubia," 583.

48 Taylor, *Egypt and Nubia*, 69; Welsby, *Medieval Kingdoms of Nubia*, 75.

49 Beshir Ibrahim Beshir, "New Light on Nubian Fatimid Relations," *Arabica: Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies* 22 (1975): 15-24.

50 Ruffini, *Medieval Nubia*, 2.

51 Or 700 pigs, see Shinnie, "Christian Nubia," 583.

52 Evetts & Butler, *Churches and Monasteries*, 266-267.

53 Ivan Hrbek, "Egypt, Nubia and the Eastern Deserts" in *The Cambridge History of Africa, Vol. 3 from c. 1050 to c. 1600*, ed. Roland Oliver (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 74-75.

history comes from Arabic sources that are biased in favor of the Arab Egyptian forces. It is also likely that ad-Dawla did not want to experience the same successful resistance of the Nubians as did the initial Rashidun forces three centuries earlier. Agriculturally lucrative land was not Salāh ad-Dīn's primary interest in Nubia to begin with; the Ayyubid monarch was fearful of the possibility of Nureddin, king of Mosul's invading Egypt. Salāh ad-Dīn's interest in Nubia was as a potential site for retreat.⁵⁴

Such interest in Nubia was not new: the eighth-century Umayyad caliph Abdallah ibn Marwan sought refuge in Nubia as he fled from Damascus. Ibn Marwan evacuated Nubia upon being denied asylum by the Makurian king. Another example is when Abu Rakwa, a Muslim member of the Spanish Umayyad family, fled to Nubia from the Fayyum upon his defeat by al-Hakim. This was also an example of the Nubians honoring the terms of the *baqt* to provide safe haven for Arab Muslims in Nubian territory. The Makurian king handed Abu Rakwa back to the Egyptian caliph with a Makurian prince in tow bearing gifts. In a similar episode, the leader of the Arab tribe Beni Kanz, Kanz ad-Dawla, fled to Nubia for fear of punishment for sacking Aswan. In this case also, Kanz ad-Dawla was handed over to the Egyptian caliph by the Nubians.⁵⁵

Although the shift to Muslim rule of Nubia in 1250 CE marks the beginning of the Islamicization of Nubia which culminated at the Ottoman conquest of Egypt in 1517 CE, the Arabization of Nubia had already been underway for some time. Al-Aswani reports the presence of land-owning Arabs in Lower Nubia east of the Nile in the latter part of the tenth century. However, the Arabs had not yet penetrated the interior of Makuria and, even less so, Alodia/Alwa.⁵⁶ During the later period of the *baqt*, the Arabization of Nubia occurred not in the form of international conflict, but of Arab immigration into Nubia in the Red Sea hills, beginning in massive numbers in the thirteenth century. What resulted was a new culture comprised of the nomadic Arab traders (predominately of the Ja'aliyin group) and the native Nubians retaining elements and adaptations of both cultures.

Through intermarriage and consistent migration across the Red Sea, Arab-Nubians grew in numbers long before the Islamic conquest. Some view the progressive rise of the Arab-Nubian population as the reason for the ease of Islamic control in the post-Christian era.⁵⁷ Perhaps the most well-known example of this is the Beni Kanz (modern Kenzi) — a multi-ethnic group composed of northern Blemmyes who encountered Arab merchants along the Red Sea. It was on the Red Sea coast that this group lived in limited autonomy from Makuria. The subsequent Islamicization of the newly-formed Beni Kanz represents the beginning of the processes of both Arabization and Islamicization of all Nubia.⁵⁸

From a political standpoint, however, the start of the Bahri Mamluk dynasty in 1250 CE represents the beginning of the end of Nubian Christianity and the beginning of the Islamicization in Nubia. In other words, Nubia entered a "feudal age."⁵⁹ Information regarding the Arab Mamluk conquest of Makuria comes from the Arabic historians Nuwairi, Mufaddal, Ibn Khaldun, and al-Maqrīzī.⁶⁰ In 1268, the Nubian king David sent word requesting recognition from the Mamluk sultan Bybars after successfully deposing his uncle. Bybars made no response to this request and David attacked the Red Sea port of Aidhab four years later. The Mamluk governor of Upper Egypt

54 Welsby, *Medieval Kingdoms of Nubia*, 75.

55 Ibid., 77.

56 Hrbek, "Egypt, Nubia, and the Eastern Desert," 70.

57 Adams, *Nubia*, 558.

58 William Adams, "The Twilight of Nubian Christianity," in *Nubia: Récentes Recherches Actes du colloque Nubiologique International au Musée National de Varsovie, 19-22 Juin 1972*, ed. Kazimierz Michałowski (Varsovie: Musée National, 1975), 13.

59 Adams, *Nubia*, 522.

60 These authors are translated and commented on in Yūsuf Fadl Hasan, *The Arabs and the Sudan from the Seventh to the Early Sixteenth Century* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1967), 106-123.

sent forces into Lower Nubia, capturing many and bringing them to Cairo for execution.

In 1275 CE, Nubian prince Shekenda appealed to the Mamluk sultan for aid in overthrowing King David to which he agreed. Shekenda assumed the throne of Dongola and David fled to Alodia/Alwa. What is significant about this event is that Shekenda was forced to demand the payment of the *jizyā* from Nubia, ending the independent state of Makouria as it became a vassal state of Mamluk Egypt. Shortly after Shekenda's rise to power, the Mamluks had him assassinated and replaced him with Barak, whom they also had assassinated soon after. The Nubian prince Shemamun was then placed on the throne. Shemamun was succeeded in 1304 CE by King Ammy, who was killed a few years later and succeeded by the last Christian Nubian king, Kerenbes. Kernebes defaulted on several duties as a vassal and, thus, was imprisoned and replaced by the first Muslim Nubian king Barshambu. Barshambu was converted to Islam while a prisoner in Cairo.

The reign of Barshambu angered the Beni Kanz leader, Kanz ad-Dawla, who was next in line for the throne according to the Nubian order of matrilineal succession. Barshambu is said to have been a proud and rude leader who mistreated his subjects and enacted laws that rapidly alienated him from the rest of the populace.⁶¹ After making a complaint against Barshambu to the Mamluk sultan, Kanz ad-Dawla was thrown into prison.

Upon his release, Kanz ad-Dawla went back to Nubia, proclaimed himself king, killed Barshambu, and assumed the throne at Dongola. It is during the reign of Kanz ad-Dawla that we find the first concrete evidence for the presence of a mosque in Nubia at Dongola.⁶² In an effort to overthrow Kanz ad-Dawla, the Mamluk sultan released Kerenbes from prison. Upon hearing of his release, Kanz ad-Dawla fled Dongola and Kerenbes reigned once again without opposition in 1323 CE. Kanz ad-Dawla counter-attacked a few years later and reclaimed the throne in 1326 CE for several uninterrupted decades.⁶³

The reign of Kanz ad-Dawla marks the end of seven centuries of Christian rule in Nubia. However, Nubia was still a predominately Christian region in the fourteenth century and complete Islamicization would take another two centuries.⁶⁴ The process of Islamicization was accelerated by the advent of Muslim rule, but the shift from Christianity to Islam in Nubia was, as it had been through the *Baqt* period, a gradual one. It should also be noted that, of the 150 known churches in Nubia, only about a half dozen were ever converted to mosques and that there are no known mosques in the Sudan of any great antiquity.⁶⁵

The reign of the Beni Kanz that was initiated with Kanz ad-Dawla would only last 40 years. The Beni Kanz king of 1365 CE was overthrown by the Beni Ja'd people with whom he had previously conspired against his native Beni Kanz. From this time until the coming of the Turks in 1517 CE, the region of the Beni Kanz, Upper Egypt and the adjoining Lower Nubia, are described to be in a state of anarchy with the control of the Mamluks rendered impotent.⁶⁶ During the time of Ayyubid and Mamluk control in Egypt, the mysterious Nubian kingdom (or principality) of Dotawo is mentioned in several Old Nubian Christian texts. The nature, geography and organization of this society is unclear.⁶⁷ Dotawo is thought to be connected with the Nubian town of Daw.⁶⁸ Derek Welsby has argued that, after the rise of Muslim power in Makuria during the mid-fourteenth century, the vassal kings of Dotawo were replaced with the royal family of Makuria.

61 Welsby, *Medieval Kingdoms of Nuba*, 247.

62 Ibid, 247. The appearance of a mosque in the imperial residence after the time of Barshambu, in conjunction with the subjugation of Shekenda, are seen as the pivotal events that instigated the rapid decline of Nubian Christianity, Faraji, *Roots*, 295.

63 Ibid, 248.

64 Adams, *Nubia*, 530.

65 Ibid., 540.

66 Ibid., 532.

67 Ibid., 534.

68 Shinnie, "Christian Nubia," 586.

A Christian Nubian empire would then have marginally existed under Mamluk dominance for another 150 years.⁶⁹

Although the reasons why are unclear, the southern kingdom of Alodia/Alwa was in serious decline by the thirteenth century as well.⁷⁰ By the time of the Funj conquest of the region south of Makuria in 1504 CE, the Alodian capital of Soba was already in ruins.⁷¹ It is likely that the fall of the Christian Alodian empire occurred only a generation or two before the establishment of the Funj capital of Sennar. It therefore remains unknown whether Alodia/Alwa or Nobatia contained the latest established Nubian Christian community.⁷² Although it is unknown when or how the Christian tradition of Alodia/Alwa died out, currently it is thought of as the most Arabized part of the modern Republic of Sudan.⁷³

The conflict between the Nubians and the Nubian-Arab Beni Kanz caused major disruptions in communication between Nubian Christians and the Patriarch of Alexandria. The consecration documents of a bishop at Faras and Qasr Ibrim in 1372 CE are the last known documents evidencing communication between Nubian Christians and the Coptic Patriarch.⁷⁴ Although it is unclear why the Nubian church lost contact with Alexandria, the disturbed conditions of both the Nubian and Coptic churches as well as conflict with the Beni Kanz were likely contributors.⁷⁵ The final mention of independent Nubian monarchs and Christian bishops of the aforementioned Dotawo are found in documents at Qasr Ibrim in 1484 CE. This evidence marks the end of Christianity as the state religion of Nubia.⁷⁶ The Arab historian Ibn Khaldūn describes the period during the Islamicization of Nubia:

Their kingdom was torn in pieces and the Juheina Arabs took possession of their country. No kingly government or policy was possible by reason of the ruination which prevented any union between the princes and split them into factions at this time. Not a trace of kingly authority remained in the country, and the people are now become Bedouins, following the rains about as they do in Arabia.⁷⁷

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, two empires dominated Nubia just after the Nubian church and autonomous Nubian monarchy disappeared forever—the Ottomans in the north and the Funj in the south. Just a few years before the Nobatian kingdom north of the Third Cataract was annexed to the Ottomans in 1517 CE, the Funj replaced the extinct kingdom of Alodia/Alwa with their new capital Sennar.⁷⁸ Though the origin of the Funj is much debated, they most likely came from the southern Shilluk country along the White Nile between Renk and Malakal.⁷⁹

At the dawn of these two empires, Sudanese history enters into its “dark age” with very little historical evidence to narrate the period—approximately between 1500 CE to 1800 CE.⁸⁰ This period solidified the transition from independent Christian Nubia to an Islamic vassal territory. Although it is appropriate to view this point as the end of Christianity in Nubia, dwindling glimpses of practicing Christians still appear during this period.

The persistence of the Christian faith among the laity is attested even after the arrival of the Turks in 1517. Leo Africanus wrote that the Nubians “lost the sincerity and light of the Gospel;

69 Welsby, *Medieval Kingdoms of Nubia*, 251; Adams, “Makouria & Nobatia,” 259.

70 Adams, “The Twilight of Nubian Christianity,” 15.

71 Welsby, *Medieval Kingdoms of Nubia*, 255.

72 Adams, “The Twilight of Nubian Christianity,” 15.

73 Shinnie, “Christian Nubia,” 588.

74 J. Martin Plumley, “Qasr Ibrim,” *Journal of Egyptian Archeology* 50 (1964): 3-5.

75 Adams, *Nubia*, 541.

76 *Ibid.*, 542; Adams, “The Twilight of Nubian Christianity,” 14.

77 From Ibn Khaldūn’s *Kitāb al-‘ibar*, translation from Adams, *Nubia*, 508.

78 Shinnie, “Christian Nubia,” 588.

79 Jay Spaulding, “The Funj: A Reconsideration,” *The Journal of African History* 13 (1972): 39-53.

80 Shinnie, “Christian Nuba,” 588.

they do embrace infinite corruptions of the Jewish and Mohammedan religions.”⁸¹ An Italian visitor to Nubia in the early sixteenth century found a colony of Nubians living near a monastery at Esna still practicing the Christian rites of baptism, marriage, and burial.⁸²

During his travels to Abyssinia, the Portuguese missionary Francisco Alvares reports in 1540 CE that the Nubians claimed to have lost their Christian faith: “These Nubians, who are neither moors, Jews, nor Christians, say that they were Christians and that they lost the faith.”⁸³ The dwindling, if not sporadic, Christian presence in Nubia after the sixteenth century contradicts Budge’s claim that Nubian Christianity completely ended during the reign of Kerenbes in 1350 CE.⁸⁴ The latest known evidence of any Christian presence in Nubia is found in a letter by a missionary friar in Cairo to Cardinal Luis Antonio Belluga y Moncada in 1742 CE:

A few days ago I received from a servant, a Berberine, whom I have in my house, such information that caused me great surprise. It is: that in his village, called Tangos, which is in an island of the Nile, in the Kingdom of Nubia, there are still some Christians; although they have endured many troubles, disturbance, and wars from the Turks, to force them to embrace Mohammedanism, they, even at the cost of their lives, have always persevered as Christians and still hold in their hands a monastery (but without monks), in which there is a beautiful church decorated with wall- and cloth-paintings.⁸⁵

By the time Western missionaries arrived in the nineteenth century, Christianity had vanished from Nubia.⁸⁶ Because of the evidence of organized Christian practice at Qasr Ibrim in the late fifteenth century, the end of Christianity should be seen as occurring around the year 1500 CE.⁸⁷ Examples of Christian presence during the Ottoman and Funj periods should be seen as exponentially diminishing attempts of the laity to maintain the religion of their ancestors. However, was the decline of Christianity in Nubia a result of the rise of Islam? It is reasonable to view the growth of Islam in Nubia (both through military force and immigration) as the impetus for the decline of Christianity in Nubia:

Taking advantage of dynastic feuds and supporting those elements who were already seeing the advantage of Muslim help in achieving their ends, the Mamluks became deeply involved in the situation in Nubia, thus helping to prepare the way for the eventual collapse of the Nubian kingdom and the decline of Christianity and its ultimate replacement by Islam.⁸⁸

Adams has argued that the decline in Christian architectural and literary production in the thirteenth century indicates that the fall of Christianity is due to weaknesses within the Christian community:⁸⁹ “In the absence of documentary records we must measure the spiritual influence of Christianity in Nubia in terms of its material monuments: artistic, architectural, and literary.”⁹⁰ John Taylor presents the more likely case that the decline of the construction of churches in thirteenth-century Nubia which coincided with the increased presence of forts was the result of

81 Translation from E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Egyptian Sudan: Its History and Monuments* Vol. 2 (London: Kessinger Publishing, 1907), 307.

82 Monneret de Villard, *Storia della Nubia Cristiana*, 124-125.

83 Padre Francisco Alvares, *Verdadeira Informação das Terras do Preste João das Índias: Nova Edição* (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1889), 30.

84 E. A. Wallis Budge, *Texts Relating to Saint Mênâ of Egypt and Canons of Nicaea in a Nubian Dialect* (London: British Museum Press, 1909), 4.

85 Translation from Adams, *Nubia*, 543.

86 Welsby, *Medieval Kingdoms of Nubia*, 256.

87 Against the view of Metz, *Sudan*, 11.

88 Shinnie, “Christian Nubia,” 584.

89 Adams, *Nubia*, 542.

90 Adams, “The Twilight of Nubian Christianity,” 11.

increasing conflict with the Egyptian Mamluks.⁹¹

Adams claims that “it is only by this means (documentary records) that we shall ever know when Islam was fully and finally established as the faith of Nubia.”⁹² The lack of literary evidence makes it difficult to know when Islam became the dominant religion in Nubia. However, the beginning of Islamic rule in the mid-fourteenth century occurred contemporaneously with the rapid decline of Christian literature and architecture. This is a clear indication that Islam replaced Christianity at the dawn of the sixteenth century. Material evidence also attests to the Islamicization of Nubia concurrent with the decline of Christianity. The presence of Muslim gravestones at Wadi Haifa in the tenth century attests to the presence of Islamic converts in Nubia before the conquest.⁹³

Adams claims that the orthodoxy of the sixteenth-century Funj is questionable and that post-Christian Nubia initially experienced Islam as more of a social system rather than a system of belief.⁹⁴ Therefore, while the reign of the Funj represents the process of Islamicization in Nubia, Islam existed as a more unorganized, unorthodox Islamic administration in comparison to the Ottomans in the north. It was during the period of Ottoman hegemony in Nubia that the Muslim rulers used Christian churches as centers through which to disperse knowledge of the Arabic language and their interpretation of the teachings of Islam.⁹⁵ This practice persists into the present as the church of Dongola is currently used as a mosque.

The causes for the decline of Christianity in Nubia are complex and extended over vast periods of time. The dysfunctional internal politics at Makuria should not be ignored as the impetus for creating an unstable empire easily susceptible to conquest. And it was the Islamic sultanate of the Mamluks that began the replacement of Christian rule for the Muslim state that continues into the present. However, the primary manner in which Nubia eventually became a predominately Islamic people was a gradual process of migration, intermarriage and conversion. The ultimate result of the Islamic intervention was the extinction of a millennia-old Christian tradition, a tradition that represents an original *cardo*⁹⁶ of African Christianity.

The legacy of the Nubian church should be transmitted and embraced for numerous reasons. The Scriptures teach that the contribution of every member of the Body of Christ is equally significant.⁹⁷ Yet racist systems targeting Africans and people of African descent in the diaspora in antiquity and the present have often deprecated the contribution of African Christians. Even in the African-American community, many have walked away from the Christian faith of their parents and grandparents and embraced Islam, a faith perceived as more historically and culturally accessible to black people. Many of these people are unfamiliar with the history of one of the earliest black civilizations that was the only nation to fight off the Arab Muslim conquest of the seventh century and establish an unprecedented truce with the Islamic forces while remaining predominately Christian. It is a story that must remain a vital part of our corporate memory to remind us all that black lives matter.

Vince Bantu is Teaching Pastor of Jubilee Community Church— an urban, multiethnic congregation in North St. Louis, MO. Bantu is also an adjunct professor of missiology and church history at Covenant Theological Seminary, Fuller Theological Seminary, and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary’s Hispanic Ministries Program. Bantu is an alumnus of Gordon-Conwell’s Center for Urban Ministerial Education and has a Th.M. from Princeton Theological Seminary and a Ph.D. in Near Eastern Christianity from the Catholic University of America. Vince, his wife Diana, and their children enjoy playing hide-and-seek, Marvel movies, and eating empanadillas.

91 Taylor, *Egypt & Nubia*, 69.

92 Adams, “The Twilight of Nubian Christianity,” 17.

93 P. L. & M. Shinnie, “New Light on Medieval Nubia,” *The Journal of African History* 6 (1965): 263-273.

94 *Ibid.*, 16.

95 J.W. Crowfoot, “Christian Nubia,” *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 13 (1927): 141-150.

96 The primary north-south street in ancient Roman cities and center of transportation and commerce.

97 1 Cor. 12:12-31.



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Jesus' Identity in the Sabbath Miracles in the Gospel of Luke¹

SAM ROGERS

During my graduate studies, I became fascinated with the Gospel of Luke. Particularly during my Gospel of Luke class with Dr. Sean McDonough, I was able to study Luke's intricacies and generalities, his purposes and themes. In that class, I chose to research the healing of the bent-over woman in Luke 13, and I found that all of the Gospel's themes converged in her story: the public elevation of women, care for the afflicted, inclusion of Gentiles, and the inbreaking of the kingdom through the most unlikely events. As I researched, it became apparent to me that most interpreters regarded this pericope as simply another healing; the issue of healings on the Sabbath had not been explored in detail outside of the commentaries. The pericope itself has received only minimal attention.² Thankfully, recent scholars have begun shifting their attention to the value of Jesus' Sabbath miracles as these events relate to his mission, identity, and the kingdom of God.³ In this article, I will demonstrate that Luke reports Jesus' Sabbath miracles in order to convey the inbreaking of the kingdom of God.

Due to the paucity of research data available, I will approach the Sabbath miracles with a general-to-specific method. I will first briefly summarize authorship, date, purpose, and audience of the Gospel of Luke. Second, I will introduce the Sabbath miracles in Luke generally, comparing their depiction to the other gospels in order to ascertain Luke's purpose for including them. Third, I will analyze Luke 6:6-11 as a specific example of Luke's purposes and Jesus' identity as Messiah as a companion pericope to the healing in Luke 13:10-17. Fourth, I will explore the Jewish backgrounds of the Sabbath to demonstrate the meaning of Jesus' actions. Finally, I will demonstrate the applicability of the conclusions to preaching, teaching, and Christian living.

Historical Context⁴

The gospel itself is anonymous. Historically, the authorship is attributed to Luke the physician and companion of Paul. By the late second century, Luke's authorship of this gospel is cemented in tradition.⁵ Paul himself identified Luke as his companion and co-laborer on his mission (Phlm 24; Col 4:14), while Luke uses the "we passages" when describing Paul's journeys (Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-

1 This essay was written for a Th.M. writing course Sabbath Miracles in Luke in Spring 2014 for Dr. Aída Besançon Spencer at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

2 In 1987, H. Dennis Hamm's research led him to find only two articles ever published on this healing. M. Dennis Hamm, "The Freeing of the Bent Woman and the Restoration of Israel: Luke 13:10-17 as Narrative Theology," *JSNT* 31 (1987): 23-44. Two years later, Joel Green had much the same reaction. Joel B. Green, "Jesus and a Daughter of Abraham (Luke 13:10-17): Test Case for a Lucan Perspective on Jesus' Miracles" *CBQ* 51 (1989): 643-54. See also Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Luke 13:10-17: Interpretation for Liberation," *TD* 36 (1989), 307, and more recently, J.J. Kilgallen, "The Obligation to Heal (Luke 13:10-17)," *Bib* 82 (2001): 402-9.

3 For a recent bibliography and excellent work on the Jewish implications and laws regarding Sabbath miracles, see especially Lutz Doering, *Sabbat: Sabbathalacha und -praxis im antiken Judentum und Urchristentum* (TSAJ 78; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999) and Isaac Oliver, *Torah Praxis after 70 CE* (WUNT 2:355; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013) and Lutz Doering's more recent work in English: "Sabbath Laws in the New Testament Gospels," in *The New Testament a Rabbinic Literature* (Reimund Bieringer, Florentino García Martínez, Didier Pollefeyt, and Peter J. Tomson, eds.; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 207-53.

4 All Scripture references are from Luke unless otherwise stated. Each English translation is the author's unless otherwise stated.

5 Iraenaeus names Luke, the companion of Paul, as the author and is the earliest external attestation of authorship (*Haer.* 3.1.1., written A.D. 175-185). Soon afterwards, the Muratorian canon (A.D. 180), Clement (*1 Clement* 13:2; 48:4; *2 Clement* 13:4, written A.D. 200), and Tertullian (*Marc.* 4.2.2-5, written A.D. 200). all attribute the gospel to Luke. Eusebius also attests to Lukan authorship (A.D. 315) and adds that the Luke in question is Paul's companion who also wrote Acts (*Hist. Eccl.* 3.4.2).

15; 21:1-18; 27:1-28:16). A large amount of linguistic, narrative, and thematic evidence exists to prove Luke's authorship of both Luke and Acts.⁶ Considering both internal and external evidence, Luke can be confidently named the author of Luke-Acts.

Aside from a companion of Paul, who was this Luke? Was he a Jew like Paul or was he a God-fearing Gentile? Outside of Acts, Paul mentions him on three separate occasions.⁷ After Paul greets Aristarchus, Mark, and Justus in Colossians 4:10-11, he says they are the only coworkers (*synergoi*) for the kingdom of God who are Jews (*ontes ek peritomēs*, "who are of the circumcision"). Luke is greeted alongside Demas later in the text, both excluded from this title, as "Jews." Since Paul mentions Luke in Colossians 4:10ff after mentioning the only Jews with him, it seems logical to deduce that Luke was a God-fearing Gentile.⁸

The gospel is addressed to a certain Theophilus in Luke 1:3. Luke addresses Theophilus twice with the title "Most Excellent" (*kratiste*). Aside from the dedications of the book, Luke uses the term three times, referring to the procurators Felix (Acts 23:26; 24:23) and Festus (26:25). A. Weiser explains: "Most excellent" may not be an official title, but "the literary form... and the address *kratiste* lead to the assumption that [Theophilus] was a person of high position."⁹

In his prologue, Luke introduces his work with the purpose that Theophilus may know the truth about the things he had heard (*katechēthēs logon tēn asphaleian*, Lk 1:4).¹⁰ Theophilus is either a God-fearing Gentile¹¹ who had been formally instructed in Christian teachings or a non-Christian Gentile who is curious about the validity of the stories he has heard. The former reading is more likely if Theophilus is the sponsoring patron of Luke's writing, meaning that Theophilus will distribute the work broadly.

Luke's emphasis on proselyte Gentiles (e.g., Acts 13:43, 50; 16:14; 17:4) shows that he at least has Gentiles in mind as he writes. On the other hand, his emphasis on Gentiles may be evidence for his Jewish audience, that God has begun including Gentiles into His covenant community. In addition, Luke's constant references to the Old Testament and the Law make little sense outside the Jewish or God-fearing Gentile community.¹² Luke's audience, therefore, is probably mixed, comprised of God-fearing Gentiles, Jews, and those interested in Christianity's development at large. Since the Sabbath was well known throughout the ancient Greco-Roman world, it is not surprising that Sabbath miracles are more frequent in Luke even if the practice is distinctly Jewish.¹³

Since Luke-Acts is one work, we can assume Luke completed each work in roughly the same time

6 The dedication to Theophilus in both works (1:1-4; Acts 1:1-2) as well as the reference to his "previous work" (Acts 1:1) argue for Luke-Acts as a complete work. In Acts 16:10, the author shifts in narration style from solely Paul to first person plural. These "we passages" place the author with Paul in his journey from Troas to Philippi (16:10-12). Paul mentions Luke by name in his prison epistles (Col 4:14; Phlm 24; 2 Tim 4:11), which would mean Luke had ample access to the eye-witnesses he mentions.

7 I am assuming Pauline authorship of the disputed epistles.

8 Paul once again refers to Luke in Philemon 1:24 when he sends his greetings with Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, calling them coworkers (*synergoi*) once again. Finally, Paul writes to Timothy, requests his presence, since Demas has deserted him, and mentions that Luke is not with him at this time (2 Tim 4:11). See N.T. Wright, *Colossians and Philemon* (TNTC; Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2008), 157 for a recent discussion.

9 A. Weiser, "κράτιστος," *EDNT* 2:315. For an in-depth discussion of Luke's preface, see Loveday Alexander, *Literary Convention and Social Context in Luke 1.1-4 and Acts 1.1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

10 The verb *katecheō* can communicate either formal, religious instruction similar to catechesis or simply hearing a report concerning something. Paul uses the term to refer both to those who have received Christian instruction (Gal 6:6b) and Jewish religious instruction (Rom 2:18); cf. G. Schneider, "κατηχέω," *EDNT* 2:273; H. W. Beyer, "κατηχέω," *TDNT* 3:638-40.

In Acts 21:21, 42, *katecheō* refers to hearing reports concerning Paul (Acts 21:21, 24). Acts 18:25 certainly conveys formal training. In Luke-Acts, *asphaleia* is used to communicate historical facts or the reliability of events (Acts 21:34; 22:30); cf. K.L. Schmidt, "ἀσφάλεια," *TDNT* 1:506.

11 See Acts 13:43, 50; 16:14; 17:4, 17; 18:7, 13; 19:27 for use of the verb *sebō*. See Acts 10:2, 22; 13:16-43; 17:17; 17:7 for the phrase *phoboumenos ton theon*, "those who fear God."

12 E.g., 1:6, 15; 2:22, 23, 24, 27, 39; 10:26; 16:16, 17; 24:44. For more references and allusions to the Old Testament in Luke, see Joel Green, "The Problem of a Beginning: Israel's Scriptures in Luke 1-2" in *BBR* (1994); 61-86.

13 See "Jewish Backgrounds" below for an in-depth discussion.

period. Taking into consideration early tradition¹⁴ and historical events,¹⁵ it seems best to date the composition of Luke to A.D. 60-65 depending on the possible availability of Mark and his dependence on it though this conclusion is cautiously made.

Very little information is given regarding the place of composition. The *Anti-Marcionite Prologues* and the *Monarchian Prologue* place the composition to Achaia, but the dating of these documents are highly disputed.¹⁶ Eusebius says Luke is from Antioch of Syria, a likely place for the gospel's composition.¹⁷ The Gospel of Luke also may have been written from Rome. Paul names Luke as with him in Rome during Paul's first and second Roman imprisonments (2 Tim 4:11). The absence of any mention of Paul's fate in Acts may mean he is still imprisoned in Rome, which would suggest Luke is still with him in Rome. Syrian Antioch and Rome, then, are the best possibilities for Luke's location during the composition of Luke-Acts.

During this time frame, all Christians would have been under Roman rule. Since many Christians had converted from Judaism, they would be acutely aware of the travesties of the Roman Empire against the Jews. The memories of the Roman conquest in 64 B.C. would still be fresh.¹⁸ The promise of freedom from the oppressive Greeks particularly Antiochus IV Ephipanes (215-164 B.C.), was never realized, making indignation toward the imperial rulers and the desire for more autonomy far greater.¹⁹ Only recently, in A.D. 19, Emperor Tiberius sent 4,000 soldiers to Syria to put down the riots there. Those who did not renounce Judaism were expelled from Italy.²⁰ Soon after Luke's composition of Luke-Acts in A.D. 66, a large protest against the Roman taxation quickly turned into bloodshed and marked the beginning of a wide-scale persecution against Jews and Christians.²¹ Later, tensions would become so high that a second Roman-Jewish war broke out, commonly referred to as the Bar Kokhba Revolt and named after Simon bar Kokhba who led the revolt.²² Though the Roman government had given special privileges to the Jewish people, the Jewish people certainly longed for their freedom.

Luke's self-proclaimed reason for writing his gospel is to relay a carefully investigated account of Jesus' life to Theophilus (1:2-4), so that Theophilus can know the truth about Jesus. Luke reiterates this purpose in Acts 1:1 ("all that Jesus began to do and teach"). Many themes specific to Luke shine through his gospel: Gentiles, the poor, and the marginalized are given more attention than in any other synoptic gospel.²³ Luke is perhaps subtly choosing specific instances in Jesus' life and ministry to urge Theophilus, in his lofty social class, to care for the poor and marginalized. In addition, Luke names women far more often than do the other synoptic gospels.²⁴ He is perhaps urging Theophilus to recognize and support the leaders of the early

14 According to early tradition (Irenaeus, *Haer.*, 3.3.2.), Paul died during Nero's reign (A.D. 64-68). Additionally, 1 Tim 5:18 (A.D. 61-64) cites the written form of Luke 10:7 and refers to it as Scripture. See George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 234.

15 The last events in Acts can be roughly dated to A.D. 60 and the earliest extant manuscript, p⁷⁵, is dated to A.D. 175-225, giving us a *terminus ad quo* of A.D. 60 and a *terminus ad quem* of A.D. 175. The relatively positive portrayal of the Roman government may place the date before Nero's persecution of Christians (A.D. 64-68) or between the reigns of Nero and Domitian (between A.D. 69 and A.D. 96). Dating the gospel after A.D. 70 because of the prophecies concerning the temple (e.g., 13:35; 19:43-44; 21:20) is rather common (e.g. Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, *The Gospel according to Luke* [ABC 28a; NY: Doubleday, 1985], 53-57; F.F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts* [NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988], 6-13; François Bovon, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke: Luke 1-9:50* [Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002], but there is no reason to doubt that these prophecies occurred before the historical events of which they speak. Paul's death is not recorded in Acts, meaning it probably did not happen at the time of composition; though see Bruce, *Acts*, 12-13 for an opposing opinion.

16 John Nolland, *Luke* (WBC 35a; Dallas: Word, 1993), xxxv.

17 Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.4.2.

18 Josephus, *Ant.*, 14.4.

19 For more on Antiochus' atrocities, see 1 & 2 Maccabees.

20 Suetonius, *Tib.* 36; Tacitus, *Annals*, 2.85.

21 Josephus, *J.W.*, 2.8.11; 2.13.7; 2.14.4; 2.14.5. Josephus says that some Greeks were sacrificing birds in front of a synagogue and the Roman guard did nothing when the Jews complained.

22 The revolt was violently put down by Hadrian, who then forbid Torah observance in an attempt to stamp out Judaism for good. He consequently renamed the entire region Syria-Palestine in an attempt to remove the Jews from history and warn other seditioners. See Cassio Dio, *Roman History*, 69.12.1; *b. Gittin* 57-58.

23 For more on this point, see Christopher M. Hays, *Luke's Wealth Ethics* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010) who points out the care for the poor is an emphasis on the Torah's care for the poor.

24 cf. Elizabeth (Luke 1:5-7, 25, 41-44, 57-60), Mary (1:26-38, 46-55; 2:5-7, 19), Anna (2:36-38), Mary Magdalene, Joanna,

church, both men and women.

We can deduce, then, that within this historical context, there is a need to explain Jesus' identity and mission in a very specific way. Jesus' claim to be God's Messiah intersects with Jewish Messianic expectation and Roman rule and oppression. Though the Jews had more freedom than other religious groups during that time period, the memories of oppression and political corruption throughout Judea show a frustrated people of God awaiting His return.²⁵ In this historical context, it is my contention that Jesus' Sabbath miracles convey the inbreaking of the kingdom of God through God's Messiah to God's people in exile.

Sabbath Miracles in Luke

Luke includes more Sabbath miracles than any other New Testament author (see Table 1) because they directly relate to his overall purpose for the Gospel. Since the Sabbath miracles begin on the same day as Jesus' public ministry, we can expect the miracles to be colored by his statement in the temple. In Luke 4:16-21, Jesus publically reads Isaiah 61:1-2 and 58:6. This proclamation is generally accepted as Luke's purpose statement for Jesus' ministry with particular emphasis on the Spirit, the poor, the oppressed, and the marginalized. It is no surprise, then, that these themes appear in Luke's narrative. Luke includes at least one of these themes in each of the miracle accounts. The man with dropsy, Peter's mother-in-law, and the bent-over woman are all oppressed physically. The demoniac and the bent-over woman are oppressed spiritually (though everyone in need of healing is indirectly oppressed spiritually because of the fall). Every individual is oppressed socially because of ritual impurity (e.g., withered hand, illness). And all women suffered from a lowered social status in the first century.²⁶

According to the New Testament, Jesus performed at least eight specific Sabbath miracles. The types of healings can be separated into the following accounts: the healing of Peter's mother-in-law (4:38-39), a man with a withered hand (6:6), a man with dropsy (Matt 12:9-14; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6:6-11; 14:1-6), the bent-over woman (13:10-16), the crippled man in Bethsaida (John 5:5-9), the man born blind (John 9:1-14), and the exorcism of a demoniac (Mark 1:21-22; Luke 4:31-37). The vast majority of these Sabbath miracles are healings with the single exception of the exorcism of a demoniac at the beginning of Jesus' ministry.

SABBATH HEALING	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
Peter's mother-in-law			4:38-39	
Man with withered hand			6:6-11	
Man with dropsy	12:9-14	3:1-6	14:1-6	
Bent-over woman			13:10-16	
Crippled man				5:5-9
Blind man				9:1-14
Exorcism of demoniac		1:21-22	4:31-37	
TOTAL:	1	2	5	2

TABLE I

Susanna (8:1-3), Martha and Mary of Bethany (10:38-42), and Mary, mother of James (24:1-11). In particular, Mary, mother of Jesus, Elizabeth, and Anna are mentioned in at least eleven passages compared to three passages in the other gospels. In addition, Luke adds stories of unnamed women not mentioned in the synoptics: widow at Nain (7:11-17); woman who blesses Jesus' mother (11:27-28); mourning women of Jerusalem (23:26-31).

²⁵ For more on the sense of exile within Second Temple Jewish thought and an extended bibliography on the recent discussions, see Roy Ciampa, "The History of Redemption," in *Central Themes to Biblical Theology* (Scott Hafemann and Paul House, eds; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 255-308.

²⁶ Bruce J. Malina and Jerome H. Neyrey, "Honor and Shame in Luke-Acts: Pivotal Values of the Mediterranean World," in Jerome H. Neyrey, ed., *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models For Interpretation* (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 1991), 49.

Luke includes five Sabbath miracles, more than double the amount of any other gospel. Within Luke, the reader encounters a variety of every sort of Sabbath miracles: settings range from synagogues to residences, the afflicted are both men and women, and the reactions to the miracles range from rejoicing to murder plots. Three miracles are public events: the exorcism in the Capernaum synagogue (4:31-37) and two public healings in an unspecified synagogue (6:6-11; 13:10-17). Two miracles are private: the healing in a private residence (4:38-41) and a healing either en route to or within a private residence (14:1-6). Jesus heals two women, Peter's mother-in-law (4:38-41) and the bent-over woman (13:10-17), and three men, the demoniac (4:31-37) and two men with dropsy (6:6-11; 14:1-6). Reactions begin with amazement (4:36), anger (6:6-11), rejoicing, coupled with the shaming of the religious leaders (13:17), and conclude with silence from the religious authorities (14:6).

In light of Luke's purpose for Jesus' ministry, Luke's balanced reporting reveals a few reasons for including more Sabbath miracles than do the other gospels. First, Luke has balanced the healings of men and women to communicate the value of women to Jesus and to his audience. Jesus' restoration of each woman is at once physical, spiritual, and social. The healing of the bent-over woman, found only in Luke, is a more dramatic example of this liberation than, for example, the private healing of Peter's mother-in-law, found in all three synoptic gospels (Matt 8:14-15; Mark 1:29-31). Second, Jesus' self-proclaimed ministerial "purpose statement" in Luke 4 was to "preach the gospel to the poor...proclaim freedom to the captives, sight to the blind, set free the oppressed, and proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." The miracles, then, are parabolic actions, a physical representation and teaching on the inbreaking of the kingdom of God. Jesus' actions of healing literally free the afflicted from illness, but also present to the reader a foretaste of the kingdom of God in which the humble are exalted, the afflicted are healed, and the captives are freed. Third, the healings in particular act as a continuation of Jesus' claim to be "Lord of the Sabbath" (6:1-5). They address larger questions looming in the background: "Who interprets Scripture (and so, the Sabbath law) correctly? Or...who knows and represents God's will?"²⁷ We might also summarize them this way: "Who can usher in God's kingdom?"

We should note that the healing of the bent-over woman (13:10-17) is also very similar to the healing of the man with a withered hand in the following chapter (14:1-6) and most probably a "companion healing" to our pericope. Joel Green helpfully lists the similarities of the stories which I have paraphrased as follows: (1) the healings take place during the Sabbath; (2) Jesus questions the appropriateness of an action during the Sabbath; (3) a religious figure is present, the ruler of the synagogue (13:10-17) and the Pharisee (14:1-6); (4) the verb *apoluō* ("release") is used; (5) analogies between treatment of animals and humans during the Sabbath are used; and (6) symmetry is formed between binding/loosing and rescue from drowning animals within those analogies.²⁸ Luke is very likely pairing the two stories as he does elsewhere in his gospel²⁹ to highlight the themes of gender equality and role reversal in the kingdom of God.³⁰

Luke's purpose for restoration of the oppressed, particularly women, continues into Acts. Though Luke follows the missionary efforts of Paul and Peter, he is careful to mention women who are also on mission. From the very beginning of Acts, he mentions Jesus' mother and "the women"³¹ as present with the disciples even before Judas is replaced. Luke mentions prominent women as joining Paul's movement (Acts 17:4, 12), as well as Lydia (Acts 16:14-15). The church as portrayed in Acts is comprised of both men and women, both filled with God's Spirit, and both continuing the work begun by Jesus.

The emphasis on God's Spirit begun in Luke 4 with the quotation of Isaiah 61 ("the Spirit of the Lord

27 Joel Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 252.

28 Green, *Luke*, 545.

29 Luke does this quite often in his gospel. See Zechariah (1:5-38) and Elizabeth (1:39-45), Simeon (2:25-35) and Anna (2:36-38), and the widow's son (7:11-17) and Jairus' daughter (8:49-56).

30 Robert Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 1:135-6.

31 Most probably the Galileans present at his crucifixion (Luke 23:49): Mary of Magdala, Joanna, James' mother Mary, and Susanna (8:3; 24:10). Note that these women had been with Jesus as long as the twelve disciples (8:2-3) and supported Jesus and His ministries financially.

is on me”) continues in Acts 2 with the quotation of Joel 2 (“I will pour out my Spirit”).³² The emphasis on the Spirit replaces the rebuke of the evil spirits (e.g., Acts 10:34). Even here, the Holy Spirit is poured out on men and women for prophetic teaching (Acts 2:17), once again leveling the social hierarchy of the day.

After observing the continuation of these themes and purposes from Luke to Acts, we are struck by the peculiarity that no Sabbath miracles occur in Acts. Therefore, the miracles should be understood as a prophetic act of Jesus. His explicit purpose for the miracles is the elevation of humanity over oppressive interpretations of the Torah (13:10-17; 14:1-6). In explaining His miracles this way, Jesus is vividly portraying the undoing of the curses of the Fall—including the oppressive dimensions present within the religious structures.

Our pericope occurs directly after the first Sabbath controversy in Luke’s Gospel (6:1-5). Each incident is introduced with a similar wording (*egenetō* + infinitive with *de en sabbatō*), and it is very likely these incidents should be interpreted as a whole unit.³³ Between the two pericopes, “Sabbath” is used six times and legal questions arise three times, clearly connecting the two passages and emphasizing the question of the Sabbatical actions’ legality in these passages.³⁴ In terms of vocabulary, Luke uses *paratēpeō* (“to watch closely”) only four times in Luke-Acts (6:7; 14:1; 20:20; Acts 9:24). In each instance, the word conveys a desire to end someone’s life and is used always by the religious figures. Twice these plots occurred on the Sabbath (6:7; 14:1) and are each time a response to Jesus’ healing on the Sabbath. This literary context is important; it links Jesus’ actions with his claim in 6:5 to be “Lord of the Sabbath.” This healing on the Sabbath is, in effect, an answer to what the Lord of the Sabbath does on the Sabbath.³⁵

Luke 6:6-11³⁶

⁶ On another Sabbath,³⁷ [Jesus]³⁸ went into the synagogue and was teaching, and a person was there whose³⁹ right hand was dead. ⁷ And⁴⁰ the⁴¹ teachers of the law and the Pharisees were watching him closely [to see] if during the Sabbath he would heal so that they could find [reason] to accuse him. ⁸ [Jesus] knew what they were thinking and said to the man [with]⁴² the dead hand, “Get up and stand in front of

32 Luke mentions the Holy Spirit (*hagio pneuma*) 13 times in his gospel and 41 times in Acts. Luke uses *pneuma* 106 times combined, though it is often used for air, wind, or unclean spirits.

33 Nolland, *Luke*, 259.

34 See Green, *Luke*, 251 who believes 6:1-11 is a single unit centered around the legality of actions on the Sabbath.

35 Green, *Luke*, 250-2.

36 Two variants are of interest here, though neither is too troublesome. In 6:10, several manuscripts add *en opgēi* (“in anger”) which seems to be a harmonization of Luke and Mark 3:5. The reading retained in κ B W which omits “in anger” should be taken as original. Second, D alone has transferred 6:5 after 6:10 to mirror Mark. Since this is the only variant to retain this reading, it should be rejected as a harmonization from a scribe.

37 Gk: *egenetō de en heterō sabbatō*, literally “And it happened on another Sabbath.” Since Luke is writing for listeners rather than silent readers, these phrases would have marked a transition into new material. In English, this is conveyed by an introductory prepositional phrase.

The Greek word *de* is a development marker; that is, *de* marks either discontinuity or continuity with the preceding content as a conjunction (hence the opposing glosses “and” and “but” for the same word), but more importantly *de* alerts the listener that the upcoming material is an addition to the current argument or plotline. In this case, Luke is signaling a discontinuity with the previous pericope not spatially (“the synagogue”) but temporally (“on another Sabbath”) yet he is also continuing the main point of the previous pericope topically: “Jesus is Lord even of the Sabbath” (6:5). No punctuation marks existed in Koine Greek, so such a signal would be extremely important for both the original reader and the original audience. For more on discourse analysis and the use of *de* in the synoptic gospels, see Steve E. Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010), 28-31 and Stephen H. Levinsohn, *Discourse Features of New Testament Greek* (Dallas: SIL International, 2000), 69-80.

38 Gk: *auton*, literally “he.” Since this is the first mention of a name, “he” would not make sense in a translation. I have clarified the subject. All following words appearing in brackets do not appear in the Greek.

39 Gk: *kai hē autou hē dexia ēn xēpa*, lit. “and his hand, the right [one], was dead.” Note that *kai* can be used as a relative pronoun substitute. See Maximilian Zerwick, *Biblical Greek*, trans. Joseph Smith (4th ed; Rome: Iura Editionis et Versionis Reservatur, 1963), 154; A.T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in Light of Historical Research* (3rd ed; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1919), 684.

40 I chose to include “and” here and in verse ten to show in English the sequence present in the Greek.

41 Gk: *de*.

42 Gk: *tō andri tō xeran echonti tēn cheira*, literally “to the man who has the dead hand.” I chose to smooth out the translation to

everyone.” So he got up and he stood there.⁴³ ⁹ Jesus then said to them, “I ask you:⁴⁴ is it lawful during the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?” ¹⁰ And after looking around at them all, he said to [the man],⁴⁵ “Stretch out your hand.” He did so, and his hand was restored. ¹¹ Then [the teachers of the law and the Pharisees]⁴⁶ were filled with rage and began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus.

Stylistic Features of Luke 6:6-11

The flow of the passage is standard prose. In 6:7, Luke spends quite a bit of time on the motives and reactions of the Pharisees and teachers of the law. He introduces the reader(s) to the agenda of the Pharisees and teachers of the law so the audience will frame this story in light of the Pharisees’ motives, and concludes the pericope with their reactions to prepare the reader for Jesus’ impending fate on the cross. In 6:6, Luke uses pleonasm in repeating the article unnecessarily (*hē cheir autou hē deksia*, “his hand, the right one”), drawing special attention to the man’s condition in his right hand. In 6:8, Luke describes the man as *tō andri tō xēran echonti tēn cheira* (“the man, the one whose hand is dead”), once again repeating the article. The description of the man’s hand before the participle gives additional emphasis to the condition of the man’s hand as dead. In verse nine, Jesus’ challenge to the Pharisees and teachers of the law is framed in two almost parallel phrases of antonyms with asyndeton separating the phrases: *agathopoiēsai ē kakopoiēsai, psuchēn sōsai ē apolesai* (“to do good or to do evil, to save or end a life”). The parallel phrases serve to elevate the emotional effect of Jesus’ challenge to the religious teachers, while the asyndeton (omission of a conjunction connecting the phrases) and omission of *psuchēn* as the object of *apolesai* give more vividness to Jesus’ challenge.

Luke uses two phrases to convey time in this pericope: *en sabbatō* (6:6, 7) and *tō sabbatō* (6:9). These phrases are traditionally translated “on the Sabbath” (e.g., NASB, NIV, NRSV), but each phrase conveys a durative sense: “during the Sabbath.” The phrase “on the Sabbath” can certainly have a durative meaning, but “during the Sabbath” seems to me a better English translation.

In 6:6, Luke describes a man in the synagogue whose hand is *xēpos*. In the Old Testament, *xēpos* typically communicates lack of moisture or dry ground (e.g., Gen 1:9, 10; 7:22; Exod 4:9, Jonah 1:9; 2:11). When trees do not receive water, the leaves become *xēpos* (Ps 1:3). The tree can also be *xēpos*, metaphorically speaking of the death of that tree (Ezek 17:24; 20:47; Isa 56:3). In the New Testament, it is used to refer to dry land (Matt 23:15; Heb 11:29), dead trees (23:31), the man whose hand needs to be healed (Matt 12:10; Mark 3:3; Luke 6:6, 8), and those awaiting healing at the Pool of Bethesda (John 5:3). *Xēpos* does not communicate the shrinking of size unless that is a direct reaction to drying up literally (e.g., a river) or metaphorically (e.g., a large plant). While “withered” is a good word to use to describe the death of a tree or the fading of the leaves, the typical translation “withered hand” needs to be examined.⁴⁷ *Xēpos* might communicate a number of metaphors: the man is outwardly marked for death, like *xēpos* leaves mark a dying tree, or the hand itself could be considered dead.⁴⁸ Today, his condition might be classified “with” to communicate the same idea.

43 Gk: *kai anastas estē*, literally “After arising, he stood.” All major translations (e.g., NIV, NET, ESV, KJV, NASB, NKJV, ASV, HCSB, NLT) translate as two finite verbs. I believe the Greek is mirroring the speech pattern of Jesus, which is best translated with finite verbs.

44 Gk: *eperōtō humas ei*, lit., “I ask you if.” I as well as the NIV, NLT, ESV, NASB, KJV, HCSB, and NET omit “if” since *ei* is functioning more as an auditory introduction to the actual question in which a comparison is made (doing good vs doing evil, saving a life vs destroying a life).

45 Gk: *autō*. I have clarified the direct object in order to avoid pronoun confusion.

46 Gk: *autoi de*, lit. “But/and/now/then they.” I have clarified the subject here. The major translations (e.g., NASB, NIV, NRSV, ESV, KJV, NET) choose to begin the sentence with “but,” however I do not think a contrastive idea between the restoration of the hand and the rage of the Pharisees and teachers of the law is meant. My preferred translation of the continuation of the plot brings out the idea of a result of Jesus’ healing (i.e., “then”).

47 NRSV, KJV, NKJV, ESV, and NASB have “withered.” The NIV has “shriveled,” and HCSB has “paralyzed.”

48 For example, Galen of Pergamom (A.D. 129-200) was a very prominent doctor within the Hippocratic school of thought (e.g., four humors) and suggests that Hippocratic thought was still alive and well in Rome during Luke’s time. See Pliny, *Nat.* 29.5 for a brief history of contemporary physicians during the first century A.D.

as muscular dystrophy or some sort of paralysis. While it is difficult to know precisely what this man's prognosis should be, a proper translation of his condition might be "dead hand" or "paralyzed hand."⁴⁹

In 6:7, the two religious antagonists opposing Jesus are named: the Pharisees and the *grammateus*. *Grammateus* can mean a "chief executive officer of a governmental entity," an expert in the Torah, or an interpreter of Jesus' teachings.⁵⁰ In the Old Testament, the first definition is fairly regular (2 Sam 8:17; 20:25; 2 Kings 19:2; 25:19) and also occurs in Sirach 10:5. In the New Testament, this definition only occurs in Acts 19:35 and is typically translated "town clerk." The second definition accounts for the vast majority of the occurrences in the New Testament, while the third refers only to Matthew 13:52. In Luke, *grammateus* seems to be interchangeable with *nomikos* (5:17; 10:25), though *nomikos* could be a more specific legal term associated with trials and jurist duties.⁵¹ The majority of the English Bible versions translate *grammateus* as "scribe,"⁵² but the English word "scribe" has come to mean one who copies manuscripts or a public clerk.⁵³ It does not, therefore, clearly articulate the position or office described by *grammateus*. It is better to use some variant of the phrases "experts in the Torah" or "teachers of the law" to describe *grammateus*.

In the first century, these teachers of the law were the spiritual children of Ezra the Scribe. Ezra's main responsibility was not transcribing the Torah as the term "scribe" may lead one to believe, but interpreting it to the people of Israel (Ezra 7:1-10). As time progressed, the teachers of the law became more widely recognized and powerful in the religious community.⁵⁴ As Baumbach notes, "they were *exegetes... teachers... and jurists*. They exerted their greatest influence through their teaching activity in the synagogues and schools."⁵⁵ In Luke, they are mentioned 14 times and always within a negative context.⁵⁶ With the exception of Jesus' warning against them, they are always identified alongside another group. They are most often identified with the chief priests (9:22; 19:47; 20:1; 20:39; 22:2; 23:10), but they are also mentioned alongside the elders (20:1; 22:2) and Pharisees (5:21, 30; 6:7; 9:22). Interestingly enough, Luke only pairs *grammateus* with the Pharisees early in his gospel, perhaps signaling an elevation of the tension between the more important *grammateus* who were better connected with the chief priests and elders and Jesus' own disciples.

If Jesus' teaching comes into conflict with the other Jewish "denominations" of his day (e.g., Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Zealots), it is not mere coincidence that some of the main antagonists will be the teachers of the Law, especially those who have power to stamp out variant understandings of the law. This is especially important if indeed Jesus is demonstrating the inbreaking of God's kingdom through what the religious leaders might consider a deviant understanding of the Sabbath.

Jewish Backgrounds concerning the Sabbath

The Sabbath was observed by most Jews during the first century. Along with circumcision and dietary laws, Sabbath observance separated them from the surrounding Gentiles. During the Sabbath, the Jews would sing praises, study the Torah, and refrain from most activities.⁵⁷ Josephus writes that Sabbath observation was particularly frowned upon by the Gentiles especially because the Jews requested

49 For an interesting link with the Exodus, see Kurt Queller, "'Stretch Out Your Hand!' Echo and Metalepsis in Mark's Sabbath Healing Controversy," *JBL* (2010): 737-758. Queller suggests that Jesus' command to the man with a *xēpos* hand recalls God's command for Moses to cross over *xēpos* land.

50 "γραμματεύς," BDAG, 206.

51 "γραμματεύς," GELNT, 36. Cf. A.F.J. Klijn, "Scribes, Pharisees, High Priests and Elders in the New Testament," *NovT* (1959), 259-67; J. Jeremias, "γραμματεύς," *TDNT* 1:740-2.

52 E.g., KJV, NJKV, HCSB, NASB, ESV. The NIV, NLT, and NET use "teachers of the law" or something similar.

53 "Scribe." Merriam-Webster.com. Accessed 17 March 2014. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/scribe>.

54 In Sirach 38, scribes are noted for their wisdom and intellect. Sirach was written around 175 B.C.

55 G. Baumbach, "γραμματεύς," *EDNT* 1:258-60. Emphasis original.

56 Luke 5:21, 30; 6:7; 9:22; 11:53; 15:2; 19:47; 20:1, 19, 39, 46; 22:2, 66; 23:10.

57 Daniel K. Falk, "Sabbath" in *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 1174-6. See Philo, *Moses* 2.215; Ps.-Philo, *Bib. Ant.* 11:8; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1209, 2.175.

exemptions from military service, work, and travel during the Sabbath.⁵⁸ Many Gentiles thought of the Sabbath as an excuse for laziness.⁵⁹

The most pertinent works on the Sabbath are *Jubilees* and the *Mishnah* tractate *Šabbat*. In *Jubilees*, the Sabbath is the focus of a new calendar in which all festivals, pilgrimages, and activities of God abide by the Sabbath. Similar to Jesus's own teachings, the author of *Jubilees* believed the Sabbath is not for fasting, but dining and praising God (*Jub* 2:21; 50:10).⁶⁰ According to *Jubilees*, only Jews should celebrate the Sabbath because "[God] did not sanctify all peoples and nations to keep Sabbath, but Israel alone" (*Jub* 2:31). Absolutely no work should be done on the Sabbath, including sacrifices (*Jub* 2:9ff).

Later Rabbinic Judaism seems to affirm Jesus' affirmation that the Sabbath was not made for humanity, but the quotations available are very late.⁶¹ A second-century A.D. tradition that healings can be made in the case of a life-threatening situation does exist (*Mek. Rabbi Yishmael, Šabb.* 1). We can at least assume the idea that human life takes precedent over the Sabbath was amongst the debates of the rabbis during Jesus' lifetime. If the rabbinic teachings allow such "work" on the Sabbath, why are the Pharisees continually upset with Jesus and why would Luke include five of these healings in addition to the other Sabbath controversy (6:1-5)?

The answer lies within the *Mishnah*, where we find further instruction concerning the Sabbath, detailing "forty minus one" activities that were considered work.⁶² Though healing is not detailed as work *explicitly*, the general consensus is that, if the condition is not life-threatening, then the afflicted person should not seek a cure (*m. Šabb.* 14). If the man with a dead hand had sought a cure, he would indeed be guilty of breaking the Sabbath according to the *Mishnah*. However, as is the case with the other Sabbath-healings, the man did not come to be healed (cf., 13:12-13; 14:1-6). He is simply present at the synagogue. This is perhaps why the man is not chastised for stretching out his hand, but Jesus is chastised for healing the hand.

Would healing on the Sabbath be a violation of Sabbath law? More specifically for our passage, would a simple command, or a healing via spoken word, be in violation of the Sabbath?⁶³ Some rabbinic texts allow for "whispering over the eye and over the snake and over the Scorpion" on the Sabbath,⁶⁴ but these are much later texts and "the Gospel narratives do not emphasize the 'verbalness' of Jesus' healings...to the contrary, the additional Lukan pericopae know of physical manipulations (13:13; 14:4)...It thus emerges that [none of the gospel authors] particularly emphasize the verbal character of Sabbatical cures."⁶⁵ Even though this method of healing may have been allowed, Luke, then, is not emphasizing the *method* of Jesus' healing, but the temporal nature and performer of the healing (i.e., during the Sabbath by Jesus). Even though this method of healing may be allowed on the Sabbath, other "good deeds" were forbidden: intentional healing and prayer for the sick.⁶⁶ I would agree with Doering's conclusion here: "It is very likely that Pharisees in the first century would have considered healing such ailments forbidden on the Sabbath, no matter how they were carried out in detail."⁶⁷ Since the healings were in all probability considered a violation of the Sabbath, we must turn now to a general understanding of the Sabbath and how it relates to Jesus' alleged violation of the Sabbath.

⁵⁸ Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.209; *Ant.* 13.249-52; 14.225-7, 241-46, 257-58, 263-64; 16.27-28, 45, 163, 168. Cited by Falk, "Sabbath," 1174.

⁵⁹ Tacitus, *Histories* 5.4.3; Juvenal, *Satires* 14.96-106.

⁶⁰ Falk, "Sabbath," 1175.

⁶¹ E.g., the oft quoted *b. Yoma* 85b: "It is given into your hands; you are not given into the hands of the Sabbath," was written around A.D. 400.

⁶² *m. Yoma* 8.6; *m. Šabb.* 7.1.

⁶³ Doering, "Sabbath Laws," 227 believes that the Sabbath laws requiring a death penalty were not in effect during Jesus' lifetime in line with J. Jeremias and R. Pesch. He cites specifically the passages *m. Sanh.* 5:1, *m. Makk.* 1:8f; *t. Sanh.* 11:1-5.

⁶⁴ *t. Šabb.* 8:23; *j. Šabb.* 14:3; *b. Sanh.* 101a.

⁶⁵ Doering, "Sabbath Laws," 229.

⁶⁶ *m. Šabb.* 14:3, 4; 22:6; *t. Šabb.* 12:8-13. Cited by Doering, "Sabbath Laws," 229.

⁶⁷ Doering, "Sabbath Laws," 229.

The Sabbath was declared on the seventh day of creation (Gen 2:1-3), though the word “Sabbath” is never used. According to Gerhard Hasel, the purpose of the Sabbath was to “enjoy the divine gift of freedom from the labors of human existence and thus acknowledging God as [humanity’s] Creator.”⁶⁸ The basic ideas of the Sabbath laws were designed to give concrete action to the commands, especially the command to set it apart from the other days (Exod 20:10-11). During the exile and afterwards, “it emerges...as a sign of God’s call for renewed loyalty from his people...So the picture of the Sabbath from the Old Testament is of a commandment which is important as much for what it points to as for its actual observance.”⁶⁹ The *Mishnah* and the Talmud’s purpose was not to oppress people, but rather to liberate people to glorify God and maintain a distinct identity as his people.⁷⁰ As N.T. Wright nicely summarizes: “[The] Sabbath indicates a rhythm of life in which God’s own rhythm of life mysteriously intersects with that of humans, of Israel, and of the whole creation... As Temple is sacred space, so Sabbath is sacred time.”⁷¹ Jesus’ actions, though morally good, were unlawful in the Jewish leaders’ sight. Jesus’ actions regarding the Sabbath certainly are meant to correct this developed legalism, but more so to act as God’s Messiah who interacts with his creation. In this case, the healing brings peace, restoration, and the kingdom of God.

The idea that the Sabbath should be a day of healing and worship and reverence for the divine is not uncommon. For example, Isaiah 58:13-14 describes the Sabbath as a day of joy, which is why fasting was forbidden (*Jub* 50:12; *Judith* 8:6; *m. Ned.* 9:6; *j. Taan.* 3:13).⁷² During Jesus’ lifetime, Sabbath observance would have reflected the *imitation dei* (e.g., *Jub* 2:17-24).⁷³ The followers of God observe the Sabbath just as God has observed the Sabbath. Violation of the Sabbath could be seen as treason against God’s covenant (e.g., *Ezek* 20:12, 20; 44:24).

Jesus’ action on the Sabbath, then, stands in violation of most streams of rabbinic interpretations of the Torah and could be seen by the Pharisees and teachers of the Law as treason against God’s covenant. That being the case, is Jesus simply demonstrating to the Pharisees, teachers of the Law, and the Jewish community that their teachings regarding the Sabbath are incorrect? If so, why would the death penalty be sought since this type of debate was not uncommon among Jewish schools of thought?⁷⁴ It is not until we continue reading our passage that we can find the answer.

In Luke 6:9, Jesus asks the crowd, “During the Sabbath, is it lawful to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?” The way Jesus frames the question leaves little discussion. It is unthinkable to respond with the legality of doing evil on God’s holy day, yet the teachers of the Torah and the Pharisees could not respond with doing good either. Jesus is clearly aligning His actions (e.g., healing on the Sabbath) with good, but he does not necessarily equate the absence of a healing as bad. The ambiguity of Jesus’ question does not last long; Luke reports the Pharisees and teachers of the Law were filled with rage and began to plot Jesus’ death on the Sabbath (6:11). In a tragic sense of irony, the Pharisees and teachers of the law were planning the death of a man because he has healed someone. This healing, therefore, also serves as a negative example of oppressive religious structures, however well-meaning they might be. Under such a religious structure, those who are meant to be liberated (4:19) are oppressed. Jesus’ healing, then, reorients the religious structure, focusing on direct liberation rather than indirect oppression. Hasel explains:

68 Gerhard Hasel, “Sabbath,” *ABD* 5:851.

69 N.T. Wright, *Scripture and Authority* (New York: Harper One, 2011), 149-50.

70 On this point, see Roland Deines, “Biblical Views: The Pharisees—Good Guys with Bad Press,” *BAR* 39:4 (July/Aug 2013), 57-8, and “Die Pharisäer und das Volk im Neuen Testament und bei Josephus” in *Josephus und das Neue Testament* (C. Böttrich and J. Herzeeds, eds., WUNT 209; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 147-80.

71 Wright, *Scripture*, 150.

72 R. Eliezer (A.D. 80 – 120) advocated Sabbath fasting only for the study of Scripture (*b. Betsa* 15b). Note that some rabbis also encouraged marital relations (*m. Ned.* 8:6; *j. Meg.* 4:1), but others forbade it (*Jub* 50:8; *b. Nid.* 38).

73 Lutz Doering, “Sabbath and Festivals” in *Oxford Handbook of Jewish Daily Life in Roman Palestine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 572.

74 See especially the schools of Shammai and Hillel. The Talmud contains over 300 issues over which they debated. See, for example, the teaching on divorce in *b. Gittin* 90a.

The Sabbath activities of Jesus are neither hurtful provocations nor mere protests against rabbinic legal restrictions, but are part of Jesus' essential proclamation of the inbreaking of the kingdom of God in which man is taught the original meaning of the Sabbath as the recurring weekly proleptic "day of the Lord" in which God manifests his healing and saving rulership over man.⁷⁵

If it is the case that Jesus' action on this particular Sabbath communicates his authority over the religious interpretations of the day, his actions must also be communicating the inbreaking of the kingdom of God. Since Jesus has just declared himself the Lord of the Sabbath after violating Sabbath law (6:1-6), his actions here demonstrate further who this Lord of the Sabbath is. Simply, in these two pericopes, we see He is one who cares for the poor,⁷⁶ feeds the hungry (6:1), and frees the captives (6:10). His demonstrated authority over the Sabbath points back to the Messiah's Jubilee in Isaiah 61, referred to in Luke 4 and demonstrated here. Jesus has clearly been anointed by the Spirit of the Lord (4:18), and his Sabbath healing conveys that anointing by liberating the oppressed.

Application

As preachers and teachers, what can we learn from Jesus' Sabbath healings? Since we have established that Jesus' Sabbath healings are parabolic, we should emphasize the *meaning* of the message first and the *mode* of the message second. A sermon or lecture should not emphasize the liberation of the man with a dead hand (mode of the message) so much as to overshadow Jesus' identity as Messiah (meaning of the message). However, we should realize that liberation stems from the knowledge of Jesus as God's Messiah: physical and spiritual captives are freed, physical and spiritual blindness is healed, the poor in wealth and in spirit receive the kingdom of God through Jesus. Jesus' command to the seventy-two disciples in Luke 10:10 can serve as a balancing act for us: "Heal the sick who are there and proclaim to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you!'" The liberation (healing of disease in this case) is both a testimony to Jesus' identity *and* the inbreaking of God's kingdom, but a proclamation about God's kingdom must still be made. Jesus' identity and mission (4:17-18; 43) and consequently our mission (24:47) must be kept in focus during any discussion of the Sabbath healings.

Though the message retains priority, it is certainly a serious misinterpretation of the text if no focus of the *mode* of Jesus' message is mentioned. Just as Jesus healed, liberated, and preached on the Sabbath, we must seek ways in which we can maintain these themes in our ministry. We must agree with Paul-Gerd Müller when he says that Jesus' ministry "restores to the Sabbath command its profound significance: *restoration* of human beings in their integrity of God's creation."⁷⁷ Generally, the integrity of any human must be retained in any observance of the Sabbath. Specifically, religious structures should be examined to determine whether any suppression of good deeds exists. We should pause and reflect on the current state of our individual and universal church: Are we limiting good deeds, specifically the liberation of the oppressed? Are we considering the oppressed, the poor, and the outcast in our sermons and do our sermons actively liberate or oppress? Are we spreading the kingdom of God by continuing to liberate during the Sabbath? Do we actively seek the restoration of the poor, hungry, outcast, oppressed, and afflicted during the Sabbath? Do we continue the in-breaking of the kingdom of God through our own actions during the Sabbath?

Aída Besançon Spencer helpfully lists seven principles that we might abide by according to Jesus' teachings.⁷⁸ They are as follows: have mercy (Matt 12:7), serve (Mark 2:27), do good (6:9), liberate (13:11-16), heal (14:3-5), model on the working God (John 5:17), and worship (John 9:5-38). We can see each of these principles at work in our pericope, but our text continually calls us back to healing, doing good,

⁷⁵ Gerhard Hasel, "Sabbath," *ABD* 5:855.

⁷⁶ If Jesus and his disciples were gleaning from grain fields, they are most likely poor (cf. Lev 23:22).

⁷⁷ Paul-Gerd Müller, "ἀποκαθίστημι, ἀποκαθιστάνω," *EDNT* 1:129-30, cited by Green, *Luke*, 256. Emphasis retained.

⁷⁸ Aída Besançon Spencer, "Seven Principles for the Seventh Day," in Edward O'Flaherty, Rodney L. Petersen, and Timothy A. Norton, eds., *Sunday, Sabbath, and the Weekend* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 155.

having mercy, and liberation.

May we not be oppressors, but liberators just as Jesus, Lord of the Sabbath, liberated. May our liberation, mercy, rest, and worship be our *imitatio dei*.

Sam J. Rogers is a graduate of Williams Baptist College (Walnut Ridge, AR), Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (M.Div. 2013, Th.M., 2014), and a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Manchester. He currently lives in Manchester, UK. During his graduate studies, he was an assistant to the Office of the Hispanic Ministries Program as well as teaching assistant to Drs. Alvin Padilla and Sean McDonough.



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Redeeming the Screens

Living Stories of Media "Ministers"
Bringing the Message of Jesus Christ
to the Entertainment Industry

EDITED BY JEANNE C. DEFazio &
WILLIAM DAVID SPENCER

How does the future look to us? Well, clearly we realize we now live in a world of screens, from the microcosmic universe of the smartphone . . . to the imposing vigil of the multiplex giants, looming over us in Imax and 3-D—more "real" than real—and to all the screens in between, from computers to iPads, to muted, high definition flat-screens pouring out images in homes, restaurants, banks, businesses, schools, doctors' offices, and hospitals, and on and on everywhere we turn. We cannot change this reality, so what these Christians, and so many like them are doing is trying to find ways to redeem what we put on these screens: what message we are sending out in word and image to the watching world.

So, clearly, our task, whether we have been called to create or not, is to join these artists as "screen redeemers," assisting the Holy Spirit in reconciling the world to God (2 Cor 5:18–19) through helping the pervasively influential means of the media adjust its goals to the mission of Jesus Christ.

"*Redeeming the Screens*' words endorse the challenge of bringing Christ to the modern media. I am proud to be a Catholic priest as well as a member of SAG-AFTRA, sharing my love for Jesus on Christian TV stations each week and also doing films and commercials on the secular scene."
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"Although all Christians are called to be lights, few will ever know the depth of this calling the men and women portrayed in this book have known. Their stories will challenge, humble, and inspire you to break out of your protective bubble and go into all the world and preach the gospel, even if that world is on Sunset Boulevard."
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Jeanne C. DeFazio holds an MA in Religion from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. She is currently an Athanasian Teaching Scholar at Gordon-Conwell's Center for Urban Ministerial Education in Boston and a co-author with Teresa Flowers of *How to Have an Attitude of Gratitude on the Night Shift* (2014) and co-editor with John P. Lathrop of *Creative Ways to Build Christian Community* (2013).

William David Spencer is Distinguished Adjunct Professor of Theology and the Arts at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary's Boston Center for Urban Ministerial Education. He is the recipient of twenty one awards for writing and editing and is the author of several hundred articles, reviews, poems, stories, and thirteen previous books, including his latest, the urban adventure novel *Name in the Papers*.

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**Review of *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke: Trajectories from the Old Testament to Luke-Acts* 2nd Edition by Roger Stronstad
(Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012)**

CHRISTOPHER D. WILLIAMS

The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke: Trajectories from the Old Testament to Luke-Acts is a concise, accessible book written by evangelical Pentecostal scholar Roger Stronstad. The author is currently a "scholar in residence" at Summit Pacific College, located in Canada. This edition is an update of the original work, *Charismatic Theology of St. Luke*, published in 1984. Through his examination of Old Testament figures, prophetic utterances, charismatic motifs, and the narrative of Luke-Acts, Stronstad argues that *the Holy Spirit in Luke charismatically and experientially empowers believers for divine vocation and service*. He offers his charismatic reading of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts as a challenge to interpreters who only understand the Spirit in conversion/initiatory or sanctifying terms.

This exegetical and theological work consists of six chapters. Chapter 1 addresses methodological issues regarding the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts. Chapter 2 examines the Spirit in the Old Testament. Stronstad outlines the following: the distribution and function of the Spirit in the lives of certain Old Testament figures, charismatic motifs that accompany the Spirit, prophetic texts concerning the "age to come," and the cessation of the Spirit in intertestamental Judaism. He concludes that the image of the Spirit found in the Old Testament should be termed "charismatic." The author writes, "By 'charismatic' I mean God's gift of his Spirit to his servants, either individually or collectively, to anoint, empower, or inspire them for divine service" (16). Chapter 3 investigates Luke's emphasis on the Spirit in the Gospel of Luke. He argues that the prophetic activity found in the "birth narratives" indicates the renewal of the Spirit's charismatic activity. This activity climactically empowers Jesus at his baptism. The author goes on to illustrate how the charismatic Christ fulfils Old Testament trajectories and eschatological expectations. Chapter 4 discusses the Spirit's transference to the disciples and their subsequent empowering on the day of Pentecost. This chapter is pivotal in Stronstad's discourse. Here the author observes that *the gift of the Spirit is only given to those who are repentant*. This is Stronstad's main argument against a conversion or sanctifying reading of Luke's pneumatology. Chapter 5 traces the Spirit's role in empowering the charismatic community in mission. In the final chapter, Stronstad synthesizes his observations of Luke's pneumatology. He concludes, "Luke's charismatic theology is characterized by an Old Testament heritage, an experiential dimension, frequent prophetic activity and no temporal limits" (96). For the author, this distinct theology of the Spirit espoused by Luke should be given equal footing with Paul's pneumatology. Stronstad claims that the charismatic activity of the Spirit found in Luke-Acts is just as relevant to the twenty-first century as it was to the first century.

Overall, Stronstad presents a sound textual study of Luke's teaching of the Spirit in Luke-Acts. His analysis of the Gospel of Luke (ch. 3) is insightful and instructive. He astutely examines the narrative of the Third Gospel, paying attention to literary and theological features. This chapter would prove beneficial to anyone studying Luke's use of the Old Testament.

The author's observation regarding the spiritual status of those who received the baptism of the Spirit in Acts (ch. 5) is also sagacious. He observes, "In Luke's theology, the gift of the Spirit always presupposes a prior repentance" (76). He bolsters this claim by researching the believers in Samaria (8:14-19), Cornelius and his household (10:1-11:18) and believers at Ephesus (Acts 19:1-7). In each of these passages, the Holy Spirit seems to baptize individuals who were in a repentant state.

While this observation is poignant, it cannot fully substantiate Stronstad's thesis. The author argues against understanding the baptism of the Spirit in conversion or sanctifying terms because the evidence in Acts indicates those baptized were in a repentant state. Therefore, the reception of the Spirit is not a conversion but an empowerment. This claim can be supported by the Pentecost narrative, but not with the Samaria (8:14-19), Cornelius (10:1-11:18), or Ephesian (19:1-7) narratives. In the latter passages, there is no evidence that those who had been baptized by the Spirit became witnesses or went on a mission. Therefore, one cannot unequivocally conclude that the believers in Samaria, Cornelius' house, or in Ephesus were empowered for vocation or mission. Stronstad anticipates this critique by arguing that the vocational thrust is “implicit in these passages based on terminology” (95). The paucity of passages that clearly illustrate the baptism of the Holy Spirit leading to vocation or mission weakens Stronstad's argument for a normative charismatic theology based on Luke-Acts.

One should be cognizant that this book is not purely a descriptive academic work. Stronstad aims to convince his reader that charismatic theology is substantiated and validated by Luke's charismatic theology of the Spirit. Nevertheless, any student, professor, or parishioner studying the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts would find this book thought provoking and informative.

Christopher D. Williams is a New Testament PhD candidate at Boston College. His research areas include Luke-Acts, the socio-political context of the New Testament, and New Testament theology. He has served as a teacher and teaching assistant at the Hamilton and Boston campuses of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. He and his wife Jennifer are the parents of two wonderful boys, Christian and Athanasius.

Review of *Iconic: Decoding Images of the Revolutionary Black Woman* by Lakesia D. Johnson (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012)

JACQUELINE DYER

The thesis of the book is to highlight and decipher stereotypical images of Black women. Yet the title is also a play on words. The author seeks to decode images of Black women who are literally seen as revolutionaries, while also discussing the ways that “iconic” Black women have controlled or recaptured control of their own public personas, which for Black women in the American public eye is revolutionary action. The author presents information gathered from research of primary and secondary sources and opinion.

The author introduces the theme of the book in chapter one by first discussing an interview experience that Michelle Obama encountered on the Larry King show. She was asked by him, per report of a non-supportive journalist (meaning the journalist would not be exaggerating), thirteen times about her anger and whether one set of comments and situations or another about her husband made her angry. The author, Lakesia Johnson, also defines “revolutionary Black women” who are “African American women who are engaged in progressive or revolutionary politics designed to achieve social justice” (10). This point is illustrated in chapter one not just by her discussion of Michelle Obama, but also her discussion of Sojourner Truth. Sojourner Truth controlled the public image of herself by careful crafting how she was presented in her photograph. Considering the era in which Sojourner Truth lived and her abolitionist work, she truly was a revolutionary icon accomplishing a revolutionary action. Johnson then examines the public images of two “iconic” Black women in most of her first five chapters before her reconsideration of Michelle Obama coupled with Oprah Winfrey in chapter six.

In chapter two, Johnson discusses two widely recognized icons in news media, Angela Davis and Kathleen Cleaver. She says of them that “Angela Davis and Kathleen Cleaver were faced with the stereotypical image of the emasculating superwoman/conspirator promoted by the white media, the tendency of the black media to portray women playing a supportive role in the movement, and the tendency of the media as a whole to treat them as sexual objects” (16). The remainder of the chapter unweaves this fabric of intersecting oppressions that complicate the perceptions of these women. She introduces commentary about the stereotyped image of Black woman revolutionary as a woman with a large gun, in this case, Kathleen Cleaver. This is an image that recurs in media, especially when she discusses Pam Grier in chapter three.

Pam Grier’s media film promotional images, discussed in chapter three, are rife with her being portrayed with guns, and the media effort to subvert the image to make “revolutionary women more palatable to the masses...[in that] blaxploitation films reinforced the stereotype of the dangerous and angry black woman while simultaneously recuperating her through a process of sexual objectification...” (45). In this chapter, Johnson introduces themes of lesbianism that reemerge sometimes pointedly in the next two chapters. She discusses the importance in the media of both Black and White communities that lesbianism be denied in favor of the heterosexual availability of the revolutionary Black woman. However, in specifically identifying iconic Black lesbians in chapters four and five, in other words, Audre Lore and a bisexual Me’shell Ndegeocello respectively, she makes the point that these women creating public space for lesbian sensibilities is revolutionary. In some instances her detailed description of lesbian imagery and encounters is a bit superfluous.

In the final chapter, Johnson returns to her discussion of Michelle Obama and identifies the ways she controls her public images. Johnson does not discuss Oprah as a revolutionary figure, which is a curious gap, but only in relation to being the interviewer of Mrs. Obama who facilitates Mrs. Obama’s accessibility as approachable and non-threatening. She closes with a summary of

how the discussed women promoted social change and resisted stereotyped images as they pursued their own plans.

The strengths of the book include the author's analysis of the gender and race dynamics that impact images of Black women. The points are well taken. It is possible the reader might have believed that these iconic figures were beyond the same struggles experienced by the average Black woman until learning details of their experiences. There are three primary weaknesses of the book. The first concern is in the author's subjective inferences made about some of the images described. For example, Johnson described the New Yorker image of the Obamas as terrorists that was published after Mr. Obama's then confirmation as Democratic candidate for president. Johnson describes the eyes of the caricature of Michelle Obama as "hypnotic," something not readily evident—if present at all—to the reader. Johnson's focus on the female depiction leads her to ascribe a hidden agenda to the female caricature only when each caricature is depicted as duplicitous. Additionally, Johnson provides erroneous descriptions of nonexistent "grins" instead of describing the smiles in the image. The second concern is the intricate and at times lengthy details of lesbian imagery which diverge from the points being made in relation to the theme of the book. For instance, detail is given about lesbian sexual attraction and encounters not expressed for heterosexual counterpoints which, if they were, could also be considered gratuitous. The third concern is that the class issues seem to have good referents but minimal discussion and a more targeted and lengthy discussion about the impact of this stereotyped imagery on poor and working class women is missing. Overall, I find more strengths than weaknesses in the book and found it a compelling read from the first chapter to the last.

Her discussions of the ways society prefers to pigeon-hole assertive Black women with a persistent and pervasive negative stereotype provide keen insight about the "catch 22" they encounter. They are vilified as "angry Black women," are sexualized, or both and any of these reductions is a form of control, marginalization and/or dismissal. The unspoken message in the image since its creation is that this woman "is considered a danger to our nation and a threat to political power. For many, she stands as a symbol of blackness and femaleness gone mad, both of which need to be curbed" (107). If anyone questions this assertion, one has only to review the New Yorker cover of Mr. and Mrs. Obama before his 2008 presidential election.

The book makes some sound and insightful social arguments that would not necessarily be considered scripturally sound. Some of the perspectives advocated do not align with the tenets of most biblically based belief systems, including Christianity. In fact, no scriptures are discussed in the book because the issues being discussed are not biblically based. However, all of those themes are oriented toward social justice and that makes them biblically relevant. A foundational concern in Christian faith is social justice. In fact, issues of social justice are near and dear to God's heart and the mandate to fight for those needing justice is present in both the Old and New Testaments. Though some might detach from some of the arguments favored by the author, even a Christian audience would find much of the discussion about the gradations and intersections of oppression informative and applicable to the experiences of many within their communities. Therefore, I would suggest educators consider this book as recommended reading for any course that addresses issues of oppression and/or women, even if the course was offered in a seminary. However, I do not believe the book would be appropriate for a course on systematic theology.

Jacqueline Tania Dyer is Director of In-Ministry Programs, at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary—Boston. She earned her Ph.D. in Social Work from Boston College Graduate School of Social Work. Dr. Dyer provides oversight for and also teaches the M.A. in Counseling Program license and non-license tracks. She is an early career researcher whose interests are clergy compassion fatigue and domestic violence in faith communities.

Review of *A Change of Heart: A Personal and Theological Memoir* by Thomas C. Oden (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014)

WOODROW E. WALTON

Oden's personal and theological memoir gets its title from an incident in his life that occurred in 1970 when he moved to Madison, New Jersey, with his family and became a tenured professor at Drew University's Graduate School of Theology. He came to know the eminent social philosopher Will Herberg (1901-1977), who taught at Drew's Graduate School. This Russian Jewish émigré challenged Oden to examine the ancient and classic backgrounds of the Christian faith as he had himself been challenged to rediscover his own Jewish roots by Christian theologian Reinhold Niebuhr. This was a “u-turn” for Oden, who, before, had not actually taken the time to examine the ancient classical writings of the Christian faith subsequent to the writings of the New Testament. Reflecting back on that incident years later, Oden wrote “Herberg became a Jew by listening to a Christian, I became a Christian by listening to a Jew” (122).

A Change of Heart traces Thomas Oden's life from birth in Southwestern rural Oklahoma near Altus, Oklahoma, in 1931 to the present (2014). He was reared in “rural Methodism,” to use his own words. His family emigrated from Alabama and Arkansas before settling in southwestern Oklahoma. They were all Christians of Wesleyan persuasion. This reviewer lives 90 miles north of Oden's hometown. Methodist congregations in western Oklahoma churches are conservative and mainly evangelical. Oden, however, described himself as a progressive Christian, seeking to apply Christian faith along liberal lines up until close to the end of the 1960s. In the first one third of his memoir he related his involvements up to 1970 and the incidences which led to disaffection with liberal tendencies. Overseas journeys with his family into Germany, Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, and Israel deeply affected him. Visits with Karl Barth, Hans Gadamer, and Wolfhard Pannenberg and a chance to attend Vatican II as an observer gave him his first awareness of ancient Christianity. That challenged Oden to make changes in the direction of his life and ministry. In his own words, his involvement at the World Conference on Church and Society, conducted by the World Council of Churches in April 1966 in Geneva, Switzerland, was the “fork in the road” for him: “I have never been the same after Geneva” (114). It was Vatican II which set him upon a new road with a change of heart.

The remaining two-thirds of the three hundred and thirty-four page narrative lays out the path of the remainder of his life-journey. He confesses, “At last I realized that the world was best viewed from the vantage point of the glory of God revealed in history” (131). He started out with the earliest church fathers subsequent to the New Testament apostles and worked his way to Nemesius, Bishop of Emesa (4th-5th cent.), and Vincent of Le'rins (d. before A.D. 450), who in his *Commonitorium*, which was redacted in A.D. 434, described the Christian consensus as consisting of anti-iquity, universality, and unanimity, in accord with the declaration of the gospel as proclaimed by the apostles.

From this beginning, Oden was on his way to a very productive life in Christian historical research beginning with his four-volume *Classical Pastoral Care*, which was published in 1987, and ending with his work on early African Christianity in 2012. In between 1987 and 2014, Oden, as editor-in-chief, worked with scholars in England, the U.S.A., Europe, Africa, and Asia, to produce the 29 volumes of the *Ancient Christian Commentary on the Scriptures*. This was followed by the 12 volume *Ancient Christian Texts* published between 2010 and 2013 and then the five volumes of *Ancient Christian Doctrine* completed in 2009. This five-volume set was done in cooperation with Gerald L. Bray, Kallistos Ware, James I. Packer, Angelo D. Berardino, Stephen Sykes, and several others representing the Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, and the Pentecostal-Charismatic expres-

sions of the Christian faith.

Oden described his turning toward ancient (classical) Christian thought as paleo-orthodox as distinct from neo-orthodox. He credits friendships with Albert Outler, Ed Robb, Richard John Neuhaus, Avery Dulles, Martin Marty, Cardinal Suenens, Carl Henry, Stan Gundry, David and Roberta Ahmanson, as influential in his “change of heart.”

Oden's memoir is more than a theological one. It is also very personal as he writes of his and Edrita's forty-plus years of marriage before her untimely death from cancer and of their several children. He writes of his own bout with cancer and also congestive heart failure. He writes of visits in Africa, including a chance to visit in the “monastery of Antony” in the Egyptian desert. His visits with Shenouda III, the Coptic Patriarch, when in Egypt, inspired him to write of the African memory of St. Mark and the African influence upon the spread of the gospel into Europe. Oden is presently the director of the Center for Early African Christianity at Eastern University in Pennsylvania. He makes his home, however, not in Pennsylvania, but in Oklahoma City.

For this reviewer, *A Change of Heart* was exciting to read. There were portions of his narrative which corresponded with my own life journey and portions which diverged from my own life experiences. Oden speaks of individuals I, myself, have known. This reviewer never had a change of direction, but from early years gravitated toward historical studies not only in the biblical and Christian past but also in American history and in historiography.

Of great value for the reader is not only the narrative, but also pages 337-384, which include “Writings by Thomas C. Oden,” “Notes” on each “chapter,” and an “Index of Names and Institutions.” Instead of footnotes, Oden provides copious notations on citations, people, and places. The index itself is very helpful for students and others.

By way of conclusion, it is interesting to note that what Oden sought, but failed to find in the World Council of Churches and inter-denominational projects, he found in the dialogue of evangelical scholars with Catholic and Orthodox scholars. That dialogue, in turn, promoted an ecumenical fellowship which inspired the Manhattan Declaration of October 20, 2009, which drew together the three branches of the Christian family tree to confront those issues in modern society affecting life, marriage, and religious freedom. Oden mentions the impact that Charles Colson and Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger had upon his life and work, as well as Neuhaus, Dulles, and Andrew Louth. He also found himself in the circle of the Evangelical Theological Society, which drew together several Protestant bodies, Lutheran, Reformed, Arminian, Anabaptist, and Pentecostal-Charismatic among them, in common dialogue and fellowship.

Dr. Woodrow Walton, “retired” theological seminary Dean, is an ordained Assemblies of God minister, with overseas’ experience, and a member of the Evangelical Theological Society, the American Association of Christian Counselors, the Overseas Ministries Study Center, and the American Society of Church History. He is a graduate of Texas Christian University, the Divinity School of Duke University (B.D., M.Div.), the University of Oklahoma (M.A.), and the Graduate School of Ministry and Theology of Oral Roberts University (D. Min.). Woodrow and Joy make their home in Fort Worth, Texas.

Christianity and Civil Society in China

--- Christian Ethics is Transforming Citizenship Rights and Church-State Relations in China through Invisible and Unstructured Church Communities

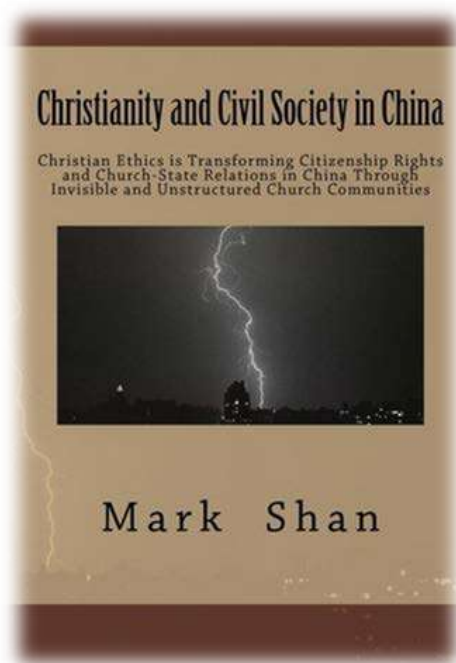
Mark Chuanhang Shan (2012)

Christianity is promoting citizenship rights in China today primarily through invisible and unstructured church communities. Through the pastoral regions' culture based on "justice- and love-centered Christian ethics," churches and Christians are holding fast to their faith ideology and its application principles, not giving up meeting and worshipping together, popularizing the model of using the law to defend their rights, and influencing church and society.

This model has pushed forward the development of civil society in China and facilitated the birth of a new form of church-state relations. To sum up, the model of a constitutional citizenship society and church-state relations, an institutional cultural capital borrowed from the West, is being contextualized in China in a positive way through Christianity's "new culture movement," and it will avoid the situation that exists in the modern Western model of a civil society from which a code of ethics is absent.

As we look to the future, if the 21st century is China's century, then the beginning of a new historical era of Christian political civilization is imminent.

The book is published in March of 2013 by Chinese Christian Theological Association, Boston (www.CCTA.me). The print and Kindle versions of this book are available on www.Amazon.com



Author's email: Mark@ccta.me

Review of *China, Christianity, and the Question of Culture* by Yang Huilin (Waco: Baylor University, 2014)

MARK CHUANHANG SHAN

Christianity has sought contextualization in keeping its kerygma of revelation by avoiding syncretism and heresy throughout its world mission history. As modern and postmodern liberalism (secular and religious) began to dominate Western thoughts in the past two centuries or so, especially in humanities and theology, a strong trend of enculturation of Christianity has been developed. This has promoted incorporation with the local culture in a program using language and naturalized spirituality that pushed Christianity away from the kerygma by infusing it with secularism and syncretism.

In his book *China, Christianity, and the Question of Culture*, with a fine scholarship in listing Chinese learning and the main Western contemporary theological positions, the prominent mainland Chinese scholar Yang Huilin shows appreciation for the approach of enculturation of Christianity into the secular context which is dominant in China today. In Part I, “Christianity and Chinese Culture,” Yang recalls the intellectual and cultural encounter and dialogue between Christianity and Chinese traditional religions (and learning) with mutual exchanges, and he promotes a non-religious interpretation of Christianity at a functional level through the common ground of ethics in Chinese culture and society. In Part II, “Theology and Humanities,” he explores, from a secular non-believer’s perspective, the Christian functional contribution from the contemporary theological perspective to the humanities, using the traditional Chinese intellectual formula of “reason,” “will,” and “affection” in parallel with the liberal theological hermeneutics, ethics and aesthetics. In Part III, “Scriptural Reasoning,” he uses a literary methodology seeking commonalities from a linguistic perspective among the religious scriptures specifically between biblical terms and terms in Chinese classics and religious writings. He praises some of the terms chosen in the Chinese Union version of the Bible (the first historic and current official Chinese Bible) which reflects such methodology (though he admits that promoting interpretation should not be the intention of the translators), especially the translation of *logos* in the Book of John as a Dao of Daoism. (See my article where I argued that, in Chinese literary context, one can find a better translation of *logos* as *li* 理 without syncretism.)¹

Yang represents in today’s China both the secular and “cultural Christian” intellectuals’ popular positive view on Christianity for its historical contribution and continuing important religious role in China, but they do away with the biblical, supernatural, spiritual truth. He doubts that Christianity of a conservative type can be indigenous in a culture dominated by Marxist atheism. To solve the problem, he proposes “the values of Christianity on the functional level” and to “explore the effects of Christianity on social culture” (44). Such a proposal lies at the value of Christianity on the ethical level, where it meets Chinese culture through his finding of “the significance of Christianity in humanities” (79). In such an effort of pushing the cooperation of Christianity with Chinese culture, he borrows with admiration a literary criticism-oriented hermeneutics, built on a structure of de-supernaturalism from contemporary theology with which to “replace the question related to ‘faith’ with the question related to ‘meaning’ ” (99) and therefore resonating with “various thoughts of humanities involving ‘value judgments’ ” (97).

Interesting to note, besides quoting Bultmann and Tillich, Yang also quotes Bonhoeffer’s “non-religious interpretation” of Christianity or of Christian faith to support his own liberal theological hermeneutics (93), yet Bonhoeffer meant the opposite of Yang, by criticizing in his days humanistic religiosity as Jesus did in His days. From the same pages and portions Yang misquoted, Bonhoeffer

1 “Critical Analysis of the Chinese Translation of *Logos* in the Gospel of John,” *Africanus Journal* 4 (2):8-20 .

clearly criticized “Bultmann’s approach” as “fundamentally still a liberal one (i.e. abridging the gospel)” and Barth’s “positivist doctrine of revelation” as not “biblical” for their “religionlessness” and “worldly” sense respectively.² Bonhoeffer pointed out that, in summary, “Here is the decisive difference between Christianity and all religions. Man’s religiosity makes him look in his distress to the power of God in the world: God is the *deus ex machina*. The Bible directs man to God’s powerlessness and suffering; only the suffering God can help.” And this should “probably be the starting-point for our ‘secular interpretation,’ ”³

Through Yang’s supported deconstruction and reconstruction based on “a perverse logic” in “a dialectical relation” (130), the resulting postmodern version of ready-to-submit Christianity is finally “defined as ‘secularization’ and was [is] described as the ‘privatization of religion’” in the name of “functional differentiation” (113). Such reasoning claims to keep divinity in Christianity (as its religious garment), thereby letting religion be religion, but actually it either secularizes it or even syncretizes it through perverse logic and negative thinking based on “scriptural reasoning” (163) combining with Chinese mystical reasoning on “emptiness” from Buddhism and Daoism (such as comparing the “emptiness” with the Christian “kenosis,” 19, 179). To articulate the thinking model, Yang presents the “Difference” and “the Other” from reading Heidegger and Derrida through an ontological definition of God as “Being in itself,” meaning, at the same time, being different from others so to be the wholly Other. In the same train of the thinking, he holds the final “meaning in itself” as different from the “meaning of language” and, he believes, “the notion of difference proves how the final meaning is constantly deferred and denoted by its differences from other meanings, hence indicating that meanings are forever correlated and can never realize themselves so that there never exists a fixed meaning” (143). Yang asserts this formula of pluralism in a confident tone of post-modern relativism (or of *zen* spirit or of Confucian *mean* or a Daoist cynicism) in which he inevitably contradicts himself by asking if what he said is what he meant.

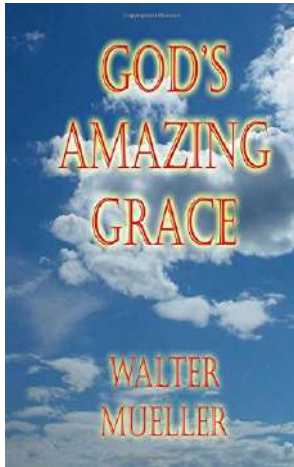
In conclusion, from a secular perspective, Yang has studied Western contemporary theology well and embraced its unbiblical spirit of liberalism as the way which indeed resonates with traditional Chinese culture. His thinking model, along with that of other liberals he has learned from, instead of accepting and studying the revelational Truth from above to humans, focuses from an opposite direction on human reasoning to define God and Christianity as a tailored functional ethical truth system and he presents only an Aristotelian God in order to detach the divinity of Jesus Christ from Christianity. He has gone even further left, away from a Hegel Spirit, a Schleiermacher mental map and a Tillich faith, and arrived at a Bultmann demythologization where Confucius waited for centuries. Evidently, Yang promotes an enculturation project to transform Christianity through removing the kerygma to be a liberal made-in-China version (as reflected by the term “Chinaization of Christianity,” 基督教中国化, as coined today in China). However, this does not at all represent the Christianity of the conservative church movement with its great revivals which dominates in China in its successful culture-transforming contextualization achieved in the past three and half decades.

Mark Chuanhang Shan, from the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China with a House Church Movement background, has written a number of books and articles, including those that are translated in English: *The Advance of Civilization: the Deepening Growth of Christianity in China* (Boston: Chinese Christian Theological Association [CCTA], 2014), *Beware of Patriotic Heresy in the Church in China: Drawing on the Historical Lessons of the Nazi’s Volk Church to Analyze the Zhao Xiao Phenomenon* (Boston: CCTA 2012), *Christianity and Civil Society in China: Christian Ethics Is Transforming Citizenship Rights and Church-State Relations in China through Invisible and Unstructured Church Communities* (Boston: CCTA, 2012). He has also authored “The Scythians of Colossians 3:11: Their Origin and Their Legacy in Xinjiang, China Today,” *Africanus Journal* 5:2 (Nov 2013), “Critical Analysis of the Chinese Translation of *Logos*

2 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, ed. Eberhard Bethge (London: Macmillan, 1972), 281, 285-286.

3 Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 361.

in the Gospel of John,” *Africanus Journal* 4:2 (Nov 2012), and “The Kingdom of God in Yurts: Christianity among Mongols in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries,” *Africanus Journal* 3:2 (Nov 2011). Mark Shan has a M.A.R. from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and a S.T.M. from Boston University, School of Theology. He is currently a Ph.D. Candidate in London School of Theology through the Julius Africanus Guild program of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Boston, MA.



ABOUT THE BOOK

The hymn *Amazing Grace* is probably the most popular hymn today. Written by John Newton as an autobiographical expression of his experience of grace, it expresses many of the ways Newton came to know the grace of God. The book is an attempt to convey the message of the hymn with illustrations from the life of the author.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

DR. WALTER MUELLER is a minister in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A). He was one of the original professors in the Conwell School of Theology. His undergraduate degree is in Classical Languages and Literature. He has two masters degrees and an earned doctorate. He is the author/editor of eight books. He is a contributor to numerous journals and publications including the *Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia*, a publication of Moody Press. His book *Amazing Grace* is available in both ebook form and soft cover from [Amazon.com/Walter-Mueller/e/B00NHU2KDA](https://www.amazon.com/Walter-Mueller/e/B00NHU2KDA)



Review of *The Gospel of the Lord: How the Early Church Wrote the Story of Jesus*
by Michael F. Bird (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014)

RYAN COLLMAN

Those who are interested in the academic study of the Gospels and their origins will find this volume by Michael Bird (lecturer in theology at Ridley Melbourne) to be a tremendous, but accessible contribution to the field. While depending on the reader's familiarity with the subject matter, Bird still offers something new to everyone. The four main questions that Michael Bird is trying to answer are related to the formation of the Jesus tradition, how was that tradition transmitted, critical questions pertaining to the literary genetics of the gospels, and the question of why we have four Gospels (3-5). Ultimately, his goal is to map "out how the Gospels emerged and why they took on the shape and character that they did" (5). He offers various views and solutions for many of the problems presented by critical engagement with the Gospels, while showing the strengths and weaknesses of each. He also includes brief excurses that illuminate some of the more important or intricate ideas he is presenting (oral history, evangelical/critical approaches to the Gospels, failure of form criticism, other "gospels," etc.).

Bird's most significant contributions to the field are found in chapters 2 and 3, which focus on the preservation and formation of the Jesus tradition. Through a careful examination of the texts in their original language and with a broad knowledge of modern scholarship, he breaks down the various reasons why the early church would want to preserve the stories about the teaching and life of Jesus and how an ancient culture would go about doing so. He focuses on the importance of Jesus as a movement founder and the role the community of eyewitnesses would have played in the preservation of the tradition. When exploring the formation of the tradition, he examines various theories related to social memory and oral history, opting to follow a model that he calls "Jesus in social memory" (97). This model explores the impact Jesus had on his followers and how their memories could have collectively formed the stories and teaching that we have today. He pays particular attention to pre-Easter memories that were recalled in a post-Easter setting, showing how Easter "provided an impetus for real memories to be recalled" (101).

Chapters 4 and 5 provide the reader with a thorough overview of the literary genetics and genre of the Gospels. He devotes 88 pages to the synoptic problem and the Johannine question, providing readers of all levels with insightful knowledge to consider. Next, he explores the genre of the Gospels and historically situates them in their Jewish and Greco-Roman environment. He views the category of gospel as being more nuanced than mere biography (focusing on the theological, Christological, and intertextual elements they contain) and he opts to categorize them as "biographical kerygma" (271).

The final chapter focuses on the fourfold Gospel witness. Here he explores the writings of the church fathers and the first 400 years of church history that led to the canonization of the four Gospels we have today. He supports his claims with both textual and archaeological evidence.

Overall, this volume is a superb exploration of how the Gospels were formed and preserved. Some readers who are more theologically conservative may find Bird to be too lenient at points, but a careful examination will reveal his faithfulness to the text and the Jesus it records. His writing style is very conversational and he peppers his pages with quick wit and humor that keep the reader engaged. This book will serve students and scholars for many years and would be a great addition to any course on the Gospels.

Ryan Collman received an M.Div. (Summa Cum Laude) from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (Jacksonville) in 2014. He is currently studying for a M.Th. in Biblical Studies at the University of Edinburgh.

Review of *An Interpretive Lexicon of New Testament Greek: Analysis of Prepositions, Adverbs, Particles, Relative Pronouns, and Conjunctions*
edited by G. K. Beale, Daniel J. Brendsel, and William A. Ross
(Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014)

WOOJIN CHUNG

In this miniature lexicon, G. K. Beale and his colleagues provide a useful tool for students, pastors, exegetes and translators of the New Testament. This practical aid offers a “taxonomy of functions performed by key Greek connecting words” (6), such as prepositions, adverbs, particles, relative pronouns, and conjunctions, as the subtitle suggests. The editors choose to analyze these markers, because they are significant indicators of the logical relationships between propositions. Accordingly, they make possible everyday communication, for communication is “built on meaningful relationships between the statements we make” (5).

In their pursuit of locating meaningful relationships, the editors include a chart for the interpretive categories of logical relationships and syntactical functions of Greek words in order to discern their meaning potentials.¹ Along with their analyses of the possible ranges of word definitions,² they also encourage the reader to cross-reference two other grammatical resources of Daniel B. Wallace and Murray J. Harris.³ The editors specifically refer to their works for each Greek entry to “facilitate the process of discerning logical relationships between propositions and thus exegetical analysis” (13).

One of the laudable features of this work is an easy and practical accessibility of key Greek connecting words for students and pastors who struggle with doing exegesis of the Greek New Testament. As the initial plan of the editors was “making this *Lexicon* accessible [even] to the nonexpert” (7), this short booklet can serve as an introductory guide to help the reader be acquainted with various translational possibilities and renderings within a short period of time. Furthermore, this *Lexicon* has brought forward a new paradigm of word study that goes beyond the concept of individual words and takes into account the logical relationships between propositions. This is a step forward in lexicography toward achieving sound interpretation of text.

However, there still remain some methodological concerns in this regard. In spite of the effort to overcome the narrow semantic nuances, this work structurally cannot escape from the fallacy of confusing word and concept.⁴ Words are not concepts and the meaning of words comes from the context, not from the word itself. It is the larger exegetical discourse that determines the accurate meaning of words by providing the contextual significance for their specific use in language. Therefore, attempts to define the meaning of words or their logical relationships in isolation from their context expose the reader to the danger of misunderstanding the proper way of pinpointing the potential meanings.

1 This chart is based on two major works: John Beekman, John Callow, and Michael Kopesec, *The Semantic Structure of Written Communication* (5th ed.; Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1981); Thomas R. Schreiner, *Interpreting the Pauline Epistles* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011).

2 The basic framework of word definitions is built on the second and third editions of Walter Bauer, Frederick Danker, William Arndt, and F. Wilber Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979; 2000).

3 Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996); Murray J. Harris, *Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament: An Essential Reference Resource for Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012).

4 This criticism is well attested in the contribution of James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (London: Oxford University, 1961).

Interestingly, the editors are aware of this difficulty. They argue that “a specific word cannot mean *anything*, but has limited meaning potential, and context will help determine specifically how that meaning potential is brought to realization in a text” (19). Consequently, the editors leave the final judgment up to the reader and aver that “the reader will be left to decide between several possible relationships, a decision among which will depend on exegetical context” (16).⁵

Identifying such complexity, one may wonder about the purpose of this work that compelled the editors to put forth and publish this volume. In my opinion, it has to do with language learning. When we learn a foreign language, it is inevitable to override some of the crucial laws and principles of language, for example, studying the definitions of words, that is to say, the lexical meanings, apart from their syntactical contexts, spotting the range of various meaning potentials of words, and categorizing the logical relationships between words, clauses, sentences, and discourses. Moreover, the editors make it clear that, despite this difficulty of language, “it is possible to demonstrate with clarity (1) the meaning of a great majority of conventional uses of words and (2) how those words express logical relationships that language uses to communicate” (21).⁶

Given these critical assessments, I recommend this book to students, pastors, exegetes, and translators of the New Testament, because it helps the reader select the most equivalent meaning of words by displaying several translational options and renderings. If one considers the exegetical context on top of that, this *Lexicon* will be a valuable resource for his or her library. Along with other grammatical resources mentioned above, I also recommend reading this book with reference to more linguistic-oriented approaches, such as *Idioms of the Greek New Testament* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999) by Stanley E. Porter.

Woojin Chung is an alumnus of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Hamilton (M.Div. 2012) and a Ph.D. candidate in New Testament at McMaster Divinity College. He is on the pastoral staff at Hamilton Korean United Church, ON, Canada, and speaks at English Ministry services on a weekly basis.

5 Italics original. In defense of the lack of contextual significance, the editors address this issue particularly in the section “Broader Methodological Matters” (17-22).

6 Italics original.

REACHING FOR THE NEW JERUSALEM

A Biblical and Theological Framework for the City

Edited by

SEONG HYUN PARK

AÍDA BESANÇON SPENCER

WILLIAM DAVID SPENCER

The task of this book is to examine the biblical and theological meaning of the city and our mission within it. It starts with the premise that the garden is lost, and we are headed toward the New Jerusalem, the city of God. In the meanwhile, we dwell in earthly cities that need to be adjusted to God's city: "[T]he fall has conditioned us to fear the city . . . though, historically, God intended it to provide safety, even refuge. . . . We have to band together and act to take back our communities if we are to help God in the divine task of reconciling the world to Godself by assisting God in adjusting our communities to God's New Jerusalem, rebuilding our own cities of Enoch on the blueprints of Christ . . . to go into all the world and share his good news, building the Christian community along the lines of the New Jerusalem, a city of light in which God is revealed." (from the Introduction by William David Spencer)

Toward achieving this goal, this single, accessible volume brings together the biblical, the systematic, and the practical aspects of urban ministry by various contributors who are urban practitioners and theologians themselves, and have taught at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Boston Campus.

URBAN VOICE

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SEONG HYUN PARK (PhD, Harvard University) is the Assistant Dean of Boston Campus and Assistant Professor of Old Testament at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. He coedits the *Africanus Journal*, the *Africanus Monograph Series*, and the *Urban Voice Series*.

AÍDA BESANÇON SPENCER (PhD, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary) is Professor of New Testament at the Hamilton Campus of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Among her books are *Beyond the Curse: Women Called to Ministry*, *Paul's Literary Style*, *2 Corinthians*, and *Pastoral Epistles*.

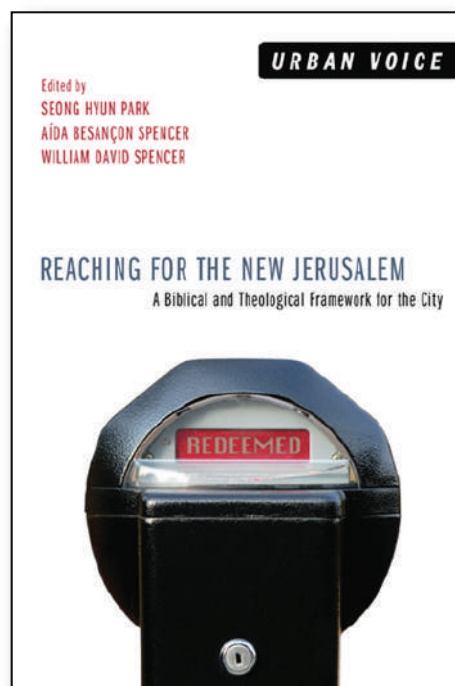
WILLIAM DAVID SPENCER (ThD, Boston University School of Theology) is Ranked Adjunct Professor of Theology and the Arts at the Boston Campus of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. He is the author of *Mysterium and Mystery: The Clerical Crime Novel*, *Dread Jesus*, *Name in the Papers: An Urban Adventure Novel*, and co-editor of *Chanting Down Babylon: The Rastafari Reader*.

"The many authors of this book offer a fresh paradigm for our mission and ministry in the city—to rebuild our cities of Enoch on the blueprint plans of the New Jerusalem, the blueprints of Christ."

ELDIN VILLAFANE, Professor of Christian Social Ethics; Founding Director of the Center for Urban Ministerial Education (CUME), Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

"Written by a diverse cadre of urban theological specialists and practitioners, this compilation is timely, scholarly, relevant, probing, and enlightening. Like a spiritual laser, rays of hope and healing keep flashing through the pages of these articles written by men and women of solid biblical faith who every day work, research, teach, and 'pray for the peace of the city' as they point us to the 'beautiful city of God.'"

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Review of *Evangelical Postcolonial Conversations: Global Awakenings in Theology and Praxis* edited by Kay Higuera Smith, Jayachitra Lalitha, and L. Daniel Hawk (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2014)

JORGE JUAN RODRIGUEZ V

In 2010, Gordon College (MA) hosted The Postcolonial Roundtable -a diverse gathering of evangelical theologians, pastors, and intellectuals from all over the world to discuss colonialism within their religious tradition. This meeting catalyzed the publication of the anthology *Evangelical Postcolonial Conversations: Global Awakenings in Theology and Praxis*. This work seeks to provide evangelical Christian pastors, professors, and community leaders, with tools to examine and redress the colonial legacy of this tradition.

Evangelical Postcolonial Conversations is divided into five sections, each introduced by the editors. The first section tackles the idea of “Mission and Metanarrative,” in which First Nations, Indian, and sub-Saharan African authors detail the strategies used in Christian mission for colonizing the non-White, non-European world. In the second section, “The Stories Behind the Colonial Stories,” academics in the Western tradition explore how meta-narratives such as the Kantian “objective man” and “American Exceptionalism” legitimized the colonial project within and without the Western World. Section Three, “Revisioning Evangelical Theology,” seeks to re-envision evangelical perspectives on eschatology, Christology, and canonicity through dialectically engaging postcolonial theory and theology. Praxis characterizes the fourth section, entitled “Transforming the Evangelical Legacy,” as authors identify how colonial mentalities permeate practices like pedagogy, identity formation, conflict management, and leadership development in evangelical communities, offering therein postcolonial strategies for redressing this reality. Finally, section five “Clos[es] the Circle” of conversation as members of the Postcolonial Roundtable describe and critique the 2010 conversation which catalyzed this book, providing suggestions for its re-creation.

This last section epitomizes the beauty of this work: openness to critique and questioning towards a postcolonial end. In this spirit, two concerns are raised. First, the book effectively engages concepts of racism, nationalism, and patriarchy but rarely critiques—the “othering” of the physically/cognitively different- as part of the colonial project, though this is done in chapters by Kay Higuera Smith, Victor Ifeanyi Ezigbo, and Reggie L. Williams. Engaging the colonial legacies of these topics is pivotal for wider postcolonial praxis, particularly in *diverse* urban contexts.

Second, in my summation this work fulfilled its mission of engaging postcolonialism and evangelicalism to address and redress colonialism in the latter. However, an obvious question is raised and never answered: can evangelicalism be truly postcolonial *and* uniquely evangelical? Robert S. Heaney in his introduction to the work attempts to engage this very question. He begins by contesting that evangelicalism is characterized by christocentrism, conversionism, charism, textualism, activism, and communitarianism while postcolonialism is characterized by responding to colonialism, “agency for the marginalized, hybridity, critique of power relations and decolonization” (30-31). He contests that postcolonialism transforms evangelicalism by making “christocentric communitarianism [result] in protest against the center...charismatic conversionism [result] in protest against the status quo...textualism [result] in protest against liberal theology and...activism [result] in protest against globalization” (32), each of these serving the postcolonial task of liberation of oppressed people. Though this articulation is well taken, and epitomized in the entire book, the praxis-oriented ends of this transformation are all distinctively postcolonial. As a result, the reader must ask what about the suggestions in this work are uniquely evangelical -a question that some of the authors struggle with as they wrestle with accepting or rejecting “evangelical” self-identification (256).

Critiques aside, *Evangelical Postcolonial Conversations* prophetically challenges the evangelical community to examine critically how it is complicit, historically and presently, in the colonial enterprise, while also providing praxis-oriented suggestions for redressing oppression. This book is *essential* for introductory level courses at *any* seminary, CUME included, as it provides a wealth of knowledge for theologians and practitioners alike to re-examine their past as they progress in their vocation. As the work suggests, the Christian Church has done too much damage in the world to be enchanted by the illusion it is somehow above reproach. For practitioners and academics alike, *Evangelical Postcolonial Conversations* is highly recommended for moving past that illusory enchantment to work that is *truly* liberating.

Jorge Juan Rodriguez V is a graduate of Gordon College (MA) who is currently pursuing a Masters of Arts in Systematic and Liberation Theologies at Union Theological Seminary. His work focuses on how oppressive social systems become divine, a project he hopes to continue in doctoral work. Learn more about Jorge at www.about.me/jjrodriguezv.

**Review of *The World of the New Testament: Cultural, Social, and Historical Contexts* edited by Joel Green and Lee Martin McDonald
(Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2014)**

SAM ROGERS

As the subtitle states, *The World of the New Testament* brings academic, cultural, social, and historical research into the hands of students and pastors for the purpose of properly interpreting the New Testament. According to the introduction, the Institute for Biblical Research (IBR), the community behind this book, wished to produce a well-rounded introduction to New Testament studies. The IBR is “a community of evangelical biblical scholars from a variety of church backgrounds and theological traditions, who are committed to advancing biblical inquiry within the broad orthodox and evangelical traditions” (6). Though not all authors are members of the IBR, the contributions within this work are aimed at “students and pastors alike” (6). Thirty-four scholars, ranging from well-known, established scholars to newer younger scholars just entering the field, contribute a total of 44 articles and 3 excurses. The articles are varied in length, ranging from 4 to 20 pages, and each article includes a short bibliography. Though some articles are a bit too short for a proper discussion of large and sometimes controversial topics, *The World of the New Testament* certainly accomplishes its goal of accurately and fairly translating difficult but necessary topics for students and pastors alike.

The World of the New Testament is divided into five parts, each containing several articles. Part 1, entitled “Exile and the Jewish Heritage,” and part 2, entitled “Roman Hellenism,” act as historical introductions to the time of the New Testament and frame the rest of the book’s articles. Part 1 works through historical considerations (e.g., “Hasmoneans and the Hasmonean Dynasty,” “The Herodian Dynasty”) as well as cultural contexts (e.g., “Scriptures and Scriptural Interpretation,” “Monotheism”) of the Jewish communities. Part 2 focuses on the Greco-Roman communities (e.g., “Greek Religion,” “Imperial Cult”). Social contexts that are often ignored in evangelical circles such as women and slavery as well are a welcome addition to this section. Part 3, entitled “The Jewish People in the Context of Roman Hellenism,” focuses on the daily life of a Jewish person and contains both specific topics the reader may not have considered previously (e.g., “Healing and Healthcare,” “Jewish Education”) and general historical information typically covered in dictionaries or surveys (e.g., “Jews and Samaritans,” “Jews in the Diaspora”), making this book a very helpful resource. Part 4, “The Literary Context of Early Christianity,” includes very helpful overviews of recent historical discussions (e.g., “Reading, Writing, and Manuscripts”) and literary controversies. Of particular note are three essays introducing the reader to Philo, Homer, and Josephus, comparing each to the New Testament authors. Each essay briefly introduces an author, analyzes the literary theory comparing particular writings to the New Testament writings, and concludes. Part 5, “The Geographical Context of the New Testament,” focuses on geography, introducing the reader to archaeology (e.g., “Jesus Research and Archaeology”) and daily life in particular religions (e.g., “Palestine,” “Egypt”) and cities (e.g., “Galatia,” “Rome and Its Provinces”). The remaining articles on money and measurements in the New Testament are found in the additional resources section, which concludes the book.

Though most articles are exemplary, a few articles seem to suffer from word limits. For example, Michael S. Moore’s article, “Civic and Voluntary Associations in the Greco-Roman World” struggles to communicate a large idea in less than six pages (149-155) and suffers from an overwhelming amount of Greek terms (more than 20 terms crowded on p.151 alone) necessary to continue research into voluntary associations. Moore’s annotated bibliography, however, is a fine resource and up-to-date for those who wish to look a bit more in depth. On the other hand,

Lynn Cohick's article, "Women, Children, and Families in the Greco-Roman World," offers a very detailed introduction to her topic in 8 pages (179-187), even including the implications this information has on exegesis.

The World of the New Testament comes highly recommended for pastors or professors of New Testament. Because the information can be a bit dense, *The World of the New Testament* is best digested in small bites. Professors who assign particular articles relevant to the lesson will help keep the lecture up-to-date for their students. For pastors, the general articles are extremely helpful since the information collected will be largely absent from more devotional commentaries.

Sam J. Rogers is a graduate of Williams Baptist College (Walnut Ridge, AR), Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (M.Div., 2013, Th.M., 2014), and a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Manchester. He currently lives in Manchester, UK.

Review of *Death Before the Fall: Biblical Literalism and the Problem of Animal Suffering* by Ronald E. Osborn
(Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2014)

JUSTIN M. YOUNG

Death Before the Fall is divided into two parts. Part 1 is made up of nine chapters which focus on critiquing “biblical literalism,” particularly in regard to Genesis 1-3. By “literalism,” Osborn refers to “any approach to the Bible that treats the creation story in Genesis 1 as a chronological-historical account that should be used to coordinate and explain scientific and historical data—the enterprise of ‘creation science’ or ‘scientific’ creationism” (p. 40). In Part 2 of the book, Osborn addresses the origin of animal death and predation (i.e., their carnivorous nature), contending that the matter is largely misunderstood among literalists and thereby creating an unnecessary obstacle in the way of evolutionary theory. To this end, the two parts of Osborn’s work attempt to “provoke honest even if unsettling conversations as one member in the body of Christ addressing others” (p. 20) with regard to these two rather controversial issues.

Chapter 1 offers a reading of Genesis 1, which attempts to deconstruct the preconceived assumptions of a literalist interpretation. Osborn contends that, although the cosmos is described as “good” and “very good,” “Genesis is in fact completely silent on the question of whether or not part of the wildness and freedom of creation included mortality before Adam’s fall...” (p. 34). Osborn regards the proposition of animal death and predation entering the world as a result of the fall as being “imposed by pious readers on the great silences of the text” (p. 34).

In chapters 2-5, Osborn moves from the exegetical to the hermeneutical, perceiving perils in the literalist model when such a hermeneutic is applied consistently. Osborn views the literalist approach as essentially mimicking scientism, arguing that the literalist reading is “scientism’s reactionary doppelgänger” (p. 58). He charges the literalist reading with conveying a deep commitment to a reading of Scripture which is rooted in modernity and thoroughly rationalistic. Osborn sees the literalist reading of Scripture as exchanging a robust, peer-reviewed, “progressive,” scientism for a less-educated, “degenerative,” form of scientism—but scientism nonetheless. By “degenerative” Osborn refers to scientism that fails to generate further scientific discovery, but rather, merely produces an *ad hoc* response to evolutionary theory. Osborn contends that “believers ought to not be so in awe of modern science as to assume that Genesis is only authoritative so long as it is scientific or historical” (p. 73). He regards this perspective as being overly swayed by modern cultural influences.

In chapters 6-8, Osborn takes a more historical tone, considering the literalist approach within the broader context of the fundamentalist movement. Attempting to sever the literalist reading from its alleged self-proclaimed position as the only faithful reading of the text, Osborn, in chapter 7, deals with what he calls the “Gnostic Syndrome,” contending that the fundamentalist approach bears the marks of Gnosticism. Osborn interacts with four key historical figures in chapter 8—Barth, Calvin, Augustine, and Maimonides. In each case, he argues that such figures cut against the grain of the literalist approach in various ways.

Chapter 9 concludes Part 1 of the book by moving from critiquing the epistemology that undergirds fundamentalism to offering another approach in its place. Osborn proposes an epistemological solution which he regards as the middle ground between the positivism of modernity and the pessimism of postmodernity. He advocates for a position called “critical realism” which “accepts the postmodern emphasis on the provisional and always contingent or mediated aspect of knowledge,” while also insisting “upon the objectivity of the world we encounter and so the possibility of more or less truthful ways of talking about the properties of the world” (p. 118).

The second half of the book is Osborn's attempt to implement this approach with regard to the Genesis account and the question of animal suffering.

In Part 2, Osborn turns toward the issue of animal death and suffering by opening with a chapter (10) that introduces three "dilemmas," contending that each one poses a threat to the literalist reading. (1) The Stasis Dilemma describes the problems associated with an endless, reproductive, and deathless existence. (2) The Deceiver God Dilemma describes the issues related to the amount of empirical evidence in favor of evolutionary theory. Osborn essentially argues that if an evolutionary model turned out to be incorrect after all, God would be deceptive in light of the excessive evidence in favor of evolutionary theory. (3) The Divine Curse Dilemma introduces the alleged problems associated with the "irreducibly predatory" (p. 134) nature of some animals. Osborn contends that each of these dilemmas are the result of an attempt to win an apologetic (scientific) battle among fundamentalists, while losing a much bigger philosophical war. For Osborn, these dilemmas combine to form a paramount theodicy problem that should not be ignored.

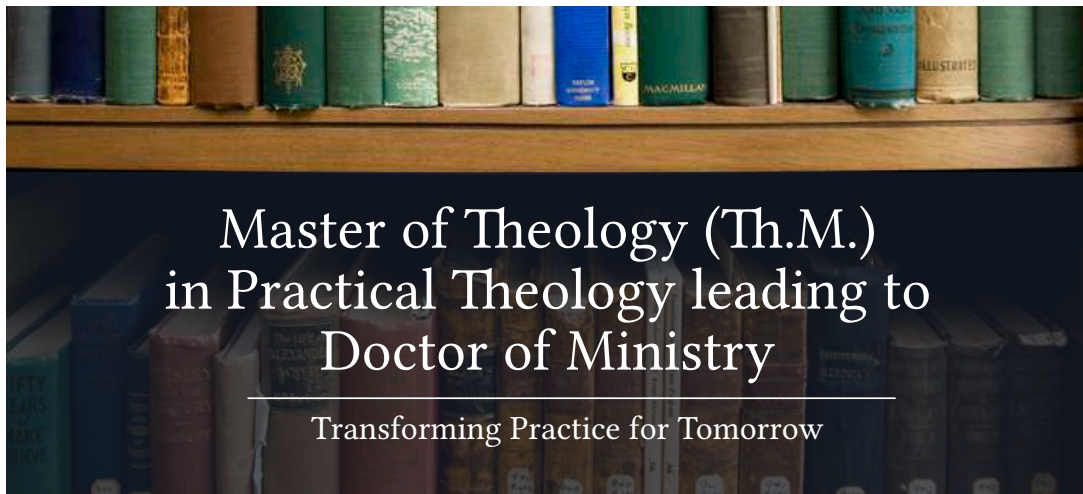
Chapter 11 presents C.S. Lewis as a favorable example of how one might approach the issue at hand. Lewis's "cosmic conflict" theodicy raised the possibility that animal life may have been "corrupted" prior to the creation of humankind. Since Lewis did not develop his views on the matter beyond mere speculations, Osborn points to Lewis as an example of "faithful agnosticism" (p. 143) with regard to the issue. It is clear that Osborn's work attempts to achieve a "faithful agnosticism" of its own, repealing the fundamentalist understanding of the origin of animal predation while abstaining from replacing it with an equally programmatic approach. Chapter 12 deals with the animals described in Job and argues that since animal ferocity is praised within Scripture (e.g., Job 40:15-34), one should not claim that animal predation is inherently evil.

Chapter 13 turns to issues related to God's sovereignty which, by his own admission, might not be too palatable for Reformed theologians (p. 161). Osborn appeals to a view of God's sovereignty which emphasizes natural (and human) freedom and stands as the vehicle for all suffering (p. 163). He demonstrates how a "Christocentric" hermeneutic, which stresses the unfolding story of *kenosis* throughout the Scriptures, informs his approach to animal predation. Chapter 14 serves as a call to action for evangelicals to care more deeply about creation and the issue of animal suffering. Osborn laments that the fundamentalist approach is not conducive to evangelicals coming to care deeply about such things. The final chapter (15) concludes with a call to "charity and greater civility" (p.178) regarding the topic of animal suffering as the conversation continues. Osborn's appeal for such charity is perhaps weakened somewhat by his provocative tone in previous chapters. For example, he refers to some of the leaders of the creation science movement as "self-taught science dilettantes who see themselves as courageous knights of faith marching out to do battle against the Philistine Goliaths of peer-reviewed scientific inquiry" (p. 69). It should be noted, however, that Osborn displays exemplary tact and sensitivity in other parts of the book.

Potential readers should note that the book is not primarily an exegetical work, nor is it intended as such (pp. 20-21; 39). The first chapter contains the majority of the raw exegesis within the entire book, which is cursory in nature. The focus of Osborn's work is, rather, on the hermeneutical and philosophical questions surrounding the topic. Osborn cogently describes some of the often overlooked underpinnings and consequences of the literalist approach to the biblical creation account and the origin of animal predation, particularly in relationship to theodicy. Given the nature of the topic, however, Osborn's work could benefit from interacting with exegetical matters to a larger degree (e.g., how one is to understand the parallels between Gen. 1:26-30 and Gen. 9:1-17 with regard to animal predation). The degree of certainty with which one might arrive at concrete exegetical conclusions regarding the creation account and the origin of animal suffering will undoubtedly be the watershed issue for evangelical readers of the book. Regardless of one's persuasion concerning creation views and the origin of animal suffering, readers will certainly find

that Osborn thoughtfully and sincerely exhibits the potential implications involved in how one addresses these complex and highly-charged issues.

Justin M. Young, M.A., graduated from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (M.A. Old Testament, 2014 [Jacksonville]) and is a Ph.D. student in Old Testament at Queen's University Belfast.



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